



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

**Date** Monday 10 November 2014  
**Time** 9.30 am  
**Venue** Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend. Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement.**

1. Apologies.
2. Substitute Members.
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 October 2014 (Pages 1 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any
5. Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.
6. Media Relations - Updates on Press Coverage
7. Community Action Team and use of targeted interventions - Overview:  
(Pages 13 - 20)  
Report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services
8. Winter Maintenance Plan - Update: (Pages 21 - 24)
  - (i) Joint Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services.
  - (ii) Presentation by the Policy and Assets Manager, Neighbourhood Services.
9. Warm Up North - Update: (Pages 25 - 30)  
Report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development.

10. European Structural and Investment Funds - Low Carbon Economy - Update: (Pages 31 - 36)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development.
11. Limestone Landscape Programme - Update: (Pages 37 - 42)
  - (i) Joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development.
  - (ii) Presentation by the Limestone Landscape Programme Manager, Regeneration and Economic Development.
12. Management of the Woodland estate owned by Durham County Council - Scrutiny Review - terms of reference for the project: (Pages 43 - 54)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
13. Minutes of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 15 July, 2014 (Pages 55 - 58)
14. Minutes of the Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group held on 20 August 2014 and draft minutes of the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee held on 10 October, 2014. (Pages 59 - 70)
15. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
31 October 2014

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

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)  
Councillor D Hall (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, D Bell, E Bell, J Clare, J Clark, D Freeman,  
J Gray, G Holland, K Hopper, I Jewell, C Kay, P May, O Milburn, S Morrison,  
J Shuttleworth, P Stradling, L Taylor and S Zair

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Spurrell

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 2 October 2014 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor B Graham (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, D Bell, E Bell, J Clare, J Clark, J Gray, D Hall, K Hopper, I Jewell, P May, O Milburn, S Morrison, L Taylor and S Zair

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Bolton

**1 Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Holland and Mrs P Spurrell.

**2 Substitute Members.**

There were no substitute members.

**3 Minutes of the Meetings held on 1 May, 3 July, 11 July, 14 July and 8 September 2014**

The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following amendments:-

- (i) 1 May 2014 – to add apologies from Councillor E Adam.
- (ii) 3 July 2014 – to add apologies from Councillor O Milburn.
- (iii) 11 July 2014 – to add apologies from Councillor E Adam.

**4 Declarations of Interest, if any**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5 Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.**

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

**6 Media Relations - Updates on Press Coverage.**

The Committee received a presentation from the Overview and Scrutiny officer on recent press articles relating to the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities.

The first articles related to an announcement by the Council to install smart traffic light system to ease congestion and traffic pollution in Durham City where approximately 40,000 cars pass through per day. The system called scout will be situated on Leazes Bowl and Gilesgate roundabouts.

The second article related to Seaham Harbour's £3.4m pier restoration to protect surrounding properties from future flooding and erosion. The project is expected to prevent coastal deterioration by stopping storm waves from penetrating the harbour. This was a joint project between DCC, the Environment Agency and port operators the Victoria group.

Further articles were reported in respect of the success of 15 Council run sites in achieving green flag awards. In addition an article was presented regarding the work of the committee on their recent review of flooding.

And finally an article was reported in relation to two new storage barns which were being built for salt in preparation for winter weather.

## **7 Neighbourhood Services Revenue and Capital Outturn 2013/14 and Revenue and Capital Outturn Quarter 1 2014/15**

The Committee considered a report and presentation by the Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services which set out details of the final outturn as at Quarter 4 for 2013/14 and highlighted variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services in delivering his presentation indicated that there was an under spend of £966,000 against the cash limit after taking account of the forecast use of reserves and items outside the cash limit. Members were advised of an overspend within Strategic Waste of £500,000 which was due to higher than anticipated one off costs associated with maintaining landfill gas power generation equipment and also a continuing fall in income from the sale of dry recyclates. The Committee were advised that the 2013/14 capital spend for Neighbourhood Services was £26.090m against a revised budget of £30.722m, which is a £4.632m underspend for the year.

The Committee also considered a report and presentation by the Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services which set out details of the forecast outturn at Quarter 1 for 2014/15 and highlighted variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhood Services in delivering his presentation indicated that Neighbourhood Services had an under spend of £486,000 and gave Members the reasons for the under spend. The Quarter 1 forecast for the 2014/15 Capital Outturn is currently estimated to be in line with the budget.

In addition the presentation detailed the capital outturn position as at Quarter 1 along with reasons for the underspend in this area.

Councillor May commented on the overspend that had been seen in the Strategic Waste service and asked whether this was as a result of the market. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that the market did indeed fluctuate and prices for recyclates did go up and down dependent upon market demand. It was noted that glass commanded a high price, however prices on plastic were dropping consistently and paper tended to stay the same. Quality of recyclates is another driver of the price that can be obtained from their sale. The authority has experienced some recent problems with contamination and they are addressing this through the "Bin It Right" campaign.

Further discussion then ensued regarding performance in relation to the Clean and Green team and Councillor E bell queried whether there had been any recent changes in council policy regarding the cutting of hedges. In response it was noted that there had not been any recent policy changes and it was noted that no cutting back of hedges or trees took place whilst birds were nesting. It was also noted that tree thinning work commenced in October.

Further discussion took place regarding the refurbishment of Waste Transfer Stations and the programme for works over the next 12 months. It was also asked whether the refurbishment of the WTCs would have any impact on kerbside collections. It was noted that no impact would be seen at the kerbside.

Councillor Adam then raised a query regarding the increase in surplus generated by Highways Services, he added that the council were often criticised for highway improvement works and questioned whether the surplus would be put back into the service. In response the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that all surpluses would be put back in to the service for Category 1 and 2 repairs. However it was interesting to note that a recent report showed that road data within County Durham had improved. It was further agreed that this report should be included alongside the next quarterly performance report.

Councillor Hall then raised a query with regard to grass encroaching on to the public footpath and asked what the procedure was for its maintenance as he had found this to be a particular issue in his area. In response the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that the service were working as best they could with a diminishing budget however it was important to ensure that local priorities were dealt with whilst also balancing higher priority repairs and maintenance.

Further discussion took place regarding the use of the youth offending scheme to help in cases such as this and it was also pointed out by a number of members that if more flexibility was permitted within the members neighbourhood budget then this may help to achieve and resolve a lot more local issues such as edging.

In response the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that the service were absolutely flexible in what they did and any member with individual ward issues should approach the service to determine whether the work can be completed within the current financial envelope.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the final 2012/13 outturn position on Revenue and Capital be noted.

- (ii) That the Quarter 1 forecast outturn position on Revenue and Capital for 2013/14 be noted.

## **8 Quarter 1 2014/15 Performance Management Report**

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Neighbourhood Services Management Team which presented progress against the Council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Greener theme and reported other significant performance issues for the first quarter of 2014/15 covering the period April to June 2014 (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager provided an overview of performance along with key messages, achievements and challenges from the first quarter.

The presentation highlighted the key ongoing projects which were taking place across the County in respect of the built environment, carbon emissions, natural environment and the clean and attractive environment.

In addition the presentation provided a focus upon fly-tipping hot spots and the work which was being undertaken on a multi-agency basis to help understand the problem, provide education and seek community involvement and ultimately provide tougher enforcement.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager further provided detail with regard to deposited waste types, top locations, common fly-tip sizes and prosecutions.

It was noted that during the period of October to December there would be a high profile county-wide campaign alongside educational programmes in schools, roadshows, and work with private land-owners, housing providers and AAPs.

With regard to enforcement it was noted that a specialist fly-tipping team had been established and worked to identify and target repeat offenders, rogue traders and commercial fly-tippers through multi-agency spot check operations. A team of six Neighbourhood Wardens would also work together to increase business compliance with trade waste disposal in hot-spot areas and improve the process for recovering costs from fly-tipped waste.

The Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services advised that the council did utilise covert cameras and publicity regarding prosecutions would be seen over the coming few months.

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager then invited Sandra Robertson, Special Projects Manager to provide background information in relation to Heritage Open Days and a brief summary of the work undertaken during the year. A copy of the most recent publication which listed the venues and activities taking place during the year was circulated to members for their information.

Discussion then ensued regarding fly-tipping and waste regulations. Councillor Morrison queried whether there was similar regulations for furniture retailers in relation to the disposal of large furniture items as there was for electrical retailers. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that there were no similar regulations in place.

for the removal of furniture waste he added that it was very difficult to get retailers on board to offer this service without any legislation in place.

Councillor Clark raised a number of queries regarding; the collection of additional waste left next to the wheelie bin and the use of plastic bags in recycling bins. She further queried whether local supermarkets could be encouraged to use plastic carrier bags which were accepted for recycling by the local authority. It was noted that only clear bags would be accepted when left next to the wheelie bin and plastic carrier bags were currently not allowed to be placed within the recycling bin.

Councillor Adam queried whether fly tipping would be preventable if charges were dropped for bulky waste collection. He further questioned whether the opening / closing of Household Waste Recycling Centres had also impacted upon fly-tipping.

In response the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that it had been learnt that fly-tipping was not always about the charge and more about the type of person tipping. He advised that at this time there was no evidence to suggest that charging for the removal of waste had led to an increase in incidents. He further commented that given the very open countryside aspects of County Durham it was very difficult to monitor all sites at all times.

Mr T Bolton, asked whether there was any training provided for magistrates who would be dealing with prosecutions and whether positive outcomes were publicised. In response the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that training was provided and was key to ensure the correct prosecutions were made. In addition prosecutions were widely publicised.

Mr T Bolton then asked whether it would be possible to include some clearer information within the County Durham News publication regarding carbon emissions and what grants were available as a great deal of confusion regarding grants was felt amongst the public. It was agreed that someone from the Warm Up North team come back to a future meeting to discuss further.

Councillor May asked for clarification in relation to the number of waste permits for HWRCs and in particular the monitoring of business vehicles accessing the sites.

Councillor Zair commented that given the high number of fly-tipping incidents within the Bishop Auckland area could it be expected that extra action would be taken in this area. It was noted that the Multi-Agency Task Force had put an action plan in place for this area, with additional surveillance taking place. The Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that Councillor Zair could contact him directly to discuss actions in his area.

Councillor Clare noted that the map highlighting hotspots showed variance and change across the county, however queried whether another map could be provide showing absolute incidents. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that this could be provided alongside quarter 2 performance.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **9 Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions - Scrutiny Review - Update on recommendations**

The Committee considered a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which detailed progress made in relation to the recommendations contained within the 'Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions' Scrutiny review published in January 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Sustainability & Climate Change Team Leader provided an update on each review recommendation and action as detailed within Appendix 2 of the report. Members were advised that the corporate Carbon Management Programme Board continued to lead the Council's work on carbon reduction and energy savings. The Council continues to explore opportunities for energy reduction and projects had been initiated including boiler optimisation, new lighting and recommendations for new invest to save projects. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader reminded the committee that 14,000 street lights had been retrofitted with new energy efficient LED street lights as part of the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project. The committee was advised that the project involves £21 million capital investment in highways that will produce gross revenue savings of £2 million per annum.

Members were advised that Durham County Council is ahead of most other councils in respect of the number of Eco Champions and in relation to the need to reduce business travel there was general awareness of the alternatives available which included conference calls. In relation to review recommendations six and seven members were informed that the council continues to monitor electric, gas and water consumption and of the performance of capital and revenue projects. Elected members and staff had received regular information in Buzz and Member Update publications in relation to the Council's carbon reduction targets and the Big Switch Off had continued to make impressive savings.

Councillor Adam commented that the focus was on the use and reductions of energy, however little was reported on water usage, the recycling of waste water and rainwater harvesting. In response the Sustainability & Climate Change Team Leader advised that the meters currently installed did not provide the same level of data however a number of premises were using Dimeter which was providing some very interesting results. In addition there hadn't been much focus to date on the recycling of water but more so on charges. It was further agreed that a report could be brought back to the committee in due course on this topic.

Councillor Clare asked whether the improvement in performance had been as a direct result of the loss of some buildings from the council's portfolio such as leisure centres or from the actions that have been put in place. In response it was reported that it was as a consequence of both. Further reference was made regarding community run buildings. It was also explained that the council has partnership arrangements with organisations who have taken over the running of our leisure centres whereby we continue to offer them energy efficiency advice.

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.



## 10 Air Quality Action Plan and Consultation Strategy - Update

The Committee considered a joint report and presentation of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on the development of the Air Quality Action Plan for Durham City (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The presentation provided details on the Corporate Air Quality Steering Group and Air Quality Technical Working Group and their roles in developing an Air Quality Action Plan for Durham City. Details were also provided of the milestones and associated timescales for the work programme.

The Pollution Control Manager advised that an Air Quality Technical Working Group and an Air Quality Corporate Steering Group had been set up to undertake and fulfil the requirement of establishing a draft Air Quality Action Plan for Durham City. A structured programme that covered identified stages of the work project in the form of work milestones had been established for the drafting of the Air Quality Action Plan.

The Senior Air Quality Officer then went on to provide some detail relating to the requirements that cover Local Air Quality Action Plans and a summary was provided relating to work already completed on milestone 1. The presentation further outlined examples of the options included in the Draft Air Quality Action Plan..

The Senior Air Quality Officer presented a summary of work which was ongoing or yet to be completed on milestones 2, 3 and 4. With regard to progress to date it was reported by the Pollution Control Manager that:

- Work Milestone 1 (July-Dec 2013) =Achieved
- Work Milestone 2 (Jan-Jul 2014) =Achieved in part - some tasks have had to be incorporated into work milestone 3 mainly due to the scale of task
- Work Milestone 3 (Aug-Dec 2014) =on going
- Work Milestone 4 (Jan-March 2015) =on course

It was noted that there were potential challenges that included: other priorities of the Council; dependency upon consultants to complete appraisals and external partners to progress improvement measures.

In conclusion it was noted that targeted monitoring to determine improvements in Air Quality within Durham City would be ongoing and periodically reviewed and revised as and when required. It was noted that the Council is required to report progress on the development of the Air Quality Action Plan and the subsequent impact on air quality from the implementation of the air quality improvement measures annually to the Government via the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Mr T Bolton, asked how closely the team are working with bus operators as it was known that buses are one of the principal sources of air pollution within the city. . In response the Pollution Control Manager advised that the team sought to work closely with transport colleagues to encourage the bus operators to update the fleet of buses with engines with a better emission standard. It was also noted that some progress had already been made since funding had been obtained for the upgrading of buses operating on one route within the Air Quality Management Area. . Further discussion took place regarding the County Durham Plan and Councillor Adam commented that there could be a risk of the actions not

working as a consequence of the impact of the new developments proposed within and on the periphery of Durham City that is contained within the County Durham Plan and the Supplementary Planning Documents.. In response the Pollution Control Manager advised that the Senior Air Quality Officer had undertaken work to establish and develop guidance that seeks to minimise the impact on air quality from new development and that an option is included within the Air Quality Action Plan for this guidance to become a Supplementary Planning Document.

The Pollution Control Manager raised the issue that DEFRA may impose penalties under the Localism Act on Councils where the air quality standards are not met. It was noted that as long as the team could demonstrate working towards achieving the standard DEFRA would be satisfied in the interim.

Councillor Hall asked whether it was possible to access and view air quality levels online from the monitors that were in place in Durham City. In response it was reported that there was a link on the Air Quality web pages that could be found by accessing Durham County Council's website, however not all monitors were linked up to this facility.

I Further to the previous discussion there was a question from the Chair on the likelihood of delays to establish and develop the draft Air Quality Action Plan and therefore penalties being imposed by DEFRA for not achieving the required air quality standards. The Pollution Control Manager advised that they work closely with DEFRA and as long as there is evidence of working toward compliance no action would be taken however if there was no evidence of progressing this work then there is a possibility that the authority could be fined.

Councillor Hall further commented that there are also a large number of taxis that operate within Durham City and queried whether the council could offer preferential rates to taxi licence holders to encourage a mass switch over to lower emission vehicles. It was reported that this had actually been looked in to, however, there had not been much support for this from the Corporate Steering Group. It was something however that would be revisited in the future.

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

## **11 Landscape Scale Projects - Overview**

The Committee received a joint report and presentation of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which provided background information on the Landscape Scale project (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Landscape Delivery Officer provided some detail regarding the European Landscape Convention and the Landscape Character Assessment which had been undertaken in 2008 and informed the strategy which had been developed for the various landscape characteristics in County Durham.

Landscape scale in County Durham was a Heritage Lottery funded partnership programme and included big projects such as

- Mineral valleys
- Living North Pennines
- Limestone Landscapes
- Heart of Teesdale
- Land of Oak and Iron
- River Tees discovered.

Members were provided with a hand out which provided a summary of each of the schemes work, along with associated timescales for each. The Committee was advised that the Woodland Trust had taken management responsibilities from Durham County Council.

The presentation further provided detail on other ongoing partnerships which were much smaller projects and were not funded through the Heritage lottery but included:

- Durham Hedgerow Partnership
- Heart of Durham
- Jubilee Woods
- Heritage Coast
- Heathland Project

Further details were provided with regard to hedgerows and the impact that hedgerow funding had taken across the county to improve the hedgerow network.

The Landscape Delivery Officer then went on to discuss the legacy of the partnership and advised that legacy planning had been in the pipeline for some time and it was important to ensure that the legacy was ambitious and sustainable whilst also ensuring there was sufficient funding to support the plans.

Mr T Bolton added that County Durham was uniquely blessed with common land and queried what the partnership were doing to protect and promote these areas. Further discussion took place regarding common land and issues with mixes of ownership, and management issues.

Further discussion took place regarding Land of Oak and Iron and the County's involvement. The Landscape Delivery Officer advised that there had been Councillor involvement initially, although Gateshead Council was leading on the project alongside the Environment Agency. Durham would however continue to benefit from the scheme and the council would continue to support its partners. The Landscape Delivery Officer also noted that she would raise the issue that there was currently no councillor representation on this project.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

## **12 Waste Programme - Update**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and a verbal update by the Head of Projects and Business Services on progress against the waste programme.

The Head of Projects and Business Services advised that Appendix 2 of the report highlighted the main aspects of the programme, including the 'Bin it Right' campaign. It was reported that this had already seen some successes as less waste was now being rejected at the Waste Transfer Centres due to contamination. Further details were included in the report regarding the campaign and the issues that the council encountered due to the contamination of waste.

It was reported that a system of placing stickers on the bin, followed up by letters and door knocking was in place to help residents with disposing of their waste correctly if found to have contaminated their bin.

Moving on the Head of Projects and Business Services provided an update on the Garden Waste scheme. It was reported that the new scheme went live on 5 September with almost 4,000 households having already signed up and approximately 400 more signing up per day. It was expected that this would drop off, but would pick back up next spring ahead of the new grass cutting season. In addition approximately 400 residents had to date requested for their bin to be removed.

Mr T Bolton commented that he had spoken with a lady who had received a letter regarding her waste as she had mistakenly placed a skirt in her recycling bin. He added that the letter she had received had made her upset and fearful. With such, he suggested that the content be revisited so that the first letter was not as threatening especially to older people.

Councillor Morrison requested whether data on Garden Waste opt-outs could be provided to a future meeting. It was noted that this could be provided in a future progress report.

Further discussion took place regarding the Garden Waste scheme following a query relating to those who were not eligible for the scheme. The Head of Projects and Business Services advised that the service had identified those properties where the scheme could not be provided however, there was an appeals procedure in place for anyone wishing to contest the decision.

In response to a question on what would happen to garden waste bins members were advised that properties eligible to participate in the garden waste scheme but decided against it would need to advise the Council of this decision otherwise the garden waste bin would not be removed from the property. Further discussion took place regarding sign up for the garden waste scheme and a query was raised as to what would happen to the bins if sign up or request to remove had been received.

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report and update be noted.

**13 Minutes of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 15 May 2014**

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board meeting held on 23 January 2014 and 20 March 2014 be noted.

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## Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



10 November 2014

### Overview of the work of the Community Action Team and the use of targeted interventions

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#### Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

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##### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the work of the council's Community Action Team (CAT) and the use of targeted interventions.

##### Background

- 2 At its meeting on 3 April 2013 the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee heard a report from council's Environment, Health and Consumer Protection team on the progress and future activity of the CAT following an initial pilot in 2012.
- 3 The CAT is a small, proactive team consisting of members of the Environmental Health and Consumer Protection Team who are responsible for delivering Community Action Schemes at identified locations within County Durham. They work alongside Planning and Housing Officers, Neighbourhood Wardens, Police and Community Support Officers, and Fire and Rescue teams and with local communities. The aim of the Community Action Schemes is to bring together key partners with specialist skills, as well as local residents, to tackle local housing and environmental issues.
- 4 In February 2013 the CAT began a two-year work programme visiting ten communities across County Durham. Locations were chosen geographically across the county in each of the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (LMAPs) – part 2 areas, against a set criteria based on health deprivation, visual environmental degradation, commercial buildings, high level of private rents and existing community groups operating within the area. Communities visited were: Coundon Grange/Eldon Lane, Murton, South Moor, New Shildon, Trimdon Station/Deaf Hill, Grange Villa, Spennymoor, Leadgate, Easington Colliery and the team is currently working in Durham city.
- 5 In each location an 8-10 week programme took place. Each initiative was split into three phases: Engagement/Priority setting, Action and Review, and Exit/Feedback. There were opportunities for the community to get

involved through a residents' meeting, drop-in sessions, and a community litter pick in some projects. Partners met during the engagement period, carried out a walkabout of the area and following input from the community prioritised 3-4 issues. A strategy was put in place to carry out targeted interventions in the action period. Partners carried out a variety of interventions including weekly, and in some locations bi-weekly, walkabouts of the area, test purchasing of alcohol, home fire safety checks, litter clearance, waste carrier licence checks, and talks to local schools. At the end of each project an exit strategy was put in place with partners. Residents and community groups received a letter outlining the action that had taken place, the exit strategy, ways to contact the council and partner agencies and a survey. A similar letter and survey was also sent to landlords.

### Key findings from the 2013-2014 Programme

- 6 In the first 18 months, up to 29 June 2014, the team carried out a total of 1263 pieces of casework, which includes follow-up work in previous project locations. Core casework related to rubbish accumulations and defective drainage, with housing disrepair and open to access properties also being investigated. There were 282 legal notices served and 76 works in default were required where there was non-compliance with notices.
- 7 Table 1 – Comparison of casework in CAT project areas up to 29 June 2014

Location	Casework	1st walkabout	Notices	Work Default	In
Coundon Grange/ Eldon Lane	168	61	43		28
Murton	65	38	10		3
South Moor	234	148	62		20
New Shildon	111	56	17		3
Trimdon Station/ Deaf Hill	144	64	31		6
Grange Villa	153	126	71		6
Spennymoor	100	73	41		9
Leadgate	65	35	7		1
<b>TOTAL - 2013-14</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>282</b>		<b>76</b>

- 8 Improving housing standards and removing rubbish accumulations were identified as priority issues in all locations, with empty/derelict properties being chosen in six out of eight of the projects.
- 9 There were between 6 and 12 additional partner activities carried out per project which included 27 test purchases of alcohol, 84 mini health checks for residents, 255 home fire safety checks, 22 untidy sites tackled by planning colleagues, 107 empty homes were pursued by housing colleagues.
- 10 Throughout all the projects there was a low number of private housing cases reported, despite this being a priority in all locations. A private



housing survey was done in New Shildon to offer assistance to tenants, however there was a low interest shown.

The Keep Warm, Stay Safe initiative in Grange Villa improved 22 properties comprising 20 owner-occupiers and 2 let properties. This was funded by Public Health England with the £52,800 spend being used to improve the domestic heating systems and health and safety within the properties e.g provision of hand-rails, producing the anticipated outcome of contributing to health improvements for the residents.

- 11 Website statistics show there were a total of 773 page views, with 493 unique views, on the main CAT webpage in 2013. Positive press articles have been published for all projects and the CAT has remained high profile in Durham County News, Buzz and member briefings.
- 12 Establishing good links with residents, businesses and community groups in each area was vital to the success of each project. Initial resident meetings had a mixed attendance with an average of 17 residents attending each meeting. Drop-in sessions were linked in with local community events and between 13 and 50 residents attended sessions in each area. There were 84 health checks carried out at drop-in sessions across all projects.
- 13 At the end of each project partners were invited to give feedback and development suggestions at the final partner meeting. The feedback received was very positive on the joint working opportunities and the specific interventions that had taken place during each project. Community engagement was highlighted in 4 projects as an area which could be improved; however, it was noted that many agencies struggle with this in the locations chosen for the CAT projects.
- 14 The resident survey response returns were approximately 5% per area. Key findings were:
  - 73% of residents felt the issues identified at the residents meeting were appropriate for their community.
  - 56% of residents felt the Community Action Team made a difference to their area.
  - 81% of residents are now more inclined to bring to the council's attention issues that the Community Action Team tackled.
- 15 The landlord survey response returns were low, however some useful comments were received which have helped improve the programme.
- 16 The feedback from landlords and residents highlighted the following issues as barriers that prevented them from being able to quickly respond to specific issues identified by the CAT aimed at helping them to effectively maintain their properties:
  - a. Fly-tipping in back yards by people not connected to the property
  - b. residents moving rubbish between properties
  - c. bins going missing
  - d. cost of replacing refuse and recycling bins

- e. cost for landlords to dispose of tenant waste at household waste recycling centres
- f. cost of pest control
- g. landlords who don't live locally struggle to manage their property and tenants
- h. criminal damage to properties

### Key findings from the summer review period 2014

- 17 From 30 June – 30 August 2014 the CAT undertook a period of review. A desktop review was carried out and five of the busiest project locations were revisited with partners on review walkabouts in: Horden, Coundon Grange/ Eldon Lane, South Moor, Grange Villa and New Shildon. The purpose was to look at the sustainability of the work carried out and address any ongoing issues.
- 18 In each of the five locations partners, elected members and community representatives welcomed the CAT team back to the area and were keen for further action to be taken. The number of housing and environmental issues found on each review walkabout was lower in each location than the initial walkabout at the start of each original project. However, in three locations there were still significant numbers of rubbish accumulations found.
- 19 Table 2 – Comparison of casework found on the original project walkabout compared to the review walkabout and the % change by location

Location	Original project 1 <sup>st</sup> walkabout	Review walkabout	% Change
Horden	153	52	-66%
Coundon Grange/ Eldon Lane	61	45	-26%
South Moor	148	88	-41%
Grange Villa	126	35	-72%
New Shildon	56	19	-66%

- 20 A number of changes that have occurred in the previous two years that partners, landlords and agents report may have had an impact on the disposal of rubbish and led to an increase in the turnover of tenants in properties:
- a. change from weekly to bi-weekly bin and recycling collections,
  - b. increase in number of 2-bedroom empty properties following changes to the benefit systems,
  - c. increase in Council Tax to 150% for properties left empty longer than 6 months leading to landlords feeling pressured to occupy properties and allowing tenants to move into properties without reference checks,
  - d. tenants' being paid benefit money directly leading to some tenants moving frequently to gain financial benefit.
  - e. The current legal system does not encourage private tenants to come forward with disrepair issues as there is little security in

tenure. Anecdotal information suggests that tenants often move into sub-standard properties as this is the only type of property they can secure; landlords of these properties tend to do less initial checks on potential tenants.

- 21 The exit strategies were largely followed, however there remains a need for further monitoring of previous CAT project locations following exit.
- 22 Further review walkabouts are planned in January 2015 for the project areas that were not visited.

### **Next Steps**

- 23 The Community Action Team has now drafted a programme for 2015-16 and will visit ten communities over this period, which may include revisits to 3 previous project areas though this remains under discussion.
- 24 The emphasis when choosing locations has changed to focus on areas of greater need rather than following a geographical route round the county. This is due to projects in the more deprived areas of the county providing a higher caseload.
- 25 New data available on percentage of empty properties in an area and percentage of private tenants in receipt of benefits in an area has been combined with health deprivation data and public health complaint data to create a dataset to determine future project locations.
- 26 The revisit projects will build on the original projects and aim to target resources further e.g. interventions may focus on specific properties where there has been a history of non-compliance or the top ten landlords. In addition previous areas will be revisited during scheduled review periods.
- 27 The barriers identified by landlords and residents will be given further consideration and may be taken forward through a focus group which is part of the 'Environment in Community' group.
- 28 During the programme the CAT has made new partner links with the council's Family Link team and Groundwork North East and Cumbria. It is anticipated that these new links will support the CAT when working with vulnerable families in the community and enable the CAT to leave an environmental legacy as part of the exit strategy in each location.

## **Recommendation**

- 29 Members of the Committee are asked to note information contained within the report relating to the overview of the work of the CAT and the use of targeted interventions and comment accordingly.

## **Background Papers**

None

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**Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – None

**Staffing** – None

**Risk** - None

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – None

**Accommodation** - None

**Crime and Disorder** – None

**Human Rights** – None

**Consultation** – None

**Procurement** – None

**Disability Issues** – None

**Legal Implications** – None

**Risk and Legal** - None

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



**10 November 2014**

**Winter Maintenance Plan : Update**

**Joint report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and  
Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods**

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with supporting information in advance of an update presentation on the Winter Service Policy.

**Background**

- 2 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2009 carried out a scrutiny review looking at the winter maintenance strategy/service. The review resulted from the severe weather experienced across the UK in 2008/09 following a pro-longed spell of cold weather, exposed weaknesses with existing policies on supply and stocks of salt to enable Highways Authorities to carry out their winter maintenance duties.
- 3 During this period, demand for salt outstripped the amount that could be supplied by UK Salt Suppliers, which left many areas at high risk of running out of salt. The Government was required to intervene in arrangements between Local Authorities and Salt Suppliers to prioritise distribution in order to keep local road networks functioning. This highlighted the need for Local Authorities to have appropriate plans in place to ensure that such intervention was not necessary should similar circumstances occur in the future. During this period Durham County Council acted as a supplier of salt to a number of Local Authorities who paid the Council for this service as the County Council had adequate supplies.
- 4 The severe weather over the winter of 2008/09 necessitated spending considerably more than in previous years on snow clearing and winter gritting of paths and highways to ensure safe movement, to keep traffic delays to a minimum and access to emergency facilities was maintained. The Council was not only concerned with the increased costs but the complaints and concerns expressed by organisations and the general public and interested parties in relation to the level of service provided. The report made a number of recommendations which were considered by Cabinet in September 2009 and then incorporated into the winter service plan.

- 5 The winter of 2009/2010 was the worst winter the country had experienced for 3 decades. During the period December 2009 to March 2010, County Durham was subject to severe weather conditions of sub-zero temperatures and heavy snowfall with temperatures of in excess of -10 degrees C with nine inches of snow falling over the new year weekend which necessitated continuous winter maintenance.
- 6 It was therefore thought appropriate to establish a further scrutiny review group to look at the progress made against the recommendations contained in the winter maintenance strategy/service scrutiny review report. The findings of the review group were considered by Cabinet in May 2010 and resulted in significant amendments to the Code of Practice 'Well Maintained Highways' with these amendments also incorporated into the winter service plan.
- 7 Due to the previous involvement of Overview and Scrutiny in shaping the winter service plan an overview presentation was provided at the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 January 2014 which was of particular use to new members of the Committee. At that meeting it was commented by members that it would be useful to receive an update as part of the refresh of the work programme so that members are aware of the processes in place before the start of the winter period.
- 8 Arrangements have been made for Brian Kitching, Policy and Assets Manager to attend the meeting on the 10 November to provide an update for members on the resources available and the processes in place prior to the winter period. The presentation will focus on the following:
  - Highways Act 1980/Code of Practice
  - Winter Policy
  - External Systems
  - Operational Matters
  - Presalting Routes/Gritters
  - Facts and Figures
  - Salt & Salt Bins
  - Partnership Working
  - Future Challenges

### **Recommendation**

- 9 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment upon the information provided in the report and presentation.



**Background Papers**

Review of the Winter Maintenance Service/Strategy – Scrutiny Review Report-  
September, 2009.

Review of the Winter Maintenance Service /Strategy – Scrutiny Review Report -  
May, 2010.

Winter Service Policy 2014/15.

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Report –  
Winter Service Plan – 24 January 2014

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance – NA**

**Staffing – NA**

**Risk – NA**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – NA**

**Accommodation – NA**

**Crime and Disorder – NA**

**Human Rights – NA**

**Consultation – NA**

**Procurement – NA**

**Disability Issues – NA**

**Legal Implications – NA**

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

**10 November 2014**



**Warm Up North; Update**

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**Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and  
Economic Development**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the development of the Warm Up North, a regional Green Deal initiative.

**Background**

- 2 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review during the 2011/12 municipal year of the development of renewable energy technologies in County Durham. As part of the review, Members considered schemes to tackle fuel poverty, including the Government's Green Deal and recommended that the Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Team continues to develop its role to provide advice and assistance to residents, businesses, town and parish councils and community groups/associations to enable them to benefit from Government initiatives/funding opportunities such as the Green Deal launched in January 2013.
- 3 In accordance with this recommendation, arrangements were made for Stuart Timmiss, Head of Planning and Assets, Regeneration and Economic Development, to attend the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 8 April 2013 to provide members with an overview of the Warm Up North initiative. This was then followed by an update to members on the development of the initiative at the meeting held on 24 October 2013 providing information on:
  - Developments since the last presentation.
  - Appointment of Preferred Delivery Partner.
  - Partnership Governance Arrangements.
  - Programme Funding.
  - Internal Management Arrangements.
  - Domestic Priorities.
  - Non-domestic Opportunities.
  - Overview of Benefits for DCC and County Durham.
  - Proposal for Member Seminar involving British Gas (preferred delivery partner).

It was highlighted to the committee that a Member's seminar had been arranged for the 12 February 2014 with the preferred delivery partner, British Gas.

- 4 As part of the refresh of the work programme of the committee of 2014/15 a further update has been included in relation to the Warm Up North Initiative and arrangements have therefore been made for Stuart Timmiss, Head of Planning and Assets, Regeneration and Economic Development to attend the meeting on the 10 November 2014.

### **Green Deal - Background**

- 5 The Energy Act 2011 introduced the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation. Green Deal was launched on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and is a scheme to offer 'pay as you save' options for home energy efficiency improvements.
- 6 In total there are 45 approved measures that can be installed at no up-front cost and paid back over an agreed period through energy savings via the electricity bills for the property. Green Deal requires loan repayments to be less than the resulting financial savings (this is known as the "Golden Rule") to help reduce energy bills. Alongside this loan, an Energy Company Obligation (ECO) has been introduced whereby energy companies are required to make grant funding available for energy efficiency measures on hard to treat homes and provide grants for low income households in more deprived areas.

### **Warm Up North**

- 7 Warm Up North is a regional response to this opportunity ensuring that we are in a position to maximise funding for the benefit of residents to assist them in reducing their energy consumption.
- 8 Officially launched on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, the Warm Up North initiative is a regional Green Deal Partnership involving the nine North East local authorities committed to undertaking wide scale energy efficiency improvements in private, private rented and social housing stock..
  - Durham County Council
  - Darlington Borough Council
  - Newcastle City Council
  - Northumberland County Council
  - South Tyneside Council
  - Sunderland City Council
  - Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
  - Hartlepool Borough Council
  - Gateshead District Council

Other councils in the North East have the potential to join at any stage and are named as part of the procurement process.

- 9 The Partnership has the following four objectives:
- To promote social wellbeing in the north east by lowering the levels and impact of fuel poverty and contributing to public health
  - To promote economic wellbeing in the north east and green economy by safeguarding and creating employment skills and the economic capacity of the area.
  - To improve the energy efficiency of domestic properties and publicly owned non-domestic properties across the north east.
  - To reduce carbon dioxide emissions from domestic and publicly owned non-domestic properties across the North East.
- 10 The Warm Up North Partnership carried out a procurement exercise which identified British Gas as the preferred Delivery Partner for the project. It is leading on assessing, providing and installing up to £200m worth of ECO and Green Deal approved measures to at least 15,000 homes across the North East. The project will run for a period of five years from 2013 with an option to extend the programme for three further years. EU funding was identified to support the procurement process and a team of relevant officers from each Partner Authority were assigned to the project.
- 11 The Partner Authorities have now entered into an 'Inter Authority Agreement' to set out each authority's relative role and interests in relation to the Warm Up North contract.
- 12 It should be noted that the Region has been at the forefront of leading Green Deal activity alongside Birmingham in ensuring that the Government's aims are now considered deliverable. It is also of note that many other regions are now following this model and have started similar procurement processes.
- 13 In terms of the Council's obligations within this partnership, the advantage for the preferred bidder is the trust which comes with local authority support. Therefore the Council is providing a 5 year exclusivity deal in terms of our support for British Gas alongside any information that we may have in respect of energy efficiency of homes that will help target our most hard to treat and inefficient homes. In County Durham there are estimated to be 36,500 'hard to treat' domestic properties with a large number of the remaining homes still able to benefit from improvements. Additionally, the programme encompasses energy efficiency measures for non-domestic buildings in the public domain and the Council is working with British Gas to establish areas of potential maximum benefit from this arrangement for non-domestic assets.

## Next Steps

- 14 The programme has just completed its first year and the Council has achieved a relatively high volume of referrals for improvements to properties to date. From September 2013 to September 2014 there have been 2026 referrals received into Warm up North from residents of County Durham resulting in the installation of 879 energy efficiency measures. We have established a cross-service officer working group to manage and monitor progress including working more collaboratively with registered social landlords in the county. Additionally a non-domestic element of energy efficiency investment is being developed under the WUN banner starting with a loans to schools scheme which will include selected schools in the county. Although there have been certain changes in Government subsidies towards Green Deal, WuN is still investing in developing the programme and has supported across all partners authorities over 5000 homes through providing £5 million ECO funding since the launch of the scheme.

## Recommendations

- 15 It is recommended that the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and comment upon the information provided within the report and presentation.
- 16 That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update on the development of the Warm Up North Initiative at a future meeting of the Committee.

## Background Papers

Report to the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 - Warm Up North Arrangements and Governance.

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**Finance** – The Council has committed to contributing £50,000 towards the procurement process and budgetary provision has been made for this. The funding necessary for delivering energy savings initiatives under the programme does not require Council investment as the finance will come from a new Green Deal Finance Company. As no prudential borrowing would be required, the Council's financial exposure is small with physical interventions being cost neutral to participating authorities.

**Staffing** - A review of existing capacity to ensure delivery objectives is underway with the intention that the resource be identified from existing staffing.

**Risk** – There are potential questions regarding take-up of the Warm Up North project interventions by householders. These related to uncertainties nationally over the viability of the Government's Green Deal initiative. .

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The project particularly benefits targeted vulnerable households subject to fuel poverty (those in 'hard to treat properties' properties) and aims to have a positive impact across communities.

**Accommodation** – None

**Crime and Disorder** - None

**Human Rights** – None

**Consultation** – Surveys have been undertaken.

**Procurement** – There has been a cross-authority agreement enabling Newcastle City Council to procure the initiative on behalf of the partner authorities according to its agreed procedures. The County Council has representatives from legal, finance and procurement ensuring that the Council's policies are maintained.

**Disability Issues** – Addressed in the Equality and Diversity Assessment.

**Legal Implications** – An inter-authority agreement will be established between the partner Authorities legal leads which include DCC representation.

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



**10 November 2014**

**European Structural and  
Investment Funds – Low Carbon  
Economy**

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**Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and  
Economic Development**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the opportunities that will be available to County Durham from European Structural and Investment Funds for Low Carbon Economy funding.

**Background**

2. European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) represent a single growth programme combining European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The EU Structural Funds programme for 2014-2020 allocates circa £450m for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area, including £135m for County Durham as a Transition Region. This presents a significant opportunity to support the economic, environmental and social infrastructure of the County in the medium term through the delivery of a range of EU compliant projects.
3. The national EU Programme is not yet operational, and is still in a preparatory phase, as the UK Government remains in negotiation with the EU Commission over the content of the English Operational Programmes (OPs) for both ERDF and ESF. The OPs contain the rules and the parameters of spending that the EU Commission will agree to in the UK. Until these are agreed, it is not possible to give certainty over the eligibility of specific projects, and so programmes of activity are still in a preparatory phase.
4. In order to prepare the English OPs, the Government has given LEPs a strategic role in preparing broad strategies for proposed investment themes within their areas, based upon the EU Commissions 2020 strategy and EU wide areas of eligible spend. LEPs are expected to work with local partners, to set out their priorities for the EU Growth Programme Funds in their area in an investment strategy
5. For the North East LEP area the 2014 – 2020 ESIF Programme incorporates £250 million of ERDF and £212 million of ESF. This money must be match

funded but because County Durham is a Transition area, up to 60% of total costs can be drawn down, with a requirement to find only 40% match.

6. The Strategic Objectives of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy are:
  - a. **Innovation** and research and development – increased levels of R&D and Smart Specialisations
  - b. **Business Support** – increased trading, entrepreneurship, start up business and private sector access to finance
  - c. **Inclusive Growth** – improve employability and barriers to employment for the most economically vulnerable
  - d. **Skills** - improving skills provision and better linking to economic opportunity and the needs of business.
  - e. **Low Carbon Economy** – increased role of low carbon economy, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation
  
7. The low carbon economy is a new element which has not featured in previous rounds of ESIF. It is ring fenced and requires that 15% of County Durham's ERDF allocation must be spent on low carbon economic growth. Durham County Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Team has supported the drafting of the low carbon section of the NELEP's ESIF strategy and has assisted in developing a pipeline of potential low carbon economy projects for the whole area. This has put the Council in an excellent position to ensure that outcomes that would benefit County Durham fit well within the programme.
  
8. The NELEP is now engaged in refining areas of expenditure into more clearly defined programme briefs in anticipation of the series of calls for projects once the OP is approved; most likely in the Spring of 2015. In anticipation of the call for project applications, work is now beginning to "shape up" a number of the agreed spend areas into more defined projects. As the Council may be submitting applications to deliver a number of projects, with significant cost value, a process of internal approval is now in place, prior to any applications for funding being submitted next year.
  
9. It should be noted that the Council does not have a bespoke allocation of funding or any formal role in approval of projects or management of a programme. However, as secretariat to the CDEP there is a significant influencing role for the Council, maintaining a programme overview and stimulating the development of projects in priority areas, once the programme is operational.
  
10. EU funds are only available for projects that fit with and meet the eligibility criteria, activities and outputs contained within the English Operational Programme, and support the objectives within the open calls locally. Projects will have a defined start and end date, agreed eligible activity and recorded outputs which are agreed with DCLG. Within Transition Regions, match funding of a maximum of 40% needs to be secured by the project sponsor.

11. A great deal of work has taken place over the past year to engage key partners and develop areas of spend that should meet European output requirements. Emphasis has been placed on identifying possible sources of match funding and of ensuring the projects meet the relevant output indicators. Key external partners have included Durham University and especially the Durham Energy Institute; the Altogether Greener and Local Nature Partnerships; Northern Power Grid; Environment Agency; etc. and extensive support has been received from directorates across DCC. Likely areas of activity for County Durham are set out below although these will be dependent on eligibility as defined in the final OP next year:

### **Areas of Activity**

12. **Energy Efficiency** There are opportunities to continue the award winning area based energy efficiency housing retrofit scheme that has already been developed in Craghead. This will benefit home owners and private and social rented tenants. At this stage no final decision has been made as to which areas would be targeted.
13. The North East Chamber of Commerce reports that energy costs have featured in our businesses' the top three concerns in every quarterly survey over the past six years so a major programme of **business energy efficiency support** is desirable. This would aim to provide accessible technical information and case studies and would supply both energy surveys and assistance with implementation. Access to finance and business to business support are considered crucial.
14. **Community energy efficiency** is featured in the submission to Government and the latest Government guidance also suggests that public buildings can be included in the programme. Consideration is therefore being given to developing a programme of energy retrofits to schools, community buildings and other buildings that are central to local communities. These would be required to maximise educational opportunities so that local people and organisations can apply the learning in their own properties.
15. **Innovative Technologies and Renewable Energy Generation** District heating opportunities are being explored, especially for the Aykley Heads site. A funding bid for a feasibility study has been approved by Government Department of Energy and Climate change (DECC) Heat Networks Delivery Unit and we have also been asked to look at water sourced heat pumps within this.
16. The best remaining untapped source of **geothermal energy** in England is the geological system that extends from beneath Eastgate and Rookhope across to Bishop Auckland, so opportunities are being explored for a range of potential projects on this theme.
17. **Energy systems**, including smart grids, energy storage and reduction in peak energy usage are another area of interest for the County. Significant grant funding was secured by Durham University and partners for the Customer Led Network Revolution project which is now coming to an end.

We hope to be able to build on the success of this project to develop a new ERDF initiative.

18. **Green infrastructure** A major area of interest for County Durham is ERDF Objective 5A, which focusses on Green Infrastructure, climate change adaptation and flood alleviation but Government guidance remains unclear as to whether or not this will be included in the final OP. There is also interest in developing a new North East Water Science Hub which could offer opportunities for growth in this sector.
19. **Low Carbon Skills** Durham University has been a key partner in considering low carbon economy opportunities and a range of potential skills projects are under discussion

### **Recommendations**

20. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report and offer views as to direction of travel of the emerging programme.
21. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a progress report early in 2015.

### **Background Papers**

North East Local Enterprise Partnership European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy 2014-20.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – A DCC contribution to the Partnership has been confirmed at £506,513 to match the HLF allocation of £1,895,700 for the period 2011-2016.

**Staffing** –

None

**Risk** – A risk register is kept as part of the project management of the programme.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The Partnership pay particular attention to access issues and this has been integrated into both the LCAP and specific Developing Community Capacity strategies.

**Accommodation** –

None

**Crime and Disorder** –

None

**Human Rights** –

None

**Consultation** – The partnership continues to deliver a wide programme of community consultation and engagement, and to involve local interests in developing and managing specific programmes and projects.

**Procurement** – Procurement will follow both DCC and the HLF financial regulations and guidelines.

**Disability Issues** – Complies with DCC general equality duty.

None

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



**10 November 2014**

**Limestone Landscape  
Programme - Update**

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**Joint report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and  
Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic  
Development**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the Limestone Landscape Programme in advance of a presentation by Tony Devos, Limestone Landscapes Programme Manager, Regeneration and Economic Development providing an update on the Limestone Landscapes delivery programme and the forward strategy for the Limestone Landscapes Partnership.

**Background**

- 2 In July 2011 the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an overview presentation on the Limestone Landscapes Programme and the work of the Limestone Landscapes Partnership within County Durham. Following the presentation it was suggested that the committee would receive a further update when appropriate on the development of the project.
- 3 When refreshing the work programme of the committee for 2013/14 it was agreed by members that a visit should be undertaken by the committee to Limestone Landscapes within County Durham so that members could see 'first hand' the development work undertaken by Durham County Council and partners. The visit was held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013 to Thrislington and Raisby quarries and it was felt by those members who attended the visit that a presentation should be provided to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the September meeting for those members who were unable to attend.
- 4 At the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013 members were provided with a presentation focusing on:
  - The importance of the globally unique Magnesian Limestone Grassland communities.
  - Thrislington National Nature Reserve – one of the ecological crown jewels of the region.
  - Opportunities for the restoration of the Thrislington Quarry.

- Raisby Quarry an example of where we are already restoring grassland habitat and utilising it as a place to interpret the geology.
- 5 it was agreed by members following the presentation that the committee would receive a further update on the development of the Limestone Landscapes programme at a future meeting. Arrangements have been made for Tony Devos, Limestone Landscapes Programme Manager to attend the meeting on the 10 November to do a short presentation focusing on:
- What has been delivered over the last 3½ years of the Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme?
  - Successes and lessons learnt.
  - The Forward Strategy for the Limestone Landscapes Partnership.

### **Limestone Landscapes Programme - background**

- 7 The three key drivers behind the programme were the European Landscape Convention, the Natural Environment White paper which looked at how fragmented habitats were joined together and finally the lessons learned and best practice derived from past projects.
- 8 The Magnesian Limestone Plateau is a wide area stretching almost from the Tyne to Tees and from the coast to central Durham. The area is unique, with common themes and patterns in the landscape and strong links between natural and cultural heritage.
- 9 The Limestone Landscape Programme is driven by a Limestone Landscape Partnership (an initiative led by Durham County Council and Natural England) which developed between 2007 and 2010 and is made up of a broad range of local authorities, public, voluntary and private sector organisations that are committed to making a positive difference in the quality of life and unique natural environment of the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau National Character Area. The programme area covers parts of East Durham, Sunderland, South Tyneside, Hartlepool and Darlington.
- 10 The project work is delivered by a combination of 9 key delivery partners and is overseen by a core team based at Durham County Council. The work is also overseen and scrutinised by a Programme Board.
- 11 In December 2010, it was confirmed by the Heritage Lottery Fund that the submission by the Limestone Landscape Partnership (Durham) to the Landscape Partnership had been successful which unlocked a grant worth £1.9m over 3 years with a further £925k in match funding and in-kind contributions, to help conserve the distinct character of the Magnesian Limestone Plateau. Over the three years of the programme the Limestone Landscape Partnership would carry out work on 25 projects which would have links to biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural heritage and the historic environment within this landscape. The Limestone Landscape Programme is now in the final year of projects running from 2011 to 2014.



- 12 Landscape Partnership schemes need to contribute towards all of the four outcomes listed below.

**Conserving and restoring built and natural heritage features typical of the area.**

**Engaging more people and a wider range of people to take an active part in their local landscape heritage.**

**Increasing opportunities for people to have access to and learn about the landscape and its heritage.**

**Providing training opportunities for people in local heritage skills.**

### **Current position**

- 13 To date the Limestone Landscapes Project has spent nearly £2.4m of its £2.8m budget. It is anticipated that all projects will complete by the end of March 2015.

- 14 Achievements to date include:

### **Conserving and Restoring**

- 235 Hectares of Biodiversity Action Plan habitat brought under positive management.
- 4 Kilometres of hedgerow restored or planted.
- Two grade 2 listed buildings restored along with one unlisted building
- Restoring two Geological Sites of Special Interest from declining condition to achieving condition.

### **Community Engagement**

- 9 Community archaeology digs delivered.
- Working with 2,615 community group members from 175 groups
- 2,447 volunteers involved in the project, contributing 22,800 hours of work.
- 38 health projects involving 832 participants

### **Learning**

- 4,855 primary school children worked with at 203 schools
- 613 secondary school pupils worked with at 12 schools
- 24 wildlife surveys undertaken
- Over 6,000 new species records reported to the Environmental Records Information Centre North East (ERIC).

- 257 adult training courses with 1,870 participants covering heritage skills such as archaeology, archiving, blacksmithing, building skills, interpretation, habitat & land management, local history, rural skills (including hedging & walling), species identification/biological recording skills, wood-turning, lime mortaring / lime pointing, stone masonry and homeowner days.

### **Access**

- 3.5 Km of public footpaths and 1.6 Km of bridleways improved
- 1.25 Km of new footpaths created
- 202 guided walks organised with 2,291 participants

### **Next steps**

- 15 The Limestone Landscapes Partnership have developed a Forward Plan of projects to be delivered over the next five years. A report on this programme has received outline approval from RED Management Team, for Durham County Council to host the legacy work identified.

### **Recommendation**

- 16 It is recommended that the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the information provided during the presentation.

### **Background Papers**

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Report - Limestone Landscapes Report and presentation – 26 September 2013

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – Limestone landscapes programme for County Durham was awarded £1.9m grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund which would attract £925k of their cash funding, in kind donations and volunteer time, giving a total budget of £2.825m.

**Staffing** - None

**Risk** – None

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The work of the partnership will be inclusive and reflect the diverse community of the Magnesian Limestone Natural Area and those who visit. People of all ages and abilities from every sector of society will have the opportunity to enjoy the area.

**Accommodation** – None

**Crime and Disorder** – Raising community awareness of issues facing the Magnesian Limestone Natural Area and encouraging participation in local environment initiatives is important to engendering community ownership and reducing anti social behaviour.

**Human Rights** – None

**Consultation** – The work of the partnership is based upon wide ranging consultation and participation.

**Procurement** – None

**Disability Issues** – None

**Legal Implications** – None

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



**10 November 2014**

**Scoping report for Scrutiny review  
of the management of the  
woodland estate owned by DCC**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the committee with background information together with the terms of reference and project plan for the management of the woodland estate owned by Durham County Council.

**Introduction**

2. Woodland is a habitat where trees are the dominant plant form. The individual tree canopies generally overlap and interlink, often forming a more or less continuous canopy which shades the ground to varying degrees. Woodland provides many ecosystem services: regulation of water, absorption of pollutants, carbon sequestration, and habitats for wildlife, provision of fruit, wood fuel and timber, and contribute to the beauty, diversity and distinctiveness of our rural landscapes.
3. Depending on the amount of light reaching the ground through the tree canopy, there will be a great variety of other plants. These will include mosses, ferns and lichens, as well as small flowering herbs, grasses and shrubs. The more different kinds of plants there are, the greater the animal diversity will be in the woodland. This will range from a variety of herbivores feeding on the different plants, to the carnivores which they provide food for. Rotting wood and decaying leaf litter offer alternative food source for a staggering variety of invertebrates. The sheer quantity of dead organic material present means that a wealth of decomposing organisms, such as fungi and bacteria also occur.
4. Those which are publicly accessible form an important recreational resource. In urban areas, trees have a role in absorbing pollution and improving air quality, reducing urban flooding and raising property and land values. Ancient woodland, woods which are known to have existed in 1600 are particularly significant. They are among the most bio diverse habitat in the UK, and are irreplaceable; their continuity fosters more vulnerable species or those which are slow colonisers.
5. When faced with a plot of woodland, the question is often - should it be managed or merely left to nature? The answer will vary depending on the purpose of each individual wood in question. Management will be necessary when economic products such as timber or game species are to be the end result together with other less tangible benefits such as conservation of wildlife and recreational opportunities, management will also be required.

6. Where the primary purpose of woodland is economic, for example, to produce a crop of trees for wood products or game birds for commercial shoots, then management will undoubtedly be necessary. This may involve removing competing species, controlling pests, predators and diseases, as well as ensuring adequate nutrition for the species involved. No management is an option but it is never going to produce an economically viable product.
7. Where the purpose of woodland is for wildlife benefit or conservation, no management might be considered to be an option however it is probably safe to say that within Britain, no single woodland has remained uninfluenced by human activities. This is because woodlands provided essential materials for everyday living with pasture type woodland used to graze sheep and cattle. In pasture-type woodland, sheep and cattle resulting in woodlands being of great economic importance.

### **Woodlands within County Durham**

8. County Durham has a large body of woods and forests. Many of its river corridors are lined with trees and woodland; river corridors are particularly important for ancient woodland. However, woodland cover in the County is low (6%) in comparison with the national average (9%) and the England average of 7% with existing woodlands are often relatively remote from populous areas.
9. The County as a whole is in an area prioritised in national and regional initiatives for an increase in woodland cover. Large areas of the County, including the North Pennines AONB and much of West Durham coalfield lies within a Woodland Creation Initiative.
10. Most ancient woodlands in the county lie on land that is unsuitable for agricultural development, on steep valleys and ravines along rivers and streams with much of the county's woodlands featuring oak and birch due to the acidity of the soil. Ash woodlands can be found on the limestone upland gills, ravines and coastal denes.
11. The majority of woodlands in County Durham are plantations established for timber, shelter, amenity or game. Older woodlands were planted with native species or with broad leafed trees such as sycamore or beech. Conifers such as scots pine or larch planted for the pit wood market which became widespread during the 19 century and continued into the 20 century with the development of large forestry commission forests such as Hamsterley. A third of the county's woodland is in public ownership via the Forestry Commission with the County Council owning and managing approximately 1000 hectares of woodland within the County.

### **National Policy**

12. In 2011 an independent panel on forestry was set up to advise the government on the future direction of forestry and woodland policy in England and on the future role of the Forestry Commission. The panel published its final report in July 2012 which put forward 31 recommendations including issues in relation to the future of the public forest estate, other functions of the forestry commission, woodland creation and management, economic development of the forestry sector, payment for ecosystems, community involvement in local woodlands and tree health.
13. The response by government to the independent panel's report was positive and agreed with the panel report that a new woodland culture should be developed and that

the woodland and forestry sector should become more resilient. A refreshed government forestry policy was produced (Woodland and Forestry Policy Statement 2013) based around a clear hierarchy of priorities which include protecting, improving and expanding public and private woodland assets. It also reflects government principles of economic growth, localism, deregulation, targeted intervention and value for money.

14. The government acknowledge the importance of protecting woodland assets and recognise the importance of preserving and maximising the social and environmental benefits given by trees particularly around urban areas. However there is a need for the sector to improve its economic performance by developing new markets based around better understanding of the value and potential of trees, woods and forests.
15. The policy addresses the need to sustain, manage and improve our forests and woodlands to enable their contribution to economic growth by reducing red tape and working with private landowners and others to actively manage woodlands. The policy identifies the need to work with the sector to explore the scope for exploiting opportunities such as fuel markets or rural tourism. Local government and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities provided by government policies to realise the potential of local woodland assets.
16. In addition the policy statement suggests promotion of greater involvement of communities in the management of woodlands; encourage planting trees, working with communities to seek funding for initiatives aimed at developing future access and to continue to look at ways to improve access to woodlands especially in urban areas.
17. A review was undertaken (Forestry Functions Review July 2013) which informed government and the Forestry Commission on what organisational arrangements on forestry expertise and functions in England would best meet the objectives of the Woodland and Forestry Policy Statement. The review was timed to be aligned with the triennial review of the Environment Agency and Natural England so that each review could inform the other. The Forestry Functions review concluded that:
  - The current forestry functions remain of value and support the aims and objectives of the new forestry and woodlands policy statement as well as wider priorities including plant health and rural economic growth.
  - The benefits of merging forestry and conservation functions were outweighed by keeping the forestry functions together as an integrated whole, with a clear specific focus on delivering forestry and woodlands policy and its economic underpinning.
  - Forestry and woodland policy delivery would be strengthened by simpler governance for forestry in England, which England specific arrangements could allow. Moving to such a model would require legislation and further development and dialogue with the Scottish Government.
  - Implementation of the conclusions of the review would require further analysis of the costs and benefits of delivery options, which could include delivery from within the Secretary of State's department, through a new English forestry body or a reformed forestry commission. Changes would require the transfer of the forestry commission's powers and duties in England to the Secretary of State, who would then decide the precise form of future organisational arrangements.

- Any changes to cross boarder arrangements should be done in discussion and consideration with Scottish and Welsh Governments.
- Any arrangements to deliver constitutional change to the forestry commission will require further development in dialogue with the Scottish Government.
- The wider financial context indicates significant pressure to achieve greater efficiency in the governments forestry functions, therefore further work will be required to identify and deliver the necessary level of efficiencies.

## **Local Policy**

### **The County Durham Landscape Strategy**

18. The County Durham Landscape Strategy is a non-statutory plan (adopted by the council in 2008) which addresses issues that affect the varied landscapes of County Durham by setting out objectives for their conservation, restoration and enhancement and is based on the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment. The strategy is aimed at those who have an interest in the Durham landscape, or who are involved in its management or development. It is intended that it will be adopted and used by a wide range of partners who will guide and facilitate its implementation.
19. The strategy addresses some of the issues that are dealt with in other plans and strategies - development plans, local development frameworks, environmental strategies, biodiversity and geodiversity action plans. It also overlaps geographically with other area-based plans such as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan. It is intended that the strategy should complement such plans.
20. The strategy has the following three aims:
- To conserve and enhance the character and diversity of the Durham landscape.
  - To make development and land management more sustainable by helping to ensure that they respect the character of the landscape and contribute towards wider environmental objectives.
  - To support and complement other environmental strategies to help promote co-ordinated action on the environment.
21. The Landscape Strategy analyses the assets and attributes of the County's varied landscapes, the trends and pressures for change operating within them, and the aspirations of stakeholders for their future management. The strategy also contains spatial strategies which are based on landscape character which broadly indicate the kinds of action it is most appropriate to take in different local landscapes, whether that is conservation, restoration or enhancement or combinations of these. It is intended that these strategies will help to establish integrated objectives for development and land management in all the diverse landscapes within the County.
22. In addition, the strategy contributes to the sustainability of new development by informing planning policies for developments like housing, minerals or wind energy. It helps in decisions where new developments should go and how it should be designed if it is to conserve what is valued about our environment. The strategy will be used in the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and guidance on its use in planning applications will be contained within a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The



Strategy will help inform the way land management initiatives and agri-environmental schemes such as Environmental Stewardship are targeted.

23. One of the principal mechanisms for delivering the Strategy will be through the development of Landscape-Scale Partnerships. A key task of these partnerships will be to develop action plans based on a common purpose and a shared vision of the future of the landscape. These action plans will integrate environmental, economic and social goals and be delivered by a broad partnership of local authorities, government agencies, the voluntary and private sectors and community groups. They will provide a framework for the activity of partners in those landscapes and identify key tasks and projects for conserving and enhancing the environment and securing funding for their implementation.
24. The emerging County Durham Plan has used the Landscape Strategy as part of its evidence base when developing policy 39 focusing on maintaining landscape character. Policy 39 states that proposals for new development will only be permitted where they would not cause significant harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views, unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh its impacts and that development proposals should have regard to the objectives of the County Durham Landscape Strategy and contribute, where possible, to conservation or enhancement of local landscape and the work of the Local Landscape Partnerships.

### **County Durham Woodland Strategy**

25. The Landscape Strategy contains a strategy for woodlands and forestry which seeks to improve the condition and management of the County's woodland resource and to increase woodland cover. It identifies priority areas for the creation of new native woodland, riparian woodland and community woodland. This will assist in reversing habitat fragmentation, strengthen landscape character and enhance biodiversity. Woodland expansion can also make an important contribution to the urban fringe environment.

### **Green Infrastructure Strategy**

26. Green infrastructure is an emerging concept which refers to the network of multi-functional green spaces – woodlands, nature reserves, river corridors, cycle ways and public open space that contribute to the appearance, accessibility, biodiversity and liveability of urban areas and the countryside around and between them. Durham County Council in partnership has developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy for County Durham.
27. The countryside around towns or 'rural urban fringe' is part of the rural landscape most familiar to people who live in cities, towns and villages. It is also the part of the landscape most subject to pressures for development, access and recreation. In County Durham the industrial settlement pattern of the coalfield gives a 'semi-rural' or urban fringe character to large areas of the countryside in the centre and east of the county. The complexities of problems and opportunities in the rural urban fringe require an integrated approach to land management and planning. The development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy offers the potential of dealing with landscape, biodiversity, access and regeneration issues in the countryside around towns in a

systematic way and has a greater degree of integration with spatial planning at a regional and local level.

28. The rural urban fringe is inevitably the part of the countryside where pressure for new development, whether for new housing, industry, transport infrastructure, mineral working or waste disposal is greatest. At the same time it is necessary to conserve the often fragile rural character of these landscapes and to contain urban sprawl. Development can contribute towards improving the appearance, biodiversity or accessibility of the countryside. Such improvements are more likely to be delivered in a systematic way where there is a Green Infrastructure Strategy in place that is reflected in Local Development Frameworks.

29. Other important Durham County Council projects include the Durham Hedgerow Partnership, which seeks to identify opportunities for conserving or planting hedgerow trees, particularly on the Council's own estate, and the Durham Veteran Tree Project, engaging the public in surveying veteran or ancient trees. The strategy identifies how planning policies impact on trees and woodlands such as:

- Resisting development that would have a significant detrimental effect upon trees and woodland, particularly ancient woodland and urban trees.
- Requiring new woodlands to be planted, where appropriate, as part of the restoration schemes agreed for new or current opencast mineral sites and landfill sites.
- Instituting policies for new tree planting for example requiring all new streets to contain street trees, or requiring three new trees to be planted for each one removed.

Statement 10 of the strategy refers directly to trees, woodlands and forests and identifies actions required which include.

- Implementing the County Durham Woodland Strategy and supporting the work of the Durham Hedgerow Partnership and Durham Veteran Tree Project.
- Removing plantations in sensitive areas, such as blanket bog and historic landscapes, where appropriate.
- Improving the biodiversity of existing woodlands through appropriate management, including coppicing and removal of timber crops to create more robust woodland habitats.
- Encouraging new large multi-purpose woodlands in those areas affected in the past by land reclamation and opencast mineral working and to restore waste disposal sites and derelict land.
- Supporting proposals for forestry and other industries employing woodland resources, including biomass.
- Protecting urban trees from damage caused by engineering works and other adjacent.

Policy 20 of the emerging County Durham Plan specifies the requirements regarding development proposals in relation to the green infrastructure within County Durham.

## **County Durham Plan**

30. The emerging County Durham Plan policy 40 lays down specific requirements for development proposals which may impact on trees, woodlands and hedges including ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNW) which make up only 1.3% of the county and planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Natural England has produced an inventory of ancient woodlands which the County Council has updated on the basis of more

recent information. This includes ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNW) and planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS). The County Durham Plan policy 40 stipulates the following:

- Concerning woodlands, proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing woodland and integrate them fully into the design having regard to future management requirements. Development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of woodland unless the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the loss and suitable replacement planting either within or beyond the site boundary can be undertaken. Proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss, fragmentation, isolation or deterioration of ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm. In these exceptional circumstances appropriate compensation will be required. Proposals affecting ancient woodland (including planted ancient woodland sites) not previously identified as such, will be subject to the same considerations.
- In relation to trees, proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of, or damage to, trees of high landscape, amenity or biodiversity value unless the need for, and benefits of, the proposal clearly outweigh the loss. Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing trees where possible and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their management requirements and growth potential. Where trees are lost suitable replacement planting will be required within the site or the locality.
- Concerning hedges, proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of hedges of high landscape, heritage, amenity or biodiversity value unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing hedgerows where they make a positive contribution to the design of the proposals. Where any hedges are lost, replacement planting or renovation of existing hedges, including management and maintenance arrangements will be required within the site or the locality.

### **Tree Management Policy**

31. Durham County Council has agreed a county wide tree policy for the management of all trees under Durham County Council ownership and for those trees in private ownership which pose a safety risk to the public highway. It was felt that having a written document would ensure that service responds to requests in a consistent manner.
32. Durham County Council aims to inspect its tree stock at an appropriate frequency to ensure public safety. In addition, under the Highways Act Durham County Council has a duty to ensure that those trees in private ownership adjacent to the Highway do not pose a danger to users seeking to ensure that all roads are inspected at reasonable intervals, that defective trees are noted, tree owners are identified and contacted and the appropriate work is undertaken. Durham County Council also provides high standards of tree management based on the latest arboricultural research and promote such standards with private tree owners.

33. The tree policy also details the requirements in relation to Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas.

### **Reviews by other local authorities**

34. For the information of the committee there has been no other scrutiny review undertaken looking at the management of woodlands however detail of scrutiny reviews undertaken by other local authorities focusing on trees and the countryside are listed below:

- Scrutiny Review of Trees and Woodlands Policy in East Sussex – was undertaken in March 2012 by East Sussex Council’s Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee. The review looked at the County council’s policies for planting trees on highways and school grounds and the effectiveness of the strategy for tackling Dutch elm disease.  
<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/C27996C1-AB7A-4B0F-AA5F-40E4BD660376/0/treesandwoodlandreport.pdf>
- Scrutiny review on Trees London Borough of Merton’s Sustainable Communities Scrutiny committee carried out a review in March 2012 of how the council manages the planting and maintenance of trees in the borough, with a view to improving procedures already in place [http://www.merton.gov.uk/trees\\_2012.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/trees_2012.pdf)
- Middlesbrough Council’s Environment scrutiny panel carried out a review on Countryside Matters in 2009. The focus of the review was existing provision, tree management, community and partner involvement, bio-diversity issues and update on allotments.  
<http://cfps.org.uk/domains/cfps.org.uk/local/media/library/countrysidematters.pdf>

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Rationale**

35. A report was presented to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 3 July, 2014 detailing the proposed work programme of the committee for 2014/2015. At that meeting it was highlighted to members that as part of the refresh of the work programme arrangements had been made for a visit by the committee to various community woodland sites within the County providing an opportunity for members to see ‘first hand’ the work undertaken by Durham County Council (DCC) and partners on woodland owned and managed by DCC.

A discussion then followed where members asked for further detail on the role of DCC in relation to the management of the woodland estate, the key partners within County Durham and confirmation as to whether timber extraction was taking place within the County. Following the conclusion of the discussion it was felt by committee members that the management of the woodlands estate owned by DCC was a topic suitable for focused scrutiny review activity providing an opportunity to examine whether current policies and strategies are ‘fit for purpose’, that funding is maximised and possible diversification opportunities for the use of woodland are developed.

Arrangements have been made for an overview presentation on the management of the woodlands estate to be given to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November providing information on the following:

- National and regional policy in relation to the management of trees and woodlands providing detail of context and identifying how the policy landscape has changed in recent years.
- How national and regional policy is translated locally – Overview of the County Durham Landscape Strategy and its key aims and objectives relating to woodland and forestry, types of woodland within County Durham, map showing distribution of woodland types within the County and woodland owned and managed by DCC.
- Local policy for tree management – Overview of the County Durham Tree Management Policy covering trees in DCC ownership and private ownership and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- Key partners – identify partners with examples of projects undertaken within the County, how they are funded and what issues have been encountered.
- Funding – current and potential sources of future funding for woodland management and the potential to generate additional income from our timber stocks or use woodlands as a fuel source for council buildings using biomass heating systems.

## **Objectives**

36. The aim of the review is to investigate how Durham County Council strategically manages the woodland estate for which it is responsible and will cover the following objectives:
- (a). To examine how the woodland estate owned by Durham County Council is managed including the community woodland estate managed by Neighbourhood Services for public benefit, together with detail of projects undertaken, the woodland restructuring programme and any issues in relation to managing the estate.
  - (b). To investigate what funding is currently available and identify any potential sources of future funding including EU funding opportunities for the management of the woodlands estate together with income generation from various initiatives such as biofuel schemes, sponsorship schemes, leasing or selling woodland.
  - (c). To establish how DCC encourages local people to use community woodlands including how we engage with local communities (do we use AAPs/Durham County News to publicise local projects), do we link in with the health agenda promoting projects from a health perspective, identify any projects that target specific groups (disabled, young people etc.) detail of participation rates within County Durham compared to participation rates nationally and regionally in relation to similar community based projects.
  - (d). To establish the work undertaken by DCC to encourage, engage with and support volunteers including detail of the current volunteer participation rate, how this compares nationally and regionally, are any projects targeted at specific groups (disabled, young people) and examples of volunteering schemes operated by partners within the County.

- (e).To identify work currently undertaken within the woodland estate in relation to timber extraction schemes and the development of woodland on unused land owned by DCC to generate biofuels.
- (f).To establish the work undertaken by DCC and partners within the woodland estate to promote the various habitats within the County, various projects that support wildlife, flora and fauna and identify changes in funding and policy.

### **Focus**

37. The review should seek to identify outcomes and make recommendations in relation to:

- (a) Are DCCs current policies, strategies and plans effective in relation to managing the woodland estate owned by DCC?
- (b) Is partnership working within the County in relation to managing the woodland estate robust?
- (c).How DCC will fund woodland management in the future?
- (d).Should DCC be seeking to create new woodland that meets multiple objectives on DCC estate where appropriate?
- (e).How DCC and partners encourage, engage with and support communities within County Durham to participate in woodland projects and initiatives?
- (f). DCC's current and future arrangements for the diversification of the woodland estate?
- (g).How DCC and partners promote biodiversity within the woodland estate?

### **Membership**

38. The membership of the Scrutiny Review Group will consist of members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The membership of the Review Group will be no more than 10 including the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

### **Reporting**

39. On completion of evidence gathering and formulation of the recommendations a report will be drafted and sent to Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and the Environmental Partnership Group.

## **Timescales**

40. The review will commence in December, 2014 with the aim of reporting to Cabinet in July/ Sept 2015.

## **Recommendation**

41. Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

Agree the terms of reference as set out in paragraphs 34 to 39.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** –None

**Staffing** – None

**Risk** - None

**Equality and Diversity** –An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in respect of the Scrutiny Review recommendations.

**Accommodation** - None

**Crime and Disorder** - None

**Human Rights** - None

**Consultation** – None

**Procurement** - None

**Disability Discrimination Act** – None

**Legal Implications** – None





**County Durham Environment Partnership Board  
Minutes**

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014  
Hardwick Park, Sedgfield**

**Apologies**

Julian Carrington - Environment Agency  
 Adrian Vass - Natural England  
 Steve Hunter - Climate Change Group  
 Stuart Timmiss - Durham County Council

**Attendees:**

**Chair:** Terry Collins - Durham County Council

Julie Form - Groundwork North East  
 Mark Usher - Natural England  
 Jim Cokill - Durham Wildlife Trust  
 Tara Duncan - Durham University  
 Oliver Sherratt - Durham County Council  
 Steve Bhowmick - Durham County Council  
 Gordon Elliott - Durham County Council  
 Jayne Watson - Durham County Council  
 Vicki Burrell - Durham County Council  
 Stella Hindson - Durham County Council  
 Beverley Clark (Minutes) - Durham County Council

Item No.	Subject	Action By
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b>                      The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies noted. Tara Duncan (Sustainability Manager, Durham University) was introduced and welcomed to the Board.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b>                      Consideration was given to the minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Vicki Burrell stated that the Low Carbon and Sustainable Growth document had been electronically sent to all but if members hadn't received it to inform her and she would resend it.                      University board member had been invited and is present at the meeting.                      Action point regarding the Partnership Newsletter to be discussed under item 4.</p>	

### 3. **Updates from Group Chairs & Questions**

#### Coastal, Heritage & Landscape Group

Oliver Sherratt gave an update and reported that the group last met on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The group is coordinating various landscape groups in existence as well as looking at specific projects such as Wildflower Meadows, Hedgerow Maintenance and Heritage Skills.

Annual heritage open days are planned for 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September.

The group is also working with Groundwork regarding community work placements. Steve Bhowmick is working towards raising the profile and engagement of the group. It was stated that the Limestone Landscapes Project is coming to an end, the impact being there would be a loss of momentum as the project has supported many community groups. Steve Bhowmick reported he is currently pursuing funding/resources to ensure the project is extended.

A discussion was held in relation to the Community Placement Programme. Julie Form gave background information on the Community Placement Programme – placements are for 30 hours a week, for carrying out genuine community work. There is huge potential there and as well as health benefits local organisations see the values of the programme.

Jayne Watson suggested a link between this programme of work and a Village Champion Scheme.

#### Environment in Your Communities

Julie Form reported that the group met on 20<sup>th</sup> June. She said that Sarah Robinson from Durham Community Action gave a presentation in relation to the Voluntary Sector across County Durham. It is anticipated through the work of the Environment in Your Communities Group that volunteering will be promoted further.

The focus point of the group is Nourishing Neighbourhoods which is progressing.

The group is looking at a project called Rethink Parks and focusing on how the group can become more involved with local parks and community space.

Jim Cokill pointed out that there are many woodland cooperative schemes. A discussion followed regarding woodlands as they're an untapped resource.

Tara Duncan stated that Durham University has a volunteer scheme whereby around 3000 employees are allowed 5 days each to carry out volunteering work; it can range from team building to cleaning riverbanks. Tara stated that the university would be willing to participate in further volunteering work for the Partnership. The Student Environment Network would also be willing to provide additional support.

	<p><u>Climate Change</u> No update given as Steve Hunter not present. Terry Collins and Steve Bhowmick to discuss contacting Steve Hunter.</p> <p><u>Local Nature Partnership</u> Jim Cokill reported that Claire Thompson (The 3 Rivers LNP Officer) will be working closely with DCC colleagues to help coordinate efforts to develop coherent regional proposals for green infrastructure. It was reported that the work of the LEP is currently very positive. Meetings have been held regarding European funding. There will be a committee under the LEP board which will be part of the scrutiny assessing bids coming in. LNP's have organised workshops to review information that will be used to target Natural England's New Land Management Scheme (NELMS). The Northern Upland Chain LNP is moving forward with work programmes.</p>	Terry Collins/Steve Bhowmick
4.	<p><b>Environment Partnership Communications</b> Stella Hindson is to provide each Chair with copies of certificates. Stella presented an example of the proposed newsletter format which the group all agreed was fine. Vicki Burrell added that she will help to coordinate and collate information for articles. A discussion took place and it was agreed that Stella will contact the group chairs initially and that the newsletter will be a quarterly publication. The newsletter will be ready for the next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Oliver Sherratt and Steve Bhowmick to circulate the Coastal, Heritage and Landscape Group newsletter.</p>	Stella Hindson  Stella Hindson  Oliver Sherratt/Steve Bhowmick
5.	<p><b>Britain in Bloom Update</b> Oliver Sherratt said that Britain in Bloom looks at the wider picture of residential areas, environmental responsibility and community participation as well as flower displays. It's not a Council initiative and includes voluntary organisations, Durham University, Durham Railway Station and the police. The judges are coming to look around on 7<sup>th</sup> August. Funding (£42,000) has been received from various sources such as AAP's parish councils, members and businesses. DCC also sponsors Sedgfield Town Council in another category of Britain in Bloom. Oliver to circulate portfolio of Britain Bloom. Jim Cokill pointed out that there was interesting article in the New York Times regarding Durham City which he will forward to everyone.</p>	Oliver Sherratt  Jim Cokill

<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Environment Awards Update</b></p> <p>Steve Bhowmick stated that the launch of the Environment Awards held on 5<sup>th</sup> June was fantastic. He then provided an update on the Environment Awards reporting that the cut off day for applications is 25<sup>th</sup> July. To date there has been 27 entries.</p> <p>The open spaces category has proved really popular; in the under 18's, climate change and waste categories there have been no real applicants. Press releases have gone out and targeted letters are to be sent out shortly. There are nine external sponsors and two internal ones with over £12,500 committed.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Vicki Burrell reported that there will be a County Durham Partnership event on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Gordon Elliott added that it will be a celebration event at which the Sustainable Community Strategy will be launched. In the process of looking for a venue and speakers.</p> <p>Oliver Sherratt stated that there are two reports going to Cabinet – The Tree Management Report; and The Dog Control Order (which is looking at a seasonal dog ban from stretches of Seaham beach).</p>	



## Durham Strategic Flood Prevention Group

### Minutes from the Meeting held on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014, 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m., Conference Room 4B, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UQ

#### Present:

Paul Armin (PA), Senior Area Drainage Engineer, Durham County Council  
 Claire Barry (CB) [Minutes], PA to the Head of Technical Services, Durham County Council  
 Martin Brown (MB), Investment Delivery Team Leader, Northumbrian Water Limited  
 Brian Buckley (BB), Strategic Highways Manager, Durham County Council  
 David Charlton (DC), Project Manager, Northumbrian Water Limited  
 Councillor David Hall (DH), Durham County Council/NRFCC Member  
 Les Hall (LH), Development Manager, Northumbrian Water Limited  
 Martin Kennedy (MK), Sustainable Sewerage Manager, Northumbrian Water Limited  
 Phil Marshall (PM), Team Leader, Partnerships and Strategic Overview, Environment Agency  
 Steena Nasapen-Watson (SNW), Senior Advisor-Flood/Coastal Risk Management, Environment Agency  
 John Reed (JR) [Chair], Head of Technical Services, Durham County Council  
 Dane Rollo (DR), Resilience Manager, Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service  
 Tony Ward (TW), Senior Project Manager, Durham County Council

#### Apologies:

Su Jordan (SJ), CCU Programme Office Manager, Durham County Council  
 Simon Longstaff (SL), Drainage and Coastal Defence Manager, Durham County Council  
 Peter Ollivere (PO), Principal Planner, Durham County Council  
 Zoe Thirlaway (ZT), Policy Officer, Durham County Council

	Subject	Assigned Officer	By When
1.	<b>Minutes from the Previous Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014</b>  <b>Update from the Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC)</b> This section was amended to read “The Committee confirmed their agreement with over-programming and that the aim should be 10% for this financial year.”	-	-
2.	<b>Matters Arising</b>  <b>Shared Intranet Site</b> PA to investigate 4 Projects and respond to JR by 26.9.14.  <b>Local Resilience Forum Approach to Community Resilience</b> The system is in the process of being changed; SJ and DR are to carry	PA  SJ/DR	26.09.14  20.11.14

	<p>out a presentation at the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014.</p> <p><b>Evacuation Procedures</b> DR advised that DCLG have produced advice regarding how to safely exit buildings etc.; DR to provide an update at the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014.</p> <p><b>Drainage Works and Maintenance</b> PA is currently awaiting confirmation from Adrian Vass regarding whether Natural England can provide assistance.</p> <p><b>Flooding in Bishop Auckland</b> NWL are carrying out a study in relation to tenuation tanks; MK is to provide an update.</p> <p><b>Public Flooding Investigations</b> BB advised that a letter to householders, for Insurers, detailing the work that has undertaken by DCC has been drafted for approval.</p>	<p>DR</p> <p>-</p> <p>MK</p> <p>-</p>	<p>20.11.14</p> <p>-</p> <p>20.11.14</p> <p>-</p>
3.	<p><b>Sewer Flood Risk Reduction – Property Level Protection</b></p> <p>MB carried out a presentation regarding Property Level Protection. MK is to liaise with PA regarding the list of capital schemes.</p>	<p>MK</p>	<p>26.09.14</p>
4.	<p><b>Local Choices / Priority Schemes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A discussion took place regarding local choices affecting the Durham County area; this is to be addressed at the P&amp;I Subgroup on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.</li> <li>▪ Seaham North Promenade: The probability is that this will be removed from the programme for next year.</li> <li>▪ Lanchester: This is a priority which is to be carried out this year.</li> <li>▪ Hardwick Road, Sedgfield: This has been identified to be carried out in 2019/20; PA requested for this to be brought forward to 2015/16.</li> <li>▪ Tindale Beck: DCC have provisionally allocated £100,000 in 2015/16 and requested for this to be reallocated to 2016/17; SNW to action.</li> </ul>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>SNW</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>26.09.14</p>
5.	<p><b>Capital Programme – Dashboard Report</b></p> <p>TW presented the report. The following points were noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lanchester: This is to be addressed to ensure that there is no slippage; PA is to action.</li> <li>▪ Chester le Street: Temporary works have been completed. The permanent works are now being reviewed; NWL are to formulate a working group.</li> <li>▪ PLP Schemes: TW to include these schemes on future Dashboard Reports.</li> </ul>	<p>PA</p> <p>-</p> <p>TW</p>	<p>03.10.14</p> <p>-</p> <p>Ongoing Basis</p>

6.	<p><b>Update on Durham Medium Term Plan (MTP)</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the Medium Term Plan would be incorporated into the Capital Programme Dashboard Report for future meetings; TW is to action.</p>	TW	Ongoing Basis
7.	<p><b>Update on Flood Investigations</b></p> <p><b><i>Durham County Council</i></b>  DCC have received 1113 requests for investigations from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to date; 948 have been completed, work is currently being undertaken on 82 and 83 are to be investigated.</p> <p>A breakdown of the investigations detailed by the geographical areas is provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chester le Street: 111</li> <li>▪ Derwentside: 282</li> <li>▪ Durham: 171</li> <li>▪ Easington: 154</li> <li>▪ Northumberland: 1 (this is being addressed by DCC however is outside of Durham County)</li> <li>▪ Teasdale: 53</li> <li>▪ Sedgefield: 97</li> <li>▪ Wear Valley: 244</li> </ul> <p>A breakdown of the investigations detailed by the source of the flooding is provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sewer: 60</li> <li>▪ Highway: 222</li> <li>▪ Overland: 208</li> <li>▪ River/water: 157</li> <li>▪ Non related: 466</li> </ul>	-  -  -	-  -  -
8.	<p><b>Update from the Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC)</b></p> <p><b><i>Youth Offending Team</i></b>  The Youth Offending Team have been carrying out work in Tyneside and are in the process of rolling this out across the rest of the region; PA is to review for DCC.</p> <p><b><i>Local Levy</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was noted that there is an over commitment of 10% that is to be discussed at the P&amp;I Subgroup on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2014.</li> <li>▪ NRFCC have undertaken discussions regarding using Local Levy funding for maintenance works however it has not been agreed by the Committee to take this forward at the present time.</li> </ul>	PA  -  -	31.10.14  -  -
9.	<p><b>European Funding - Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation</b></p>		

	Ongoing work is taking place to maximise the opportunities.	-	-
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Plans</b></p> <p><b><i>EA Flood Risk Management Plans</i></b> These will be out for consultation from September to December 2014. This does not include surface water flooding however this will need to be included for the next round in six years.</p> <p><b><i>Infrastructure Delivery Plan</i></b> The examination with the public is to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014. The next step is to address any issues that are raised by the investigator. NWL are working with DCC.</p> <p><b><i>Local Flood Risk Management Strategy</i></b> RAB Consultants are currently reviewing the draft strategy. This is to be received during the latter part of October 2014, following which, this will be provided to the EA and NWL for comments.</p> <p><b><i>Surface Water Management Plan</i></b> No issues were raised.</p> <p><b><i>Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)</i></b> Defra have advised that an announcement is to be provided during the summer period.</p>	-	-
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b><i>Water Framework Directive</i></b> All of the Water Boards have been provided with a designation and are required to obtain the best designated status. There will be opportunities to provide comments through the European Legislation.</p> <p><b><i>Flood Map</i></b> The link to the updated flood map that contains the data set to carry out property counts is to be provided to PA; PM is to action.</p> <p><b><i>NRFCC Flood and Coastal Training Date - 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014</i></b> DH and PA have received invitations to attend this training.</p>	-	-
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014, 10.00 a.m.</b> <b>Conference Room 4C,</b> <b>Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UQ</b></p>	<b>PM</b>	<b>26.09.14</b>



## Environment Agency

### Minutes of a meeting of the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee held at the Thistle Hotel, Middlesbrough on Friday, 10 October 2014 at 10.00 am

<b><u>Present:</u></b>	Dr J Hargreaves Mr P Armin Mr M Chicken Councillor T Dixon Councillor P Harman Councillor T Harvey Councillor M James Councillor D Ledger Councillor H McLuckie Mr J Robinson Mr J Young Mr S Dickie	Chairman Sub - Durham Council Sub – Stockton Council South Tyneside Council Darlington Council Middlesbrough Council Hartlepool Council Northumberland County Council Redcar and Cleveland Council Sub - Newcastle City Council Sub - Gateshead Council Independent Member
<b><u>Officers:</u></b>	Ms M Fallon Mr P Welton Mr A Cadas Mr B Rodham Mr P Marshall Mr J Heslop Ms D Murphy Mr B Marley	Area Manager Area FCRM Manager Area Operations Manager Acting Programme Manager Partnership and Strategic Overview Team Leader Environment Programme Manager (Minute 53/14) Technical Officer (FRB) (Minute 53/14) NRFCC Secretary
<b><u>In Attendance:</u></b>	Mr P Woods Ms L Small Ms N Younis	North East Coastal Group Middlesbrough Council (Minute 53/14) Middlesbrough Council (Minute 53/14)

There were nine observers at the meeting.

#### **41/14 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting including new member Helen McLuckie. He thanked Middlesbrough Council for hosting the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Bell (Newcastle), D Hall (Durham), G Miller (Sunderland), J McElroy (Gateshead), and D Rose (Stockton) and from J Cokill, H Clear-Hill and R Warneford.

There were four prior notified and confirmed substitute members in attendance as noted in the attendance list above.

#### **42/14 MEMBERSHIP**

The Chairman said that David Stewart had resigned from the Committee. Members thanked David for his service and contributions to the Committee and asked the Chair to write a letter of thanks on its behalf.

Following the recent recruitment of an independent member, the selection panel had identified a second candidate who met the criteria and was eligible for appointment to fill a vacancy should this occur within a period of six months. The Area Manager said

that she had offered the vacant position to that person to avoid a second recruitment exercise in 2014.

**43/14 PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

None declared.

**44/14 MINUTES**

It was resolved to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2014.

**45/14 MATTERS ARISING [NRFCC/088]**

The Committee noted matters arising outlined in the table including an outstanding issue to nominate an additional RFCC Member from the Tyne and Wear Partnership for the Programming and Investment Sub Group.

**46/14 AREA UPDATE [NRFCC/089]**

Phil Welton submitted an Area Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) report covering all aspects of FCRM in the Committee's area. The report covered progress on Grant-in-Aid, Local Levy and Environment Programmes as well as giving updates on major schemes, work with partners, incident response, maintenance/recovery and communications and engagement. The Committee discussed the following issues:

**a) Programme Strengthening**

Mr Welton outlined the additions to the Flood and Coastal Risk Management Grant-in-Aid (FCRMGiA) Programme totalling £716k and the changes to the spending profile to spend more FCRMGiA this year and moving Local Levy expenditure to 2015/16. As a consequence of this re-profiling, he asked the Committee to note that the carry over for Levy will be greater than anticipated. **The Chairman asked to note this adjustment in future updates to make it clear that the additional carry over is not due to underspending.**

**b) Major Schemes Updates**

**The Committee asked for a more detailed presentation on the Lustrum Beck scheme at the next meeting.**

**c) RFCC Workshop**

Mr Welton said that Member attendance at the workshop had been low and he would welcome feedback to inform future events.

Councillor McLuckie said that as a new Member she had found the event useful from an information and networking perspective.

**It was agreed to have a discussion at a future meeting about the content and audience for a future event.**

**d) Efficiency Targets**

Mr Welton highlighted efficiencies of £2.28m achieved against a target of £1.1m. As a result of the success in quarter 1, the Area had agreed to take on

an additional £1.2m of Yorkshire's target meaning an achievement of 98.7% against target at the end of quarter 1. Further efficiencies submitted would take the achievement to 111% of target at the end of Quarter 2.

A significant proportion of the efficiencies had been achieved following close cooperation between the Environment Agency and Hartlepool Council over the Greatham Realignment.

e) **Future Meetings**

**It was agreed to visit the Brunton Park partnership scheme after the January Committee meeting.**

f) **Private Contributions to Schemes**

Mr Welton outlined some of the more significant private contributions secured towards schemes in the Committee's investment programme. This included schemes at Brunton Park, Seaham and Hartlepool. He invited Members to contact him if they would like to receive more detailed information.

The Chairman referred to the significant contributions received from the local community towards a scheme at Runswick Bay in Yorkshire RFCC area. Mr Welton agreed that this should be highlighted as a model for good practice.

**Resolved**

It was resolved to note the Area Update.

**47/14 PROGRAMMING AND INVESTMENT SUB-GROUP REPORT [NRFCC/090]**

The Chairman submitted a report of the Programming and Investment Sub-Group following its meeting on 3 September 2014. The meeting had been open to all members of the Committee to attend.

Key issues included an update on the current Local Levy programme especially the relatively low level spending so far (currently £543k out of a programme of £4,036k). The Chairman highlighted the importance of all risk management authorities meeting their spending targets by submitting their claims for funding.

The meeting also considered draft Local Choices for 2015/16 to 2020/21. This item is the subject of a separate report on the agenda (Minute 48/14). There had been some concern about flexibility to bring forward schemes eg following a major flood event and dealing with project slippage. Further details about the high level principles relating to the future management of the programme were outlined in paper NRFCC/091.

**Resolved**

It was resolved to:

- i) Note the current financial position, the revised Local Levy programme for 2014/15 and the carry over to 2015/16 as set out in further detail in the Area Update.
- ii) Note the importance of Risk Management Authorities continuing to forecast accurately their expenditure and make the Environment Agency aware if

some of their expenditure is likely to carry forward or they no longer require their full Local Levy allocation.

- iii) Approve the Local Choices for 2015/16 to 2020/21 submitted for National consideration following the Programming and Investment Sub-Group meeting in September.

**48/14 PROPOSED 2015/16 TO 2020/21 CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**  
[NRFCC/091]

Phil Welton submitted a report and gave a presentation on the FCRM capital investment programme. Following the Local Choices submission the Committee received £45.6m (65%) of its bid over the 6 years. This percentage was comparable with outcomes for other Regional Flood and Coastal Committees. He highlighted the split of funding between the 15 Risk Management Authorities allocated funding in the Committee's area. He also summarised the Local Levy programme against tied and untied projects including unallocated Levy or over programme, assuming a 0% increase on Levy over the 6 years.

Information on the future management of the programme, including the emerging high level principles was outlined in paragraph 4.3 of the paper.

The Chairman thanked all concerned for their sterling work in pulling together the programme in such a short period of time.

**Resolved**

It was resolved to:

- i) Note how the draft proposed capital investment programme has been built.
- ii) Consent to the draft proposed programme's implementation in preparation for the Autumn Statement.
- iii) Note the emerging high level principles for the future management of the programme.

**49/14 SETTING THE 2015/16 LOCAL LEVY RATE** [NRFCC/092]

The Chairman presented a paper on options for setting the Local Levy rate for 2015/16. He mentioned that in due course he would like to have a discussion around a more strategic approach to levy setting to increase certainty of funding over a set period of time to match the six-year Grant-in-Aid programme.

For the present he recognised the financial difficulties faced by local authorities following their own grant settlements. However, he asked the local authority appointees to consider a minimum increase of 1.6% to keep pace with inflation.

After discussion, eight of the ten authorities represented at the meeting were content with an increase of 2%. Darlington and Gateshead councils favoured a standstill (0%).

Members raised the following points:

- a) The importance of using Local Levy funding to keep feasibility studies in train to help build up a pipeline of schemes.

- b) It would be beneficial to isolate any increase from the main programme by utilising the extra funding of about £40k to untied (ie 100% funded) Levy projects. This would create a fund for other activities or work. Suggestions for the Committee's future consideration included paying for a resource to bring in third party funding or towards 'slow the flow' type small projects or for Risk Management Authority training opportunities. It might be beneficial to involve other parties in these discussions eg the two Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Committee's Area (for third party funding discussions) and Natural England/National Farmers' Union for natural flooding solutions [NB: Mr James Copeland who was present at the meeting as an observer said he was sure his members would be happy to work with and assist the Environment Agency and its partners].

Councillor M James (Hartlepool) proposed an increase of 2% in the Local Levy with the new funds generated ring fenced to untied Levy projects as described in b) above. Councillor H McLuckie seconded the motion. On being put to the vote the motion was carried (with local authority members/substitutes voting only) by eight votes in favour and two votes (Darlington and Gateshead Councils) against.

### **Resolved**

It was resolved to:

- i) Consent to a Local Levy for 2015/16 of £2,171,592 equivalent to £3.28 per Band D equivalent property.
- ii) Utilise the 2% increase in Local Levy on untied (100% Local Levy funded) projects with details to be discussed and agreed by the Committee.

## **50/14 LOCAL LEVY INVESTMENT PRIORITISATION CRITERIA**

Phil Marshall gave a presentation on the ongoing work of the Prioritisation Group to produce prioritisation criteria to compare different capital flood defence schemes and to consider the percentage split in the use of Local Levy.

He outlined a number of issues requiring further deliberation and to clarify some inconsistencies that had come to light at the NRFCC workshop in September. The workshop participants agreed that simplifying the criteria should help. Members favoured this. However, they also asked for a degree of flexibility in the process to enable innovative/demonstration type schemes to succeed. In reality this might mean it would be necessary to develop two sets of criteria or to give the Committee discretion to set aside the criteria. There was also the issue of ensuring a fair distribution of Levy monies across the Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Mr Marshall thanked Members for their comments and guidance that would be taken on board in the preparation of a revised draft. He said that he hoped to bring a final set of criteria to the January NRFCC meeting after seeking advice from the Programming and Investment Sub-Group in December.

## **51/14 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS AND RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS CONSULTATION**

Richard Robinson gave a presentation on the production and consultation on draft Flood Risk Management Plans required under the Floods Directive. The consultation

started on 10 October and would run until 31 January 2015 (except Solway Tweed consultation that would run until 2 June to align with Scottish Environment Protection Agency consultation). Consultation on draft updated River Basin Management Plans had also been launched until 10 April 2015.

He said that the document for Northumbria covered only the flood risk that the Environment Agency managed. Also as there are no significant flood risk areas within the river basin district, there is no statutory requirement for Lead Local Flood Authorities to produce a Flood Risk Management Plan. North Yorkshire County Council had contributed voluntarily. This meant that the Plan covered at a high level the risk from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs.

He undertook to circulate the links for the online consultation.

Members asked if we were missing an opportunity to include all sources of flood risk in one document.

In reply, Mr Robinson said that risks from other sources including surface water and ordinary watercourses are covered in local flood risk management strategies produced by Lead Local Flood Authorities. It was a question of timescale as to whether or not they could be included in the Plan published next year and depended on the information supplied by LLFAs. However, it should be possible to include this extra information in the second round of Flood Risk Management Plans to be produced in the future.

Mr Robinson encouraged Members to submit their views on this more inclusive approach in their responses to the consultation. He also agreed to take away an action to keep Members updated on how many authorities had agreed to provide information voluntarily to enable inclusion of the data in the final plan.

The Chairman thanked Mr Robinson for his presentation and the Members for their strong views on the need for a more inclusive approach to presenting information on flood risk across the river basin district.

#### **52/14 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE (SuDS) [NRFCC/093]**

Steve Dickie submitted an update on the work of the group to establish a Committee position statement on Sustainable Drainage. However, this had been put on hold because, on the day of the group meeting, the National Standards had been published followed by a Ministerial Statement and consultation setting out a possible alternative approach for implementing SuDS and for future maintenance mechanisms to the one envisaged in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Paul Armin clarified the situation following legal advice on local authorities' abilities to charge householders and businesses to fund their activities in maintaining sustainable drainage systems.

Members were concerned about potential issues with the new approach and funding issues associated with the SuDS Approval bodies (SABS).

**The Chairman asked if it would be beneficial for the Committee to comment on the consultation. Paul Armin undertook to do this on the Committee's behalf.**

**53/14 INTRODUCTION TO SITE VISIT**

Liz Small and Nasreen Younis from Middlesbrough Council gave some brief details of the site visit to Marton West Beck following the meeting.

**54/14 NEXT MEETING**

Friday, 23 January 2015 at 10.00 am.

DRAFT

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