



Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Friday 24 November 2023

Time 9.30 am

Venue Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

Business

Part A

**Items which are open to the Public and Press.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's
agreement and if registered to speak.**

1. Apologies
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Items from Co-opted Members and Interested Parties
6. Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 13 - 20)
7. Ecological Emergency Delivery Plan
 - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (Pages 21 - 30)
 - b) Presentation by the Environment and Design Manager (Pages 31 - 38)
8. Environment and Climate Change Partnership Minutes of the Partnership Board Meeting held on 12 September 2023 (Pages 39 - 46)
9. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Bradley

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall

Durham

16 November 2023

To: **The Members of the Environment and Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor B Coult (Chair)
Councillor J Elmer (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, P Atkinson, L Brown, R Crute,
C Kay, C Lines, B McAloon, I McLean, D Nicholls, D Oliver,
J Purvis, A Reed, P Sexton, A Simpson, T Stubbs,
D Sutton-Lloyd, S Townsend and R Yorke

Co-opted Members

Mr T Cramond and Mr P Walton

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

**Environment and Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

At a meeting of the **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 5 October 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Elmer in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, B Coult, R Crute, C Lines, D Oliver, A Reed, A Simpson, T Stubbs, D Sutton-Lloyd and S Townsend.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Atkinson, L Brown, C Kay, D Nicholls, J Purvis and co-opted member, Mr P Walton.

2 Substitute Members

Councillors V Andrews and R Ormerod substituted for Councillors C Kay and L Brown respectively.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members and other Interested Parties

There were no items reported from co-opted members and other interested parties.

6 Highways Asset Management - Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on highways asset management service delivery. Strategic Highways Manager, Paul Anderson, was welcomed to the meeting to deliver a presentation (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Introducing the presentation, the Strategic Highways Manager highlighted the highway network is the Council's highest value asset. He explained that the Highways Act 1980 sets out the duties for local highway authorities in respect of highway maintenance and whilst the Act does not specify the level of maintenance, the Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highway Infrastructure 2018 provides a framework for the management of highway assets.

The Committee received information on the highway inventory and the types of maintenance carried out under the categories of reactive, routine and programmed maintenance. The Highway Maintenance Plan sets out service levels for safety, inspections, condition surveys and reactive and routine maintenance. Condition surveys are undertaken to identify deficiencies and to assist in determining programmed maintenance. Details were also provided of the various surveys, including visual inspections, footway network surveys and machine surveys.

Referring to the asset condition, the Committee noted that Durham's classified road network is performing better than the national average however the unclassified network remains a priority and additional funding is being used to improve its condition. The condition of the bridge stock is in line with national targets.

The process for identifying capital programme works was outlined, which takes into consideration accident blackspots, the results of condition surveys and feedback gathered from the public and elected members, to identify priority schemes. A detailed breakdown of the proportion of the budget allocated to the various types of highway work and structures was included in the presentation.

The Committee noted that a team of 16 Highways Inspectors undertake safety inspections throughout the county which include 1,126 statutory inspections per year, identifying approximately 55-65,000 defects. Information was provided on how the frequency of repairs is determined by analysing factors such as footfall and traffic type, with each defect being allocated a repair category, in accordance with the Highway Inspection Manual. Within the previous year, 93% of all safety defects were repaired within timescales and this robust maintenance and inspection process resulted in a repudiation rate of 94% in respect of 3rd party claims. The Strategic Highways Manager drew attention to category 2.2 defects, which require repair within 3 months, noting that performance over the past year was slightly below target, however, performance in relation to the more serious category defects had exceeded targets.

The Strategic Highways Manager explained that the development of artificial intelligence is being used in defect identification and condition monitoring which has the potential to reduce the number of site visits and provide better quality evidence to defend claims. The Committee also received information on how the Council continues to introduce initiatives to reduce carbon emissions such as the development of new road surfacing techniques which incorporate plastic and rubber crumb.

With regard to highway structures, the Committee noted that the figure for the current maintenance backlog was higher than that stated in the presentation, and stood at approximately £50million, with a current budget of approximately £4.8million.

Concluding the presentation, the Strategic Highways Manager outlined the main challenges for the service included reduced budget allocation, the impact of the global economy which had caused costs to soar, skills shortages and the government's digital rollout initiative. The Strategic Highways Manager updated the Committee that, since the presentation was prepared, the number of digital providers in the county had increased to 8 and information received from just one of the providers was that they expected to work in 12 towns and villages and provide 45,000 connections. The Committee heard that the Highway Network Team works alongside digital broadband suppliers to ensure safety, to protect structures and minimise disruption. Due to the scale of the broadband installation works, a decision had been taken to postpone capital footway replacement schemes for this financial year, with a view to reinstating the schemes when the installation programme is complete. The Strategic Highways Manager explained that whilst utility companies must apply for permits, the digital rollout is a government initiative and broadband suppliers are granted blanket permits, with far fewer restrictions than other utility companies.

The Chair thanked the officer for the detailed report and invited comments and questions from the Committee.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd raised the issue of faded road signs and he asked for further information on the range of street furniture maintained by Durham County Council. The Strategic Highways Manager responded that approximately 95% of street furniture is maintained by the Council, including pedestrian guard rails, fences, bollards and some planters, with litter bins being maintained by the Clean and Green team. He clarified that maintenance of street signs is not within the remit of the service and these matters would therefore be referred to Traffic colleagues who repair damaged signs, whilst the Clean and Green team deal with signs which require cleaning.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd then referred to the issuing of permits for trenching across roads and the Strategic Highways Manager explained that the Highway Network Team approve permits and undertake spot-checks. Where work is found to be below standard, the number of spot-checks may be increased. If, during the course of their work, the Highway Inspection Team identify a trench that is failing, they may identify it under the Street Manager system and issue a report to the utility company, for a repair to be carried out. With respect to complaints regarding noisy ironwork, repairs are undertaken if the defect is identified to be a safety defect.

Councillor Stubbs asked for clarification in relation to the process for the inspection of resurfacing works on unclassified roads and he asked if a minimum standard of work is required as he had observed varying standards of work.

The Strategic Highways Manager explained the different types of surface dressing and he explained that the Council designs the type of dressing to be used. On occasions, contactors may query the design and they may advise that an alternative dressing should be used. The Council supervises the work on site and loose chippings must be swept until the Council is satisfied that no further sweeping is necessary. When a surface dressing fails, the repair is not carried out straight away as the process relies upon warm, dry weather to be successful and for this reason work is usually carried out during the summer months. The Strategic Highways Manager invited Councillor Stubbs to email him with further information, if he wished to discuss a particular site.

Councillor Ormerod asked for further information on how artificial intelligence is being used. The Strategic Highways Manager stated that scanner surveys are limited and trials show that artificial intelligence provides more accurate information and defect detection rates, in addition to real-time information. It also provides better quality evidence to defend claims as well as financial savings and carbon reduction, in terms of fewer site visits being required.

In response to a comment from Councillor Robson regarding the prevalence of weeds growing through surface treatments on footpaths, the Strategic Highways Manager highlighted that footpath surface treatment can prolong the life of a footway by 5-7 years and he explained that safer weed treatments are now used which are weaker in strength to those used in previous years, making weeds more prevalent.

Councillor Robson then referred to trenches which are installed for electric vehicle charging cables and he asked whether this work would impact the service. The Strategic Highways Manager clarified that this initiative is managed by Durham County Council and the channels for this purpose are unobtrusive and are at a shallow depth, which minimises the impact on utility companies.

Councillor Adam raised concerns with regard to contractors and the standard of surface dressing on footways and he asked how the Council reports these problems to contractors to ensure they are aware of the issues. He echoed the comments of other members regarding the number of weeds and he had observed that this seemed to occur when footpaths were not sufficiently cleared back, prior to the surface treatment being applied. The Strategic Highways Manager requested that these issues be reported to the service as it is the responsibility of the Council's Contract Supervisor to ensure the works are carried out to the required standard.

Councillor Adam then referred to the highway maintenance backlog of £175million which could take approximately 20 years to address and he asked how this would be funded. The Strategic Highways Manager spoke of the importance of using innovation to introduce more durable products to increase the longevity of repairs and he stressed the importance of ensuring that the right treatment is applied at the right time.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

7 Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP) – Update

The Committee considered the Street Lighting Energy Reduction (SLERP) Project update report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Head of Highways, Mark Readman, was welcomed to the meeting to deliver the presentation. Background information was provided on the development of the invest-to-save project to convert high energy lanterns to low energy LED lanterns in order to reduce carbon emissions, energy consumption and costs. The Committee noted the project is the largest single contributor to the Council's reduction in carbon emissions to date.

In addition to energy and carbon reduction, the Committee noted the project delivers a number of benefits which include better quality white light, fewer road traffic accidents and reduced maintenance costs, saving an average of £1.2million per year.

The Head of Highways highlighted that a number of factors are taken into consideration when converting existing lighting installations to LEDs which include the location of the column, road width, road speed and conversion costs.

Information was provided that SLERP 1 had delivered 16.9 million kwh of energy reduction and the Head of Highways illustrated the scale by explaining that a typical house will use 10,000 kwh per year. In respect of carbon savings, these were 8,413 tonnes with a typical house using 8.1 tonnes per year. During this phase 20,000 additional lights were converted, due to reduced conversion costs, as the project progressed.

SLERP 2 progressed to lanterns which were more difficult to convert which led to the project being extended for six months. This phase was completed at an underspend of £2.9million due to technological advances and the reducing cost of lanterns. The underspend has been used to fund SLERP 3 which commenced in September 2023, aiming to convert 1,900 street lights by March 2025.

The target is ambitious as many of the conversions will be more complex and costly than those in the previous phases and column replacement may be required.

The Committee heard that by the completion of the project, 3,500 'out of scope' lanterns will remain outstanding and the plan is to incorporate these lanterns within the traditional column replacement programme.

Councillor Adam commented that some town and parish councils had funded the continuance of lighting in their areas and he asked what the situation would be if those councils, due to lack of funds, made a decision not to fund this lighting in the future. The Head of Highways replied that these would not be included in SLERP 3. He informed the Committee that a full review of the service level agreements will be undertaken and town and parish councils will be involved in the process.

Councillor Reed gave her view that lighting had been removed in some areas where she felt it was required and she asked what criteria was used when decisions were originally taken to remove lighting. She added that pedestrians should be able to walk safely during hours of darkness and shared her concerns that lack of lighting may be leading to an increase in accidents. Councillor Reed also highlighted that not all towns and villages benefit from having a town or parish council to assist with funding. The Head of Highways replied that a full risk assessment and consultation took place and the number of lights which were originally planned for removal was substantially reduced. He acknowledged that members had provided some direct funding to reinstall lights in some areas and highlighted that he was keen to work with members should they want to provide direct funding. Councillor Reed said she would welcome further investment and the Head of Highways expressed his willingness to work with members to ensure lighting is safe and connected communities. Councillor Reed requested that should any additional funding become available, that the service look at reinstating lighting columns in areas where they had been removed.

With reference to a question from the Chair as to whether motion sensor lighting could be used as an alternative to removing lighting, the Head of Highways explained that the use of motion sensor lighting had been investigated however technical issues were found. Jonathon Hughes, Street Lighting Engineer, explained that this would be classed as part night-lighting and it is possible that this could be a policy development in the future.

Councillor Ormerod referred to street lighting columns and asked whether the Council has scope to alter the design of street lighting columns to provide a more traditional appearance. The Head of Highways pointed out that heritage lanterns are costly, however, in some conservation areas they are a requirement in order that lighting is in-keeping with the area. He added that columns can be improved with embellishments which is a more cost-effective method of providing the appearance of a heritage column.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd congratulated the team on the successful delivery of the programme to date. He referred to the original reluctance to accept the proposals and he hoped the results had allayed concerns. Councillor Sutton-Lloyd raised the issue of the number of day-burners he had observed. The Street Lighting Engineer explained in the early stages, day-burners were caused by faulty microchips however faulty batches had been reported to manufacturers, therefore, incidents of day-burners should continue to reduce in the future. The Head of Highways urged members to continue to report day-burners through the CRM system.

Councillor Stubbs commented on how well the project had been delivered and he asked what the plan was, on completion of the project, in terms of the team involved and whether they could share their good practice for future capital projects.

Resolved:

- a) That the content of the report and presentation be noted
- b) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an end of project update report on completion of the scheme in 2025.

8 Quarter Four Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 and Quarter One Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24

The Committee considered joint reports of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change on the revenue and capital outturn for the final quarter of 2022/23 and the forecast revenue and capital outturn for the first quarter of 2023/24 (for copies of reports see file of minutes).

Presenting the quarter four revenue and capital outturn for 2022/23, the Finance Manager, Phil Curran, outlined the outturn position for the service area, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget as at 31 March 2023. The reasons for under and overspending against the relevant budget heads were provided.

The Finance Manager then presented the forecast of revenue and capital outturn for the first quarter of 2023/24, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget, based on the position to the end of 30 June 2023. The Finance Manager also provided information on under and overspending against the relevant budget heads.

Resolved:

That the Quarter Four Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2022/23 and the Quarter One Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2023/24 be noted.

9 Quarter One 2023/24 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive Officer which detailed performance during the first quarter of 2023/24 (April to June 2023) (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Introducing the report, Tom Gorman, Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, highlighted that the new easy-read format allows greater clarity, includes a new indicator set and reintroduces data dashboards, to provide more focus on trends and the direction of travel.

In presenting the report, the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager drew members' attention to the following key headlines.

- The visitor economy in County Durham has contributed more than £1billion to the overall local economy, for the first time.
- Library active borrowers and digital borrowers performed above target.
- Average occupancy levels and yield for theatres were below target and initiatives are being trialled to boost sales.
- Initiatives have been engaged to raise staff awareness in respect of reducing carbon emissions within the Council's operations.
- Issues experienced at the energy from waste facility which were reported at the previous meeting had been resolved and the rates of waste diverted from landfill are above target.
- 34% of properties covered by the selective licensing scheme are now licenced or have had legal proceedings instigated against them.
- The contamination campaign continues and the number of contamination notices issued had increased. The latest contamination rate, which relates to the period before activity was escalated, showed a slight decrease in the quarterly rate.
- Journeys on the Park and Ride service remain lower than pre-COVID levels due to a number of factors including changes in working behaviours. Changes are being implemented to improve the service at Belmont and a scheme is being progressed to extend Sniperley, in anticipation of increased demand from the future development.
- Leisure centre memberships were below target and there had been a higher than expected number of cancelled memberships. The leisure transformation programme continued to deliver new facilities, however this had resulted in a temporary dip in visits.
- The discount for early payment of fly-tipping fines was removed in July. Following the peak during the pandemic, incidents of fly-tipping had reduced and remain at a historic low.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager for the report and asked the Committee for their views on the new reporting format. Members complimented the accessibility of the new format, adding that the visuals enable the reader to pin-point areas of interest and identify trends.

The Chair then invited comments and questions on the report.

Councillor Stubbs referred to the visitor economy and he asked if increased visitor numbers had resulted in increased traffic in the city centre. He also pointed out that bus patronage remains lower than pre-Covid levels which led him to question whether the £2 bus fare cap was having the desired effect to encourage bus patronage. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager clarified that the visitor economy figures were county-wide figures, not merely Durham city and that the spend may be generated by visitors staying in the county for a longer period, rather than being generated from an increase in the number of visitors. He added that it was too early to assess the full impact of the bus fare cap.

Councillor Adam was pleased to see that the issues experienced at the energy from waste facility had been resolved and the amount of waste diverted to landfill had reduced. He expressed concern that the contamination campaign had not made a significant impact and he said he would like to see other initiatives being introduced, for example the possibility of imposing heavier fines. He asked whether there was data available from other local authorities as to what action they were taking and he requested clarification regarding the recalculating of the 12 month rolling figure which was mentioned in paragraph 42 of the report. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager responded that he was unable to comment on the current position with regard to the possibility of imposing fines. In relation to measures used by other local authorities and the resulting impacts, he would contact the relevant service for information on initiatives, for the information to be shared with members.

In response to a question from Councillor Robson as to what action is being taken in respect of those properties which remain unlicensed under the selective licensing scheme, the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager confirmed that legal action is taken against those landlords who fail to comply. Diane Close, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, informed members of the arrangements for an informal information session on selective licensing to be held on the 30 October, which will provide more detailed information.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd expressed concern that the number of landlords not registered remains high and he queried whether the scheme was reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager confirmed that levels of anti-social behaviour were lower in selective licensing areas of the county.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd highlighted that up-to-date figures are essential and he asked when the most up-to-date data relating to carbon emissions would be available. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager clarified that figures for carbon emissions from Durham County are provided by the government and those figures are expected in quarter three, whilst the Council's carbon emission figures in relation to Durham County Council's operations are expected in quarter two.

Concluding the discussion, Councillor Sutton-Lloyd referred to members' comments regarding contamination of recyclates and he expressed the view that there is still work to do with regard to educating the public as the variety of packaging and different labelling has led to more confusion for consumers as to whether packaging is recyclable.

Resolved:

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Noted the overall strong position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.
- b) Noted and commented on the changes and improvements to the new format performance report which will be used exclusively from quarter two 2023/24.

10 Minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Partnership Executive Board Meeting held on 20 June 2023

The Chair presented the minutes of the Environment and Climate Change Partnership Board Meeting held on 20 June 2023, for information.

11 Such other business

The Chair reminded the Committee that arrangements have been made for a Special Joint meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 3 November, to consider the Destination Management Plan for County Durham. The meeting will be followed by a workshop, at 11.00am, for all Overview and Scrutiny members to consider the promotion of the tourism offer in County Durham. All members of the Committee were urged to attend, if at all possible.

**Environment & Sustainable
Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

24 November 2023

**Local Nature Recovery
Strategy Update**



**Report of Alan Patrickson Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee an update on the progress of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Executive summary

- 2 Durham County Council is the responsible authority tasked with production of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 3 DEFRA provided Regulations and Guidance around the LNRS in March 2023 and work to date has concentrated engaging with the Local Records Centre, setting up Regional Steering Groups and establishing lines of communication and contacts with Government Agencies Natural England, Environment Agency, and Forestry Commission and developing the engagement and consultation process.

Recommendations

- 4 That the Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

Background

- 5 Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits. The requirement for there to be Local Nature Recovery Strategies, what they are and how they should generally work has been established by the Environment Act 2021.

- 6 Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a way of prioritising nature's needs on a more local and focused level. The strategy will become a blueprint for the recovery of nature, showing how and where we can support things like wildflower grasslands, woodlands, wetlands, and new hedgerows.

Alongside nature recovery the LNRS will also help by guiding

- Planning and development: It will guide how and where we plan for new development and direct developers towards the best places to deliver their Biodiversity Net Gain requirements (BNG)
 - Agri-environment funding: It will help shape the local roll out of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme
 - Nature-based solutions: It will identify key locations for nature-based solutions for climate change.
 - Health and Well-being. It will promote the development of accessible nature-rich spaces.
 - Investment: It will help to attract and guide future investment for nature recovery in County Durham
- 7 The LNRS is comprised of a habitat map (that defines the existing resource and where resources should be directed to deliver nature conservation) alongside a Statement of Priorities (that identifies the priority habitats and species in County Durham with associated targets and actions).
 - 8 The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed 48 responsible authorities (RA) to lead on preparing a local nature recovery strategy for their area. Together these 48 strategy areas cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps.
 - 9 Durham County Council is the responsible authority tasked by DEFRA to produce the LNRS.
 - 10 The Ecological Emergency Workstream of the Environment & Climate Change Partnership has as its current priority to assist in the development of the LNRS.
 - 11 Ring-fenced funding has been received from DEFRA for the financial year 2023/24. This funding has been earmarked to facilitate the development of the habitat map and deliver engagement within schools.

- 12 DEFRA are still producing guidance and information on links between LNRSs and other policies and delivery mechanisms. Further guidance on the linkage with Environmental Land Management (ELM) funding to farmers and landowner is amongst the guidance that is still outstanding.
- 13 A Regional Steering Group has been established that includes representatives from the 4 regional LNRSs, the relevant Government agencies, the Wildlife Trusts, and supporting authorities.
- 14 A Regional Stakeholder Sub-Group has been established to determine the potential benefits of a regional approach to engagement and consultation for specific consultees. Those consultees with a regional mandate may benefit from a more co-ordinated approach.
- 15 The role of this Regional Steering Group is to share information and learning and ensure that the 4 LNRSs are cognisant of each other and cross boundary opportunities for nature conservation are identified and incorporated in the LNRS.
- 16 A North East and Yorkshire LNRS Steering Group has been established with a similar remit and role to the Regional Steering Group.
- 17 Monthly meetings have been established with Natural England to monitor progress against DEFRA milestones. DEFRA have produced a LNRS Progress Tracker and Action Log to track the progress of responsible authorities (RAs) against several performance indicators and indicative milestones as they prepare their LNRSs.
- 18 To date Durham County Council has met the targets within the Progress Tracker and Action Log.
- 19 Most of the work on the LNRS to date has focused on developing an approach to engagement and consultation.
- 20 The consultation will be a two-stage process with the first stage being used to inform the writing of the LNRS and a final consultation on a draft version.
- 21 The first stage of consultation will identify locations that are currently valued for nature and locations consultees believe could be improved for nature. The consultation will also seek to find out what broad groups of habitats and species consultees believe should be prioritised within the LNRS. This information will shape the draft LNRS.
- 22 A webpage is being developed as part of the Durham County Council website that will hold background information on the LNRS, provide a mechanism to deliver updates on progress and links to consultations.

- 23 The Council's Consultations Team and GIS Teams are helping to develop the consultation in conjunction with members of the Ecological Emergency Board.
- 24 The Ecological Emergency Board has produced a draft list of consultees that is due to be refined after a meeting of the Regional Steering Group.
- 25 This consultees list identifies key organisations and individuals that should be made aware of the LNRS and engaged with the process. The list of consultees ranges from Parish Councils and community groups through to business interests, developers, farmers, and conservation organisations.
- 26 It is appreciated that different consultees may require different approaches to engagement and consultation.
- 27 Meetings have been held with The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and National Farmers Union (NFU) to discuss how best to approach the farming community and a workshop is planned with land agents to further inform the process.
- 28 The CLA and NFU have agreed that background information on the LNRS and a link to the Consultations webpage and LNRS webpage will be sent out to individuals on their database.
- 29 The Principal Ecologist attended the CLA Committee Meeting in October along with a representative of the North of Tyne LNRS to discuss the LNRS and how best to engage with the CLA and their members.
- 30 Identification of other farming clusters and organisations with an ability to reach farmers and landowners is on-going. An example is the Wear Rivers Trust who have offered to send out information and consultation links to their contacts in the farming industry.
- 31 Conservation organisations and individuals with specialist knowledge are to be engaged through direct involvement with writing the statement of priorities.
- 32 A schools engagement process is being developed alongside Children and Young Peoples Services and OASES. The current thinking is to have a broad coverage across the Area Action Partnerships with sessions targeting pupils across primary, special, and secondary schools. Activities will inspire pupils and draw out their understanding and experiences of nature in County Durham and their preferences for habitat improvements and connect with the latest nature related programmes from the Department for Education. Schools' engagement is planned for Spring 2024.

- 33 Initial, informal, conversations have been held with a housing developer around engagement and consultation with developers. These discussions will help inform our approach to engagement and consultation with this sector.
- 34 Initial, informal, conversations have been held with an ecological consultancy around engagement and consultation with ecological consultancies working in County Durham. These discussions will help inform our approach to engagement and consultation with this sector.
- 35 All residents of County Durham will be consulted on at both stages. The consultation and the LNRS website will be promoted via social media, County Council website, Durham County News magazine and other appropriate outlets.
- 36 The approach to consultation is still being refined in conjunction with Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, and other responsible authorities.
- 37 Although most effort is currently directed towards consultation and engagement, there is other work around the mapping and statement of priorities taking place.
- 38 The 4 LNRSs in the North East have agreed that the Environmental Records Information Centre for the North East of England (ERIC) is best placed to deliver the local habitat map. ERIC have direct access to a substantial wildlife dataset and were involved with developing the habitat map for the Pilot LNRS in Northumberland in 2021. Using ERIC to deliver the mapping will help to ensure that the regional LNRSs can be read across boundaries and linkages across local areas can be easily identified.
- 39 Funding for ERIC to recruit additional staff and deliver the habitat map will come from DEFRA funding. The details of the funding requirement are to be confirmed.
- 40 ERIC and the Council's Ecology Team have established a working group and have begun to develop a mapping protocol that will inform future work on the habitat map.
- 41 Preparatory work has begun on the list of priority habitats and species for County Durham. The initial list will be based upon the list of priority habitats and species in England (under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act) and the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. The list will be refined through consultation.
- 42 Proposals to use sub-groups to help deliver the statement of priorities is currently being investigated. The proposal is to engage with specialist

individuals or organisations to lead sub-groups tasked with developing the actions and targets for priority species and habitats. For example, the Wear Rivers Trust could lead a sub-group to define the actions and targets around Rivers and Streams.

- 43 The Council has declared an Ecological Emergency and developed an Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP). Although the EEAP concentrates on Council actions it will need to be aware of the developing LNRS, this is being achieved through the Ecological Emergency Delivery Plan Group which has a representative from the Ecology team leading on the LNRS attending.

Conclusion

- 44 Regional co-ordination is in place and the 4 LNRSs continue to work together to ensure regional cohesion.
- 45 The development of the LNRS continues to make steady progress, in line with DEFRA's timescales and expectations. Most efforts being currently directed towards developing the engagement and consultation strategy.

Background papers

- None

Authors

Stuart Priestley (Principal Ecologist)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The council is legally obliged to deliver the LNRS.

Finance

None forecast at this stage, DEFRA funding has been provided to facilitate the LNRS.

Consultation

Not applicable at this stage

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Staffing resources have been increased partly to address the LNRS and other increases in workload arising from the Environment Act. No further staffing resources are expected at this stage.

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable

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**Environment & Sustainable
Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

24 November 2023

**Ecological Emergency
Update**



**Report of the Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of
Neighbourhoods and Climate Change**

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) with a progress update regarding the Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP).

Executive Summary

2. Responding to the pace of decline in habitat and species diversity, the committee recommended to cabinet that a countywide ecological emergency be declared, which was consequently ratified on 6th April 2022. Officers were tasked to take this forward by means of an Ecological Emergency Action Plan (referred here on as EEAP) to identify how council services should respond to the issue. Its purpose is to review and revise the management of council land assets and put in place activities to promote and achieve best ecological practice.
3. In December 2022 Cabinet received an initial version of the EEAP, which was subsequently considered by the ESCOSC in April this year. In receiving the report, the committee requested that regular updates on the plan's progress be provided to enable them to consider and review progress against key actions. This report presents a first overview of progress per activity to date. A copy of the latest EEAP action log is attached as Appendix 2.

Recommendations

4. That Members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- i. Receive an overview of progress to date of the Ecological Emergency Response Action Plan outlined in the report to review its progress and,
- ii. Agree that a further progress update is presented to a future meeting of the committee as part of the 2024/25 work programme.

Background

5. At its meeting on 14 December 2022, Cabinet received an initial EEAP outlining council activity in response to its declaration of an ecological emergency. The report was referred to the ESCOSC in April 2022, who agreed to regularly monitor progress in relation to the plan's future development and delivery; commencing with a six month update, as fulfilled by this report.

Scope of the Plan

6. Producing the EEAP commenced by officers conducting a fully detailed cross service review of key services who directly impact or influence the council's interests in the natural environment. This has led to the identification of areas for action through a cross-service plan which identifies service leads, resource implications and monitors ongoing progress. Delivery is reviewed and updated at quarterly meetings. The latest EEAP action log is attached as Appendix 2.
7. In line with members wishes, activities are also identified that recognise opportunities for raising awareness about biodiversity decline through wider promotional of educational activity that the council can lead to tackle this issue with its partners and the community.
8. Although the council is promoting its environmental activity widely, the main focus of the EEAP is however on key areas of its own activities that can deliver a response to the declaration. A wider ecological strategy, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), is being produced by the council through the County Durham Partnership's Environment & Climate Change board.
9. The LNRS is to be a strategic document which aims to drive nature-based environmental action and investment across the county. In line with statutory requirements, the council is the 'responsible authority' for its production, and so the EEAP is being developed whilst being cognisant of the aims and objectives of the LNRS throughout its production over the next two years. A report on progress regarding the LNRS which includes reference to the impact of the councils' own activities as set out in the EEAP is to be considered as a separate item on the meeting agenda.

10. The council must consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England, which is now formalised and strengthened as a 'biodiversity duty' by the Environment Act 2021. Consequently, the council is required to report against this duty, and the EEAP will form the basis for this by specifying what it considers it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity through the agreement of objectives, policies, and delivery mechanisms.
11. The EEAP is being developed within certain parameters; notably that Cabinet deemed that delivery of the plan would not be incumbent on new resources at this stage. Therefore the emphasis is on achieving improvements by doing things differently wherever possible, and the plan is focussed on 26 actions that can be delivered from within current resources. The document is based on three key themes under which outputs are being delivered: 'Land Management', 'Education, Awareness and Communication', 'Policies and Strategies'.

Key Themes

12. **In relation to land management**, six key areas of practical action are identified, which are listed below, accompanied by a brief overview of respective progress against each to date:
 - i. Undertaking condition assessments of designated sites such as Local Wildlife Sites within the estate.*
13. We have identified 20 sites within the Countryside Estate for these to date, located previous citations and will look to carry out condition assessments against all 20 over the next few years.
 - ii. Instigating appropriate long-term management to restore designated sites to good condition when resources are made available.*
14. We have started the process in relation to the above and are on track to complete 2 assessments by end of November '23.
 - iii. Running trials on reduced cutting regimes on amenity grassland with a view to reducing cutting and encouraging a greater floral diversity on sites where ceasing management or a single annual cut is not a viable option.*
15. We have commenced consultations for progressing 28 sites whilst considering alternative locations including former school sites. Implementation has progressed for 8 sites with no adverse public response noted to date (equivalent to 64 acres planted). These are to be promoted to assist in rolling-out the programme.

- iv. Running trials on non-herbicide use in conjunction with Councillors who have expressed an interest in this subject.*
16. Six sites were being considered but four have been confirmed to date. The aim is to double this number into next season. A councillor's briefing note is being prepared, however very few complaints have been noted to date.
- v. Developing a strategic document to define the council's approach towards biodiversity interventions on its public open space and outline key process to ensure its roll out.*
17. Work has started on this document with main headlines in place, working up detail for a draft version to be completed by November, for circulation to the EEAP officer working group. The standardised approach will be accompanied by information and awareness raising such as site signage when biodiversity interventions are commencing on public open space.
- vi. Consolidating and building on current activity to ensure Council woodlands assets are managed and maintained through current project development with a view to robust legacy and renewal provisions being in place following existing projects.*
18. Legacy provisions are being drawn up for the Durham Woodland Revival woodland planting programme which ends in April 2024, in line with National Lottery funding obligations. Woodland management plans are being put in place for the long-term management and maintenance of sites, subject to Forestry Commission agreement and support.
19. **In relation to the theme of education, awareness and communication**, four key areas of delivery are highlighted as listed below, and accompanied by a brief overview of progress to date against each:
- i. Committing to the continuous development and engagement with partners and stakeholders in the delivery of landscape scale programmes.*
20. All key landscape scale schemes are incumbent on third party landowner commitments. A green corridor pilot project centred on Crook Hall house and gardens is underway with the National Trust and now embarking on consulting with other landowners to seek their buy-in to the project. A partnership agreement with the Trust is being finalised to give clarity on land holding opportunities.

21. We are fully engaged in landscape legacy provisions. The Seascapes programme ends in autumn 2024 and its board is now engaged in evaluation and legacy provisions whilst the Heritage Coast partnership is bidding into the Lottery's Species Survival Fund to enable grassland habitat restoration from Blackhall to Noses Point. The River Skerne wetlands landscape recovery is a key outcome of Brightwater project and central to legacy provisions in process for its wrap-up in Mar 2024.
 - ii. *Engaging with partners, especially Natural England, to assist in developing a strategic solution for Nutrient Neutrality.*
22. Launched in October, Natural England are delivering a habitat mitigation scheme (based on land use change / selling credits to developers) in partnership with Durham Wildlife Trust. The Council's role in delivering mitigation measures for both council and private developments is being determined by CPAL.
 - iii. *Introducing and promoting the Ecological Emergency within the CERP Marketing Plan under the theme Nature, Adaptation and Land.*
23. Future opportunities for linkages between the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP) and nature recovery programmes and sites are being explored, including through the development of the LNRS.
 - iv. *Determining the extent to which relevant articles relating to the Ecological Emergency can be hosted on the Climate Change website.*
24. Marketing and comms of the ecological emergency and the evolving response plan are being put forward for inclusion in the marketing plan for the CERP, feeding into the current development of the website and promoting it as part of the events programme scheduled for March 2024.
25. **In relation to the theme of policies and strategies**, four key areas of action are identified from the plan as listed below, accompanied by a respective overview of progress against each to date:
 - i. *Developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the County Durham Partnership*
26. The compilation and mapping of a robust evidence base on natural assets is being progressed alongside provisions for wide stakeholder and public consultation including a consultation plan and the development of a dedicated website hosted by the council. Engagement with schools is also a priority area.

27. The pursuit of regional links across all neighbouring authority LNRS areas is under way. Meetings between the 4 NE LNRS groupings have been agreed and continue to take place, including regular liaison with the government's lead body, Natural England.

ii. Producing a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), concentrating on delivery of biodiversity within urban and industrial developments.

28. A postponement on issuing of regulations for the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements until January 2024 means that the timescales for producing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on this are being deferred from a planned Cabinet approval for February 2024 to a date to be determined.

iii. Producing procurement systems in relation to an Ecological Emergency using the model employed by the Climate Emergency

29 Some scoping work is underway in aligning the recognition and measurement of ecological impacts to existing social impact scoring of procurement contracts (TOMS) This is in need of more progress to take forward.

iv. Examining the potential to include ecological impact implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and Council reports.

30. This is yet to be progressed with officers involved in the constitution working group, drawing on the processes employed to measure climate impacts of report decisions as established through the CERP. It would necessitate the introduction of corporate training and learning programmes.

Conclusion

31. The report identifies how the initial activities listed in the EEAP are being taken forward in key areas of County Council service who can lead in delivery of a response to the declared ecological emergency, and who can influence the state of our environment. The report shows where and how new ecologically based practices are being adopted out with new dedicated resource. This will continue to evolve as more programmes come on stream, and further updates will follow.

Background papers

- [Ecological Emergency: Outline Strategy and Action Plan Cabinet 14 December 2022](#)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Consultation is taking place throughout plan development, aligned to internal comms plans and community engagement activity.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

All EEAP activity is strongly aligned to tackling climate change, primarily through mitigation provisions but also through adapting to the adverse effects of climate change.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

All procurement provisions are being reviewed to include ecological impacts within contract assessment processes.

Appendix 2: EEAP Action Log 09.10.23 attached under separate cover

Meeting Ecological Emergency Action Plan Review - Action Log Updated from Corporate Meeting.
Date 9th October 2023.
Purpose To log progress, decisions and issues against EEAP actions; Document to be updated after each meeting

Action and theme area: [Education and Awareness theme](#) . [Policies and Strategies theme](#) . [Land Management theme](#)

9th October 2023						
	Issue / Decision / Action required	Responsibility	Date Raised	Due Date	Action taken	Status
1	Commit to the continuous development and engagement with partners and stakeholders in the delivery of landscape scale programmes.	Environmental Services; Environment & Design	03/04/23	ongoing	Reaching out to other landowners and consulting with National Trust. Currently signing of Partnership Agreement to give clarity of roles and relationships including land holding opportunities. Seascapes programme ending autumn '24 and board are now engaged in evaluation and legacy provisions Heritage Coast has passed 1st stage of bid to NLHF Species Survival Fund – for restoration of grassland habitats from Blackhall to Noses Point Skerne wetlands landscape recovery is a key outcome of Brightwater project and central to legacy provisions in process of wrap up in Mar '24.	Progressing
2	Development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the County Durham Partnership	Environmental Services; Ecology	03/04/23	on-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Webpage agreed and to be host by DCC. Meeting with web team arranged to discuss the content and layout •Draft consultation process has been produced, this is the subject of on-going discussion. •DCC Consultation and GIS Teams fully engaged with the development of the consultation process •Regional Meetings between the 4 NE LNRS groupings have been agreed and continue to take place •Regular update meetings with Natural England are being undertaken •ERIC has agreed to produce the LNRS mapping •Working with CYPS and OASES to deliver schools engagement 	Progressing
3	Produce a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), concentrating on delivery of biodiversity within urban and industrial developments.	Environmental Services; Ecology & Planning and Housing; Spatial Policy	03/04/23	01-Sep-23	As the Government has now postponed the implementation of the requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain until January 2024, and the upcoming regulations and guidance are yet to be published, the timescales for the SPD will have to move back from the February 2024 Cabinet date that is currently in the forward plan.	Progressing
4a	Produce Contributions SPD, which clarifies the process and options available to developers to deliver biodiversity net gains.	As above	03/04/23	01-Jul-23	Consulting on 2nd draft currently. Subject to comments – if minor changes only adoption June/July 23. finalising now - looking for apotion next month.	Progressing
4b	Investigate a model that enables developer contributions for BNG to be delivered, where appropriate, on currently available Council land.	Environmental Services; Ecology & CPaL; Asset Strategy	03/04/23	01-Mar-24	SP working with Countryside (DC), sites been identified, progress to baseline surveys over the summer, ideally have site assessed by end of Nov 23 when BNG becomes mandatory Engagement with CPAL continues. SP been various meetings with DWT for on site delivery and also CPAL and other local/regional authorities. Also investigating legal agreements; how we manage it etc.	Completed
5	Examine the need to develop or change systems and policies so that the system for identifying and allocating land for biodiversity purposes is optimised.	CPaL ; Asset Strategy	03/04/23		Links to Action 4b. Setting up sub group to consider and bring forward landuse change - now need to see C Bradley for links to plan policy - REG etc.	Completed
6	(Procurement) Produce systems in relation to an Ecological Emergency using the model employed by the Climate Emergency.	Resources; Procurement	ongoing	on-going	System development completed. System will require monitoring to ensure it is fit for purpose. Refer to Procurement: R. Carroll.	Completed
7	Examine the potential to include ecological impact implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and Council reports.	Resources; Democratic Services	03/04/23	01/09/2023??	SB to refer to Michael Turnbull, review timeline - align to constitution working group for introduction to training and learning programme. Utilise approach adopted for CERP training. SB to chase M Turnbull, Dem Servs, for an update.	Progressing
8	Produce a strategy document to define the approach to biodiversity interventions on public open spaces managed by Clean & Green and identify constraints to delivery as the programme continues to be rolled out across the county.	Environmental Services; Ecology & Technical Services	20/09/23	01-Jun-23	Work has started, with main headlines are in place. Now working on the detail, aiming for a draft version by December - almost completed; It will be circulated to this group as soon as its ready. GK proposing list of back-up sites to put forward when going through to Members for endorsement. Health and wellbeing benefits message needs to be included, as well as target setting for site delivery. Regular meetings scheduled between GK , SP, and other Ecology leads.	Progressing

	Issue / Decision / Action required	Responsibility	Date Raised	Due Date	Action taken	Status
10a	Engage with partners, especially Natural England, to assist in developing a strategic solution for Nutrient Neutrality.	Housing and Development; Spatial Policy	20/09/23	ongoing	Natural England are delivering a mitigation scheme (based on land use change / selling credits to developers) in partnership with Durham Wildlife Trust. Round 3 of NE's credit bidding round was launched on the 2nd October 2023.	Completed
10b	Investigate possibilities of delivering a strategic mitigation approach to NN on DCC land	CPaL and Spatial Policy			The role of DCC in delivering mitigation for either our own development or private development is yet to be determined by CPAL but being considered alongside delivery of BNG on DCC land as per action 4b.	Progressing
11a	Undertake condition assessments of designated sites (i.e., Local Wildlife Sites) within the estate.	Environmental Services; Countryside Service	20/09/23	Ongoing	Countryside team leading on identification of 20 sites within the Countryside Estate, located previous citations and will look to carry out condition assessments against all 20 over the next few years.	Progressing
11b	Instigate appropriate long-term management to restore designated sites to good condition when resources are made available	Environmental Services; Countryside Service	20/09/23	Ongoing	We have started the process in relation to the above item and are on track to complete 2 assessments by end of Oct.	Progressing
12a	Run trials on reduced cutting regimes on amenity grassland with a view to reducing cutting and encouraging a greater floral diversity on sites where ceasing management or a single annual cut is not a viable option.	Environmental Services; Clean & Green Service	20/09/23	ongoing	Consultation on 28 sites. Currently liaising with ward members, including further alternative sites. Approx 20/28 sites may progress. Could expand to former school sites. 8 sites trialled to seek initial public responses and none received. Photos of the 8 sites to be collated to show they are working. 64 acres achieved this year.	Progressing

Ecological Emergency Update

24th November 2023



Context

- Decline in habitat and species diversity
- Cabinet declares countywide ecological emergency; 6th April 2022.
- Ecological Emergency Action Plan identifies how council services to respond to the issue.
- Reviews the management of council land assets in order to revise& intro activities to promote and achieve best ecological practice.
- Plan identifies areas for action, service leads, resource implications and associated targets as possible.

Key Considerations

- Link to LNRS; a strategic approach for nature-based environmental action and investment across the county.
- EEAP improvements to be focussed on actions & doing things within current resources.
- Key themes for outputs: 'Land Management', 'Education, Awareness and Communication', 'Policies and Strategies'.

Land Management

- *Condition assessments of designated sites such as Local Wildlife Sites*
- *Appropriate long-term management to restore key sites to good condition when resources are made available.*
- *Trials for reduced cutting of amenity grassland, encouraging floral diversity including trials on non-herbicide use.*
- *production a strategy document to define the approach to biodiversity interventions on public open spaces and identify constraints to delivery as the programme continues to be rolled out across the county.*
- *Council woodlands assets managed and maintained from current project development to robust legacy provisions*

Education, Awareness and Communication

- *Cont. development & engagement with partners and stakeholders in landscape scale programmes.*
- *investigating viability of using DCC land for 'green' uses – BNG, Nutrient Neutrality and renewables*
- *Promoting the Ecological Emergency within the CERP Marketing Plan under the theme Nature, Adaptation and Land.*
- *Hosting of Ecological Emergency matters on the Climate Change website.*

Policies and Strategies

- *Developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the County Durham Partnership*
- *Produce SPD on delivery of biodiversity for urban and industrial developments.*
- *Produce procurement systems addressing Ecological Emergency principles based on Climate Emergency approach*
- *Look at including ecological impact implications in committee and Council reports.*

Overview

- Good progress to date
- New ecologically based practices being adopted without new dedicated resource.
- Priority themes of Land, Awareness and Policies
- 14 areas of action being progressed across services
-
- Continually evolving as more programmes come on stream
- Further updates to follow.

Any Points for Discussion?



Better for everyone

Meeting: Environment & Climate Change Partnership Executive Board

Date & Time: 12th September 2023 at 2.00pm

Venue: Online Via Teams

Present:	Name	Organisation
	Jim Cokill (JC) Chair	Durham Wildlife Trust
	Steve Bhowmick (SB)	Durham County Council
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	Vice Chair of CDEP
	Amanda Healy (AH)	Durham County Council
	Maggie Bosanquet (MB)	Durham County Council
	Chris Woodley-Stewart (CWS)	NP AONB
	Simone Abram (SA)	Durham university
	David Louden (DL)	Durham University
	Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action
	Angela Brown (ABro) (Minutes)	Durham County Council
	Glenn Robinson (GR)	Durham County Council
Apologies:		
	Alan Patrickson	Durham County Council
	Jon Gluyas	Durham university
	Stuart Priestly	Durham County Council
	Cllr Mark Wilkes	Durham County Council

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
1.	Welcome and apologies.	<p>JC welcomed everyone to ECCP meeting today he mentioned that Jon Gluyas had stood down as chair from Climate and Emergency workstream so therefore wouldn't be attending this group in future. JC welcomed Simone Abram to the meeting she will now, as the new chair of the CE workstream be attending instead of Jon. He also welcomed Amanda Healy from Public Health.</p> <p>Round table introductions were initiated.</p> <p>AH mentioned that the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) had been refreshed and would like to share this at a future meeting if the Board felt it was relevant.</p> <p>Apologies for the meeting were noted.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AH to bring refreshed JHWS to future meeting if relevant 	AH	
2.	Minutes of the meeting 20th June 2023	The minutes from the meeting on the 20th of June 2023 were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting.		
3.	ECCP Workstream Updates	<p>Place, Health, and Communities Workstream – Kate Burrows/Steve Bhowmick</p> <p>KB – discussing the future direction today is important as it links to what our group do and our need to demonstrate impact. At the last meeting we had feedback from community perspective on the Horden Mine water Project. Power East Durham are looking at opportunity to become energy distributor. There is a possibility of linking to County Durham Sport work and Horden Masterplan. The next discussion will be on how to take this forward, inform and influence and amplify tangible outcomes that this group is working towards. County Durham Sport discussed Sport England's plans for active community development work in</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>the county.</p> <p>SB – Felt we have been working in silos for so long, so its good to learn from others. Karbon and Believe Housing are working together on unban green homes. We are realising our health needs as a county from a whole community perspective.</p> <p>Climate Emergency Workstream – Simone Abram</p> <p>SA – we need a plan to co-operate with each other and influence each other’s agendas. Last meeting met at Morrison Busty. It was interesting to see everyone getting excited about regional energy plans. We are aiming to work together to complement each other e.g., Lanchester Wines are a carbon neutral company and are happy to share learning with other organisations, to provide positive benefit for everyone. The solar car ports project is progressing well, and a performance specification is being developed by electrical and civils consultants. This work will be finished in December, and work to develop a business case and an invest to save application will be undertaken in early 2024 for the 16 sites in scope. Durham University developing a workshop event to look at Local Area Energy Plans and all partners to be invited. Beamish are new members on CE board.</p> <p>Ecological Emergency Workstream – Chris Woodley-Stewart</p> <p>Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Update – written update was sent with papers.</p> <p>CWS - the future of the Ecological Emergency Workstream is dictated by the LNRS for the County. There is a lot of work to do. Stuart Priestly is doing a lot of work engaging and working with surrounding local authorities, and working on what constitutes meaningful consultation with the public and how this can influence the LNRS.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>MB – we have an ecological emergency and a climate emergency; we need to see how we can dovetail the 2 agendas to work together. Something like a local plan to climate proof the LNRS and ecological proof the CERP3. To deliver joint benefits.</p> <p>KB – need to make sure people aren't excluded from the process and PHC workstream can support the wider consultation approach, whilst managing expectations of public.</p>		
4.	Refresh of the ECCP Board	<p>JC mentioned that he had written report with a proposal to make changes to the structure of the ECCP Board with the aim of strengthening the focus of the board to improve the delivery of the ECCPs vision for a better County Durham: sustainable communities, resilient to climate change, richer in nature.</p> <p>Inform, influence and amplify is a good summary of what we should be doing.</p> <p>JC asked the Board what they thought of the proposals?</p> <p>DL felt this was an opportunity to refresh the Terms of Reference for the group, he asked if we should be looking to take on a more strategic role rather than operational? Should this group try to influence policy e.g., pollution rules around building homes or conflict between nutrient neutrality policy and the economic agenda from the govt.?</p> <p>MB - we need to be generating action and need to make sure it leads to more added value.</p> <p>SB - there was a slight danger is we tend to talk to ourselves which shows the importance of a forum giving a wider voice and having influence.</p> <p>CWS felt in relation to policy influence (national policy before white paper) we should steer clear of this. We should be looking at where we can influence policy locally e.g., DCC and not national policy. And be aware that some partners may</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>have opposing agendas e.g., on nutrient neutrality.</p> <p>AH – Increasing cross thematic work looking at what strategic priorities are for the Health and Wellbeing Partnership (HWB). Get greater traction by working together. Impact Environment has on human health e.g., active travel.</p> <p>DL –could we ask that we are a Board that must be consulted on environment policy matters.</p> <p>SB – Council has a formal process through cabinet, we need a degree of independence for this board. How can we, as a board, be heard and what role could and should ECCP have in informing DCC policy.</p> <p>GR – This partnership isn't statutory so powers would be limited.</p> <p>DL – felt need to give group focus – we could act as a critical friend on policy matters, similar to how the Uni acts.</p> <p>MB – partners on CDP don't have one view. We should influence all views to consider environmental issues.</p> <p>DL – paper looks good. Agree that 50% of our meetings should be face to face.</p> <p>AH - we need to draw all data and intelligence and see if we have any gaps, this will help us shape the priorities.</p> <p>JC – issue we have on data is that it isn't available or robust in the environment world as in areas like health and wellbeing.</p> <p>KB – evidence base is important, but this is a large beast which is difficult to analyse. Agree with everything said but need to act early and there is an exercise to be done to see if we are making enough impact.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>JC – we should have enough knowledge around the table to identify where we can influence.</p> <p>DL – we can't do everything, but we need to be monitoring KPIs.</p> <p>JC said we do have some outputs on the plan but have never reported on them.</p> <p>CWS – what benefit would we have from gathering more information on KPI's we don't necessarily need, what value would we get? Will it make things better? As a board we don't deliver so we shouldn't invent KPIs we don't need. It feels like a make work project.</p> <p>JC – we can collect existing indicators from partners to help formulate our direction.</p> <p>KB – we need to think about resources – what we have and what we can realistically do with it. Time for all partners is an issue.</p> <p>SA – in relation to measurement – if spending time measuring you are not 'doing'. Annual Event is what we should be focusing on with support and fresh ideas.</p> <p>AH – Going back to basics – are there regular thing we can measure, not necessarily 1/4ly but perhaps yearly. What are the ambitions and is there anything that could be measured.</p> <p>MB – Climate Change easy - CERP3 is based around carbon measures we have Countywide, but the data is 2 years out of date. I appreciate that the Ecological Emergency workstream don't have easy access to measures.</p> <p>SB said we need to remember that we don't have a funding resource and rely on others to deliver projects for us.</p>		

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
		<p>GR – If we are planning an event for March next year we need to start planning now. He said he needs more information on what the Board wants from the event, so we need a group to meet in October to begin planning the event for March. Ellie Grimes/Steve Bhowmick all volunteered.</p> <p>JC thanked everyone for their input and support for the refresh.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group to meet in October to provide plan for March annual event. 	EG/SB/GR	
5.	Any Other Business	<p>JC asked about nominating a Vice Chair for this group - please contact JC in next week or so if you would be interested in taking on this role.</p> <p>SB thanked everyone who supported the preparation work for the Environment Awards, this year's nominations launched on Monday, running until 5th October and the celebration ceremony will be early 2024.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are interested in becoming Vice Chair for group, please let JC know ASAP. • GR mentioned that the awards are now on CDP website and AB will send this link to Board members. 	ALL AB	
	Date and time of Next Meeting	The next meeting of the ECCP Board will be 11th December 2023 at 2pm online via Teams		

Summary of Actions (as meeting date above)

No	Action	Lead	Timescale
1	Welcome and Apologies – AH to bring refreshed JHWS to future meeting if relevant	AH	
2	Refresh of ECCP Board – Group to meet in October to plan for the event in March	EG/SB/GR	
3	AOB – If you are interested in becoming Vice Chair for ECCP, please let JC know ASAP	ALL	
4	AOB – GR mentioned that the awards are now on CDP Website and AB will send this link to Board members	AB	