



Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date **Wednesday 8 July 2015**
Time **10.00 am (Please note the later start time)**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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 17 April 2015. (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any.
5. Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.
6. Media Relations.
7. Community Action Team - Update (Pages 9 - 14)
 - Joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services.
 - Presentation by Environment Protection Officer.
8. Quarter 4 2014/15 Performance Management Report - Report of the Corporate Management Team. (Pages 15 - 28)
9. Review of the Management of the Woodlands Estate Owned by Durham County Council - Report of Assistant Chief Executive. (Pages 29 - 60)
10. Light Touch Review of Parking on Council Land - Report of Assistant Chief Executive. (Pages 61 - 66)
11. Council Plan 2015-18 - Refresh of the Work Programme - Report of Assistant Chief Executive. (Pages 67 - 76)

12. Minutes of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 12 March, 2015. (Pages 77 - 82)

Colette Longbottom
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham

30 June 2015

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

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)
Councillor E Adam (Vice-Chair)

Councillors J Armstrong, D Bell, E Bell, J Clare, J Clark, D Freeman, J Gray,
D Hall, 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

Contact: Paula Nicholson

Tel: 03000 269710

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 17 April 2015 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor B Graham (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, D Bell, E Bell, J Gray, D Hall, G Holland, C Kay, P May, S Morrison, P Stradling and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Spurrell

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Clark, K Hopper, I Jewell and S Zair.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes.

3 Minutes of the Meetings held on 20 January, 4 February and 5 March 2015

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 January, 4 February and 5 March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

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 Neighbourhood Services Revenue and Capital Outturn 3 2014/15 - Overview

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Neighbourhood Services Management Team which set out details of the forecast outturn as at Quarter 3 for 2014/15, highlighting variances against revenue and capital budgets for Neighbourhood Services (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant went on to provide details regarding the revenue outturn position and analysis by Head of Service. It was reported that the revenue outturn for 2014/15 was under budget against the cash limit by £1.105m in comparison to the previous forecast at Quarter 2, which was under budget by £0.820m. The presentation further detailed the significant variances, which included:-

- Savings in accommodation costs and early achievement of MTFP savings in Direct Services
- Increased Highways Maintenance spend
- Increased surplus in Technical Services
- Overspend in Strategic Waste
- Savings within Environmental Health and Consumer Protection.

With regard to the capital outturn position details were provided regarding the variances against the revised budget and it was reported that there was a need to slip £8.222m into 2015/16 as a result of delays in a variety of schemes. It was confirmed that the forecasted capital outturn at quarter 3 was £39.1m.

Councillor Adam queried why a bridge had been demolished and bridges inspections and maintenance were not undertaken when there is an underspend in the budget with plans to take reserves forward. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that bridge inspections had however been in arrears and further details could be provided to Councillor Adam following the meeting.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

7 Quarter 3 2014/15 Performance Management Report

The committee received a joint report and presentation of the Corporate Management Team and Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Greener theme and report other significant performance issues for the third quarter of 2014/15 covering the period October to December 2014 (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager provided a detailed presentation which gave an update on performance relating to the following:-

- Overview of performance
- Key messages in relation to;
 - Refuse and recycling
 - Improvements in environmental cleanliness
 - Fly-tipping actions and outcomes
 - Condition of highways and footways
 - Reduction of carbon emissions and impact upon climate change
 - Renewable energy generation
 - Maximising value and benefits of natural environment
 - Working in partnership to enhance the natural environment.

Councillor May in reference to the creation of five new wildflowers meadows asked why Chester-le-Street meadow was being closed. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance advised that she would investigate this further and report back to Councillor May.

Councillor Kay commented that municipal waste could not be carbon neutral so questioned how this was dealt with. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that landfill gas was extracted from the Coxhoe site and some of the older landfill sites in order to generate electricity however this was not sustainable. On a day to day basis EFW was generated at the SITA plant at Teeside and although there was some emissions from this process, it was the best option with limited carbon emissions.

Councillor Kay further queried why there had been a sudden increase in tyres being fly-tipped. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that the team were in the process of investigating as to why there had been this increase in the North, however tyres are expensive to dispose of and it was suspected that rogue traders would not pay the costs of disposal.

Councillor Bell asked whether there was any update in relation to the use of CCTV to catch those fly-tipping including detail of the performance of those camera funded by members. In response the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that she would provide an update to Councillor Bell following the meeting.

Councillor Holland queried whether there was any commercial value to tyres and whether there was anything in place nationally to prevent the dumping of this form of waste as it was surely not a localised problem. In response the Head of Projects and Business Services advised that there was a number of good schemes in place including re-using the rubber from tyres to make rubber crum sports pitches, road surfacing, construction of road embankments and in some cases they could be burnt to create electricity, however this was very expensive. It was further acknowledged that this was a national problem.

Councillor Hall added that he had found that the issuing of a fixed penalty notice (FPN) was the best deterrent and subsequently requested detail of the fixed penalty notices issued in relation to fly-tipping. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that detail of FPN's could be included in the quarter 4 performance report.

Further discussion took place regarding allotments and it was suggested that a representative of Culture and Sport attend a future meeting. It was further noted that Allotments were included on the 2015/16 work programme.

Councillor Clare added that he had some concerns regarding the equitability of the sanctioning policies of FPN's as local residents had approached him and raised issues regarding the sanctioning process and questioned as to whether the appeals process for those issued with a FPN was still in place. In response the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that she would take details of the individual cases from the member and would provide a response to the issues raised in relation to the process. In addition, she would confirm as to whether the appeals process was still in place.

Further discussion ensued regarding cat fouling and it was noted that the council did not have any powers to issue FPN in this respect.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

8 Air Quality Management Plan for County Durham - Update

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

The Pollution Control Manager provided details of the work programme and progress against each of the four milestones. It was therefore proposed that the Draft Air Quality Action Plan would go out to public consultation in September 2015 with a view to the final plan being approved by Cabinet in April 2016. It was noted that the consultation period had been slightly delayed due to a number of late responses, the Purdah period and the impending road works at Milburngate Bridge.

The Senior Air Quality Officer then went on to provide detail regarding the Air Quality Improvement Options Appraisal and its main findings. The presentation further outlined the projected decreases in emissions in Durham City compared to the required reduction in NO_x Emissions and it was reported that it was projected that Gilesgate and Crossgate Peth would not meet those objectives at this current time.

Further details were reported with regard to the improvement options that had been appraised and would continue to be developed and would of course be subject to consultation.

The Senior Air Quality Officer advised that if implemented the appraisal scenarios would lead to reasonable reductions in NO_x across the picture. Further details were reported in respect of the consultation including the proposed form and purpose.

The Pollution Control Manager then went on to report upon how progress would be assessed noting that evaluation of the effectiveness of each measure would be undertaken along with devising indicators for each measure to assess progress and regularly review in order to determine whether further and stronger local action or intervention are necessary.

Further details were presented regarding the Chester-le-Street Air Quality Management Area and it was reported that the boundary had now been reduced and further work was scheduled to be undertaken in developing the Draft Air Quality Action Plan.

Councillor May asked whether the team worked closely with planners, as it was likely that the demolition or erection of new buildings would impact upon air quality. In response the Pollution Control Manager advised that they did indeed work closely with planners and a guidance note was given to developers regarding air quality assessments near or within a AQMA.

Further discussion took place regarding the list of appraisal options and whether any consideration had been given to associated costs. In response the Senior Air Quality

Officer advised that it was known that there were costs involved in that process both economic and social.

Councillor Adam queried where the funding would come from to put in place these actions. It was noted that some of the actions may not as yet have funding allocated but in many cases the funding would be sought from external sources. It was acknowledged that some of the actions may have to be disregarded as a result of lack of funding.

Councillor Holland commented that it would be an interesting experimental base to monitor air quality during the partial closure of Milburngate Bridge. It was reported that the team were intending on placing AQ monitors on some of the intended diversions for a period of 2 months to monitor activity.

A further query was then raised by Councillor Hall as to whether any other pollutants were assessed and whether air traffic had any impact upon results. In response the Pollution Control Manager advised that there were a total of seven pollutants which were assessed, however at this time there were no other problems, however it was anticipated that PM2.5 could be cause for concern in the future.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive further update reports detailing the progress of air quality management within County Durham.

9 European Structural and Investment Funds - Low Carbon Economy - Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which provided an update with regard to European Structural and Investment Funds, Low Carbon Economy strand funding and set out the opportunities that are available to County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Sustainability & Climate Change Team Leader advised that there was around £18m of funding that could be spent within County Durham on low carbon economy projects however it was unknown at this stage the agreed EU criteria for projects which will gain ESIF. Full details of the project opportunities were included within paragraph 11 of the report.

Further details were reported regarding technical assistance money and it was noted that negotiations between Government and Europe had now enabled the first calls to go out. The Sustainability & Climate Change Team Leader further advised that following the appointment of a consultant, his findings had highlighted the lack of any leadership on the low carbon economy element at regional level.

It was also reported that the team were exploring various European transnational programmes and further details would be reported at a future meeting.

Councillor Armstrong commented that he was disappointed to hear that more progress had not been made, however appreciated that this was as a result of politicians within government and Europe.

Councillor Holland commented that it was clear that there was a lack of drive in this country in developing effective renewable energy. However he considered Durham to be best placed to take this forward given the positive and strong links with Durham University. He further asked where match funding would be taken from. In response the Sustainability & Climate Change Team Leader advised that DCC could not possibly provide the full amount of match funding and it was anticipated that the lead organisation for each agreed project would provide the match funding with some partial funding potentially from DCC. Private organisations may be a source of match funding for certain projects.

Councillor Bell commented that he was disappointed to see that the Environment Agency was allowing the Coal Authority to pump mine water into the sea at Whitburn and that this is now seen to be the next way forward in renewable energy. He added that it was frustrating to see that the council were now just looking at developing District Heating Schemes.

Further discussion took place regarding the use of minewater and how heat exchange work. A trial was currently being undertaken at Dawdon.

Resolved:

(i) That the content of the report be noted.

(ii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive further updates on the development of the ESIF programme.

10 Council Plan 2015-18 - Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided information contained within the Council Plan 2015-18, relevant to the work of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and provided the opportunity for members to refresh the work programme in line with the Altogether greener priority theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that Paragraph 9 of the report provided members with an overview of the work undertaken in 2014/15 by the committee and detailed scrutiny review activity, systematic review and overview activity. Paragraph 10 of the report highlighted a further 11 additional areas which members may want to consider for inclusion in the work programme which had been identified under the 'Altogether Greener' section of the Council Plan for 2015-18. It was highlighted that members had identified several areas from the 2014/15 work programme for further updates and these would need to be included in the work programme for 2015/16. In addition, systematic reviews of the recommendations within three Scrutiny review reports would also need to be included in the future work programme together with quarterly budget and performance reports. The committee is also the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham and therefore the future work programme will need to include a special meeting with the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham.

A further report will be provided to members at the meeting on the 8 July detailing the work programme and asking members to identify a topic for Scrutiny review.

Councillor Stradling commented that Members should forward any comments or suggestions for additional items to be included in the future work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny officer.

Resolved:

(i) That the content of the report be noted.

(ii) That the additional areas identified in paragraph 10 of the report be included in the 2015/16 committee work programme.

(iii) That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further report detailing the work programme for 2015/16.

11 Minutes of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 10 December, 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the County Durham Environment Partnership Board held on 10 December 2014 were received for information.

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



8 July 2015

**Update on the work of the
Community Action Team and the
use of targeted interventions**

**Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell Assistant Chief Executive and
Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services**

Purpose of the Report

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

Background

- 2 At the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 10 November 2014 an overview was provided on the Community Action Team and the use of targeted interventions covering the 2013 – 2014 programme of work. Subsequently, it was agreed by members at the meeting that an update on the work of the CAT would be provided at a future meeting of the committee. In addition, following the November meeting, members of the committee received the detail of the CAT work programme for 2015/16. It is therefore considered timely for the committee to receive a further update and arrangements have been made for the Environment Protection Manager to attend the committee meeting on the 8 July to deliver a presentation focusing on:
 - Background information on the CAT work programme for 2013-15.
 - Results of the CAT 2014-15 work programme.
 - 2014 Summer Review findings.
 - Future work.
- 3 The CAT is a small, proactive team consisting of members of the Environmental Health & Consumer Protection department who are responsible for delivering Community Action Schemes at identified locations within County Durham. They work alongside Planning officers, 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 identified degraded 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 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 Durham City and Horden (East).

- 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 2014-2015 Programme

- 6 Core casework related to rubbish accumulations and defective drainage, with housing disrepair and open to access properties also being investigated. There were 161 legal notices served and 37 works in default were required where there was non-compliance with notices.
- 7 Table 1 – Comparison of casework in CAT project areas up to 5 April 2015

Location	Casework	Notices	Work In Default
Spennymoor	100	41	9
Leadgate	65	7	1
Easington	150	75	19
Durham City	60	1	1
Horden East	148	42	7
TOTAL - 2014-15	523	161	37

- 8 Improving housing standards and removing rubbish accumulations were identified as priority issues in all locations, with empty/derelict properties being chosen in several of the projects.
- 9 There were a number additional partner activities carried out per project which included test purchases of alcohol, mini health checks for residents, home fire safety checks, untidy sites tackled by planning colleagues, and empty homes were pursued by housing colleagues. Groundwork was also involved in working with communities to improve the immediate environment within the project area.

- 10 Throughout all the projects there was a low number of private housing cases reported, despite this being a priority in all locations. However within Durham city the team engaged with a number of student landlords and the Students Union.
- 11 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 residents' meetings have, where possible, been linked to existing community meetings, for example PACT meetings, while drop-in sessions were linked in with local community events.
- 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 remains an area that could be improved; however, it was noted that many agencies find this to be a challenge in the locations chosen for the CAT projects.
- 14 The resident and landlord survey response returns continue to be low, however some useful comments were received which have helped improve the programme.

Key findings from the summer review period 2014

- 15 From 6 – 27 January 2015 the CAT undertook a period of review. Since the full programme began, 10 projects had taken place following the initial 3 pilot areas. During this review period 6 locations were chosen to look at the sustainability of the work carried out and address any ongoing issues.
- 16 In each of the 6 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.
- 17 Table 2 – Comparison of casework found on the original project walkabout compared to the review walkabout and the % change by location

Location	Original project 1st walkabout	Review walkabout	% Change
Spennymoor	73	36	-51%
Leadgate	35	14	-60%
Trimdon Station / Deaf Hill	64	20	-69%
West Cornforth	44	29	-34%
No Place	40	4	-90%
Murton	38	10	-74%

18 A breakdown of casework in each review area.

Location Breakdown of work	Spennymoor	Leadgate	Trimdon Station / Deaf Hill	West Cornforth	No Place	Murton
Food/Noxious Accumulations	26	5	7	10	1	6
Open Access	1	0	0	2	0	0
Drain Defects	0	0	0	6	0	0
Other CAT cases	1	0	3	0	0	1
Wardens – inert accumulations	3	4	5	6	2	2
Clean and Green	3	2	1	3	0	0
Other referrals	2	3	4	2	1	1
Total	36	14	20	29	4	10

19 The exit strategies were largely followed, however there remains a need for further monitoring of previous CAT project locations following exit.

20 Further review walkabouts are planned in July 2015 for the recent project areas.

Next Steps

21 The Community Action Team is now undertaking the finalised programme for 2015-16 and will visit ten communities over this period, which will include revisits to previous project areas where environmental degradation remains a priority issue.

22 The emphasis when choosing locations remains 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.

23 The revisit projects will build on the original programme 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.

24 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.

25 During the 2014 – 15 programme the CAT team made new partner links with the council's Family Link team and Groundwork North East and Cumbria. These new partner links will continue to 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.

Recommendations

- 29 Members of the Committee are asked to note information contained within the update report on the work of the CAT and the use of targeted interventions and comment accordingly.
- 30 That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update on the work of the Community Action Team at a future meeting.

Background Papers

None

Contact and Author: Gary Hutchinson, Environment Protection Manager
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Contact: Tom Gorman
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Author: Diane Close
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Appendix 1: Implications

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

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

8 July 2015



**Quarter 4 2014/15
Performance Management Report**

**Report of Corporate Management Team
Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Councillor Simon Henig, Leader**

Purpose of the Report

1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Greener theme and report other performance issues for the 2014/15 financial year.

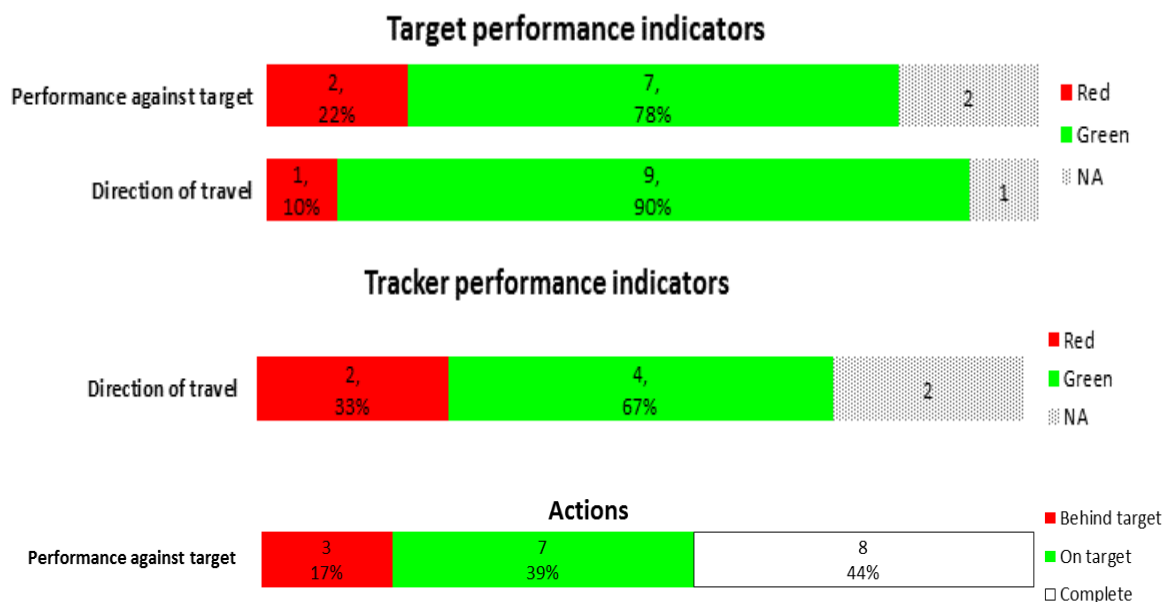
Overall Council Performance

2. Since 2010, the council has made significant financial savings following reductions in government grants and have delivered just under £137 million savings to date and have plans in place to make a further £16 million of reductions in 2015/16.
3. Demand over the year has increased for some of our key services such as children in need referrals, looked after children cases, people requiring rehousing, and freedom of information requests received. However, it is encouraging to note that there have been some notable reductions in demand placed on some of our services in line with council strategy. The number of incidents of fly-tipping being reported is starting to come down after a concerted effort to tackle the perpetrators. All contact through our customer services team whether through face-to-face, telephone or via electronic means is generally reducing in line with our customer first strategy, which aims to answer queries at first point of contact and reduce the need to contact the council again. There has been a large spike in terms of telephone calls received in the last quarter of the year which is predominantly as a result of the introduction of the new garden waste service which has generated a number of additional calls around the time of implementation, some of which have been new customers wanting to join the scheme.
4. Against this backdrop of reducing resources and increasing demand it is critical that the council continues to actively manage performance and ensures that the impact on the public of the difficult decisions we have had to make is minimised.

Altogether Theme Performance

5. The report sets out an overview of performance and progress for the Altogether Greener theme. Key performance indicator progress is reported against two indicator types which comprise of:
 - a. Key target indicators – targets are set for indicators where improvements can be measured regularly and where improvement can be actively influenced by the council and its partners (see Appendix 3, table 1); and
 - b. Key tracker indicators – performance will be tracked but no targets are set for indicators which are long-term and/or which the council and its partners only partially influence (see Appendix 3, table 2).
6. The report continues to incorporate a stronger focus on volume measures in our performance framework. This allows us to better quantify productivity and to monitor the effects of reductions in resources and changes in volume of activity. A chart detailing a key volume measure which form part of the council's corporate set of performance indicators are presented in Appendix 4.
7. A corporate performance indicator guide has been produced which provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources. This is available to view from the intranet or can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at performance@durham.gov.uk.
8. Work has been carried out by officers and members on developing the proposed indicator set and targets for 2015/16 (see Appendix 5) to ensure that our performance management efforts continue to stay focused on the right areas.

Altogether Greener: Overview



Council Performance

9. Key achievements this quarter include:

- a. During the 12 months ending February 2015, 99% of municipal waste was diverted from landfill. This exceeds the target of 85%.
- b. Street and environmental cleanliness achieved targets this period. The results of the third survey relate to the period December 2014 to March 2015 and indicate that of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of litter, 4% fell below an acceptable level. Performance was better than the target of 7% and improved from 5.33% reported at the same quarter last year. Of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of detritus, 6.14% fell below an acceptable level. Performance was better than the target of 10% and improved from 8.78% reported at the same quarter last year. Of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of dog fouling, 0.56% fell below an acceptable level. Performance improved from 2.33% reported at the same quarter last year.
- c. During 2014/15, there were 1,443 renewable energy feed in tariff installations registered and approved and the target of 500 installations was exceeded. During quarter 4, there were 346 solar photovoltaic (PV) installations and 2 wind installations with an installed capacity of 1.839 megawatts (MW).

Since this indicator has been monitored, the feed in tariff installations have contributed 217.168 MW. Assuming an optimal performance of 30%, this will supply enough energy for approximately 163,000 homes, based on an average domestic annual usage in the North East.

- d. The multi-agency taskforce approach to dealing with fly-tipping has helped drive down the number of reported incidents over the last two quarters from its peak at 9,922 incidents over October 2013 to September 2014 to 8,779 incidents in 2014/15 (see Appendix 4, Chart 1). Work done by the taskforce has included campaigns and communications and working with councillors

and parish councils to fund CCTV cameras. Recent outcomes include 67 duty of care warnings, 12 requests to produce driving and vehicle documentation were issued, seven fixed penalty notices, 81 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) interviews, 23 cases referred for prosecution and four prosecutions. CCTV cameras have been deployed at 94 locations countywide.

10. The key performance improvement issues for this theme are:

- a. During the 12 months ending February 2015, 42.5% of household waste was re-used, recycled or composted. Performance is below the 45% target but is comparable to the 42.4% reported 12 months earlier and is better than 42% reported in the previous three quarters this year. This can be attributed to contamination of recycling bins and changed legislation in relation to street sweepings. Recycling Assistants continue to educate residents, targeting areas with contamination issues. The Environment Agency has changed legislation in relation to street sweepings so they can no longer be classed as recycling. This applies to all local authorities across England and Wales and has impacted on the recycling performance indicator. Street sweepings are currently being deposited at the Waste Transfer Stations and are being mixed in with refuse to go for waste treatment. SITA are developing a system to treat separated street sweepings resulting in them being able to be recycled for reuse (stones/gravel/sand).
- b. The key Council Plan actions which have not achieved target in this theme include:
 - i. Delivery of the waste transfer stations capital improvement programme at Annfield Plain has been delayed from March 2015 until June 2015. As mentioned in quarter 3, high voltage power lines were found underground and the subsequent re-design around these resulted in a delay.
 - ii. Delivery of the waste transfer stations capital improvement programme at Thornley (demolish and rebuild) has been delayed from March 2015 until March 2016. As part of the annual planning process, this action has been reviewed in line with priorities and resources and has been delayed.
 - iii. Preparation of an air quality action plan for Durham City and identifying a range of required actions to improve air quality and to meet specific air quality objectives has been delayed from March 2015 until May 2015.

11. There are no key risks in delivering the objectives of this theme.

Recommendations and Reasons

12. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and consider any performance issues arising there from.

Contact: Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance
Tel: 03000 268071 **E-Mail** jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

Staffing - Performance against a number of relevant corporate health PIs has been included to monitor staffing issues.

Risk - Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly monitoring report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - Corporate health PIs are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

Accommodation - Not applicable

Crime and Disorder - A number of PIs and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

Human Rights - Not applicable

Consultation - Not applicable

Procurement - Not applicable

Disability Issues - Employees with a disability are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

Legal Implications - Not applicable

Appendix 2: Key to symbols used within the report

Where icons appear in this report, they have been applied to the most recently available information.

Performance Indicators:

Direction of travel

Latest reported data have improved from comparable period



Latest reported data remain in line with comparable period



Latest reported data have deteriorated from comparable period



Performance against target

Performance better than target

Getting there - performance approaching target (within 2%)

Performance >2% behind target

Actions:



Complete (Action achieved by deadline/achieved ahead of deadline)



Action on track to be achieved by the deadline



Action not achieved by the deadline/unlikely to be achieved by the deadline

Benchmarking:



Performance better than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available



Performance in line with other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available



Performance worse than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

Appendix 3: Summary of Key Performance Indicators

Table 1: Key Target Indicators

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
Altogether Greener											
53	NS14a	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed (LEQSPRO survey) as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level	4.00	Dec 2014 - Mar 2015	7.00	GREEN	5.33	GREEN	11.00 GREEN		2013/14
54	NS14b	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed (LEQSPRO survey) as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level	6.14	Dec 2014 - Mar 2015	10.00	GREEN	8.78	GREEN	31.00 GREEN		2013/14
55	NS10	Percentage of municipal waste diverted from landfill	99.0	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	85.0	GREEN	81.0	GREEN			
56	NS19	Percentage of household waste that is re-used, recycled or composted	42.5	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	45.0	RED	42.4	GREEN	42.0 GREEN	37* GREEN	2013/14
57	REDPI53	Percentage of conservation areas in the county that have an up to date character appraisal	41.00	As at Sep 2014	37.00	GREEN	39.00	GREEN			
58	REDPI48	Percentage change in CO ₂ emissions from local authority operations	-9.0	2013/14	-5.0	GREEN	5.5	GREEN			

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
59	NS08	Percentage reduction in CO ₂ emissions from the DCC fleet	2.91	2013/14	Not set	NA	3.35	RED			
60	NS36	Average annual electricity consumption per street light (kilo-watt hour (KwH)) (estimated)	345.5	2014/15	Not set	NA	388.6	GREEN			
61	REDPI49	Number of registered and approved feed in tariff installations	1,443	2014/15	500	GREEN	1,170	GREEN			
62	NS04	Percentage of recorded actionable defects on carriageways and footways repaired within 24 hours (category 1)	92	Jan - Mar 2015	90	GREEN	88	GREEN			
63	NS05	Percentage of recorded actionable defects on carriageways and footways repaired within 14 working days (category 2.1)	88	Jan - Mar 2015	90	RED	New indicator	NA			

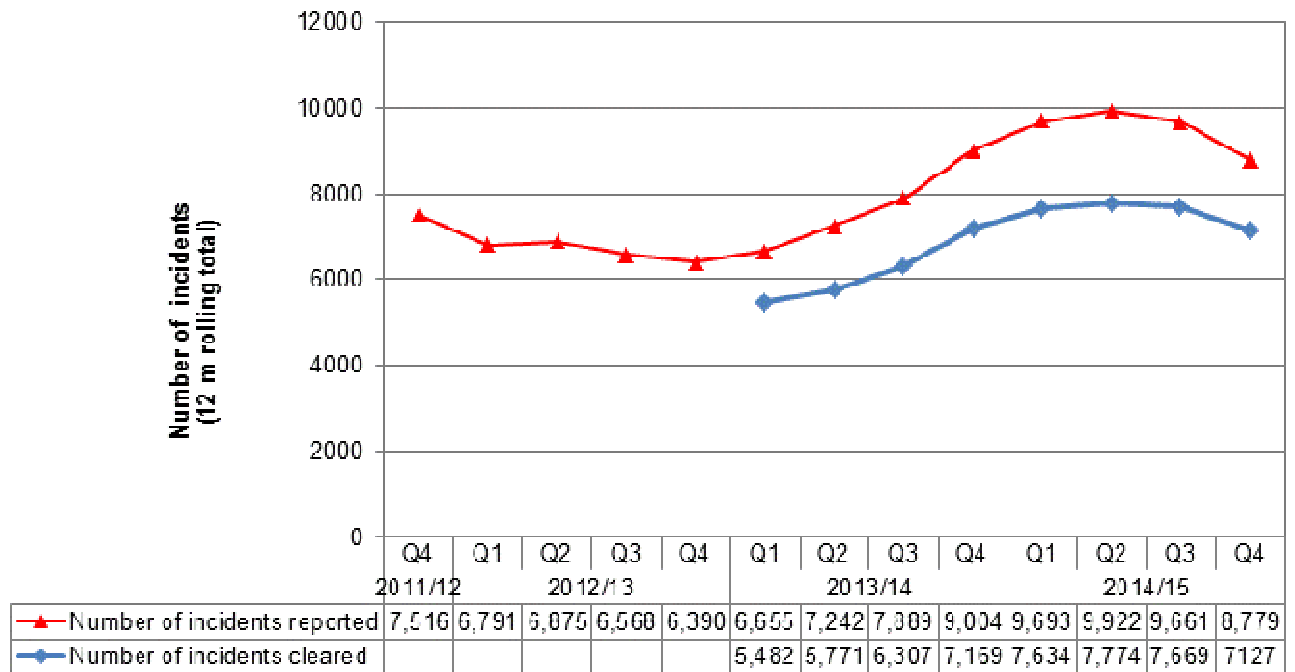
Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
Altogether Greener											
175	NS14c	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of dog fouling that fall below an acceptable level	0.56	Dec 2014 - Mar 2015	2.33	GREEN	2.33	GREEN	8.10 GREEN		2013/14
176	NS15	Number of fly-tipping incidents reported	8,779	2014/15	9,661	GREEN	9,004	GREEN			
177	NS16	Number of fly-tipping incidents cleared	7,127	2014/15	7,669	NA	7,169	NA			
178	NS17a	Percentage of household waste collected from the kerbside and recycled	21.2	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	20.8	GREEN	21.4	RED			
179	NS17b	Percentage of household waste collected from the kerbside and composted	11.2	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	11.2	AMBER	10.3	GREEN			
180	NS09	Megawatt hours (MWh) of energy produced from municipal waste sent to Sita's 'Energy from Waste' plant	67,556	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	57,743	GREEN	11,503	GREEN			
181	REDPI46	Percentage reduction in CO ₂ emissions in County Durham	39.0	As at Dec 2012	41.2	RED	41.2	RED	14.0 GREEN	20* GREEN	2012
182	REDPI47	Renewable energy generation - mega watts equivalent (MWe) installed or installed/ approved capacity within County Durham	217.17	As at Mar 2105	215.61	Not comparable [1]	206.33	Not comparable [1]			

[1] Data cumulative year on year so comparisons are not applicable

Appendix 4: Volume Measures

Chart 1 – Fly-tipping incidents



Appendix 5: Proposed 2015/16 Corporate Indicator set and 3 year targets

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service Grouping	Frequency	Performance		2014/15 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2013/14	2014/15 Q3		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Greener											
Target	NS14a	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level.	NS	3 times a year	5.33	6.17	7	7	7	7	11 (13/14)
Target	NS14b	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level.	NS	3 times a year	8.78	8.21	10	10	10	10	31 (13/14)
Tracker	NS14c	Percentage of relevant land and highways assessed as having deposits of dog fouling that fall below an acceptable level	NS	3 times a year	2.33	2.33					8 (13/14)
Tracker	NS15	Number of fly-tipping incidents reported	NS	Quarterly	8,999	9,661					
Target	NS19	Percentage of household waste that is reused, recycled or composted	NS	Quarterly	42.4	42	45	38	38	36	42 (13/14)
Target	NS10	Percentage of municipal waste diverted from landfill	NS	Quarterly	81	97.7	85	95	95	95	
Tracker	NS09	Megawatt hours (MWh) of energy produced from municipal waste sent to Sita's 'Energy from Waste' plant	NS	Quarterly	11,502.7	57,742.9					

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service Grouping	Frequency	Performance		2014/15 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2013/14	2014/15 Q3		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Target	REDPI53	Percentage of the conservation areas in the County that have an up to date character appraisal	RED	Annual Q2	39	41	42	TBC following County Durham Plan decision	TBC following County Durham Plan decision	TBC following County Durham Plan decision	
Tracker	REDPI46	Reduction in CO ₂ emissions in County Durham	RED	Annual Q2	41.2 (11/12)	39 (12/13)					14
Tracker	NS08	Percentage reduction in CO2 emissions from the DCC fleet	NS	Annual Q4	2.01 (11/12)	3.35 (12/13)					
Target	REDPI48	Percentage change in CO2 emissions from local authority operations	RED	Annual Q2	5.5 (12/13)	-9 (13/14)	-5	-4	-4	-4	
Tracker	REDPI47	The amount of renewable energy generation (MwE) installed or installed/approved capacity within County Durham	RED	Quarterly	206.33	215.61					
Target	REDPI49	Number of new registered and approved Feed In Tariff (FIT) installations	RED	Quarterly	1,170	1,095	500	900	Not set	Not set	
Target	REDPI109	The number of private sector properties benefiting from an energy efficiency measure installed by British Gas through the Warm Up North partnership	RED	Annual Q4		324 (404 Apr 13-Mar 14)		200	200	Not set	
Target	NS04	Percentage of recorded actionable defects repaired within 24 hours (category 1)	NS	Quarterly	88	96	90	95	95	95	

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service Grouping	Frequency	Performance		2014/15 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2013/14	2014/15 Q3		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Target	NS05	Percentage of recorded actionable defects repaired with 14 working days (category 2)	NS	Quarterly			N/A	95	95	95	

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



8 July 2015

**Review of the management of the
woodland estate owned by Durham
County Council**

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Review Group report on the management of the woodland estate owned by Durham County Council.

Background

2. The Environment and Sustainable Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the refresh of the work programme for 2014/15 identified the management of the woodland estate owned by Durham County Council as the future topic for focused scrutiny review.
3. The terms of reference for the review were agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 11 November 2015 with the aim of the review to investigate how Durham County Council strategically manages its woodland estate and identify any areas for improvement. It was agreed that the review would focus on:
 - Are DCCs current policies, strategies and plans effective in managing the woodland estate?
 - Is partnership working within the County in relation to management of the woodland estate robust?
 - How will DCC fund woodland management in the future including opportunities for income generation?
 - Should DCC be seeking to create new woodland that meets multiple objectives on DCC estate where appropriate?
 - How DCC and partners encourage, engage with and support communities within County Durham to participate in woodland projects and initiatives?
 - DCC's current and future arrangements for the diversification of the woodland estate?
 - How DCC and partners promote biodiversity within the woodland estate?

4. A review group of ten members was established from the membership of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Evidence was gathered over a period of six meetings and two site visits with information from Durham County Council officers from Regeneration and Economic Development and Neighbourhoods Service groupings; Forestry Commission; Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) and Northwoods.
5. The review group's findings are contained in the attached review report at appendix 2 and have resulted in the formulation of the following recommendations (see page 4-6 of report):
 - a) That Durham County Council as part of the audit of the woodland estate considers:
 - The future strategic management of the woodland estate.
 - The partnership management approaches adopted by key partners within County Durham such as Durham Wildlife Trust.
 - The development and implementation of a streamlined corporate strategy/policy framework for the management and protection of woodland owned by Durham County Council.
 - b) That Durham County Council maximise the income generation and employment opportunities from timber extraction on existing and potential new sites including consideration of new management models for the marketing and extraction of timber such as the SIMWOOD project.
 - c) That Durham County Council's procurement process for the letting of timber extraction contracts ensure that:
 - Contracts are advertised to target and maximise interest from the private sector.
 - That in conjunction with the Corporate Procurement Manager the required documentation and process is simplified to make contracts more attractive to private sector companies.
 - d) That Durham County Council maximises the funding opportunities available via the Common Agricultural Policy (Countryside Stewardship Scheme for England) and the European Structural and Investment Fund (Low Carbon Economy Strand) if and when such funding becomes available for the benefit of the Durham County Council woodland estate.
 - e) That Durham County Council continues to actively encourage and promote the volunteering opportunities available within the woodland estate via the Durham Community Action's Do-it website, AAPs, Durham County News, Durham County Council Staff (current and former), Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Council Members.
 - f) That Durham County Council ensures that the contact details of the Countryside Service are clearly displayed on Community Woodland Sites for use by the general public and that Durham County Council publicise via

factsheets information in relation to the benefits of biodiversity; woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.

- g) That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet including as part of this process an update on the progress of the audit of the woodland estate.

Service Response

6. The report was shared with Regeneration and Economic Development Departmental Management Team and Neighbourhoods Departmental Management Team and was well received by both. RED DMT commented that the report “very positive in terms of managing the Council’s assets”.

Recommendation

7. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the report of the Woodland Scrutiny Review Group attached as appendix 2.
8. That the report of the Scrutiny Review Group is submitted for consideration by Cabinet at the meeting on the 16 September 2015.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The report highlights the need for DCC to maximise the funding opportunities for woodlands available via the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the European Structural and Investment Fund via the Low Carbon Economy Strand when funding becomes available. In addition, woodlands present an opportunity to generate income for the Authority which needs to be maximised via timber extraction from the forest estate on appropriately identified sites.

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The necessary Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared concerning the review report.

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – In relation to timber extraction contracts for DCC woodland estate the report identifies the need to ensure that contracts are advertised appropriately to maximise interest and target the private sector. The report also identifies the need for the required documentation and procurement process to be simplified to make the contracts more favourable to the private sector.

Disability Issues – DCC tries to ensure that community woodlands sites can be accessed by people with disabilities including by the use of mobility scooters. However, some sites have limited access and advice can be given by the Countryside Service as to the accessibility of individual sites.

Legal Implications - None



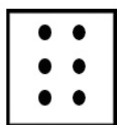
Environment & Sustainable Communities OSC

Scrutiny review of the Management
of the woodland estate owned by
Durham County Council

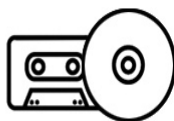
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Table of Contents

Chair's Foreword	Page 1
Executive Summary	Page 2
Recommendations	Page 4
Detailed Report	Page 6
Woodland in County Durham	Page 6
DCC approach to woodland management	Page 7
Policies and strategies for the management and protection of trees and woodland	Page 10
Partnership working	Page 13
Future funding of woodland management	Page 15
EU funding opportunities	Page 17
How DCC and partners promote volunteering	Page 19
Current and future arrangements for diversification	Page 22
Woodland Biodiversity in County Durham	Page 23
Map showing DCC woodland estate	Appendix 1

Chairman's Foreword



In County Durham it is important that our woodlands are looked after for future generations to enjoy. Durham County Council owns a substantial amount of woodland within the County with further woodland creation being carried out as part of the Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Lottery Fund project.

During this review we have learned of the diversity of our woodlands. They provide a habitat to fauna and flora, a place of recreation, they regulate the movement of water, reduce soil erosion and the leaching of pollutants into surface and ground waters. Our woodlands create jobs, provide opportunities for economic diversification in rural areas, store carbon and create opportunities for education and community involvement. Woodland is also resource for the county council and provides an opportunity to generate income from timber extraction.

The review received information on the management of woodland both by the council and key partners, volunteering opportunities and engagement with local communities, sources of funding and woodland biodiversity. Site visits showed to us two of the many diverse benefits of woodlands – we visited work taking place to extract timber at woods at Croxdale and at Hawthorn Dene we viewed the beautiful site of the bluebell woods.

I would like to thank all of those who have been involved in gathering information especially officers from Regeneration and Economic Development, Neighbourhood Services, The Forestry Commission, Durham Wildlife Trust and Northwoods. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors who have served on the review group.

Councillor Barbara Graham

Chair Environment and Sustainable Communities

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Executive Summary

- 1 During the discussion of the committee's work programme for 2014/15 the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at the meeting on 3 July 2014 to undertake a visit to various community woodland sites within the county. This provided an opportunity for members to see 'first hand' the work undertaken by Durham County Council (DCC) and partners on community woodland owned and managed by DCC.
- 2 Members also asked for further detail on: the role of DCC in managing the woodland estate; the key partners within County Durham involved in the woodland estate; timber extraction currently taking place within the county and any future plans for the woodland estate. Following the conclusion of these discussions members identified management of the woodland estate owned by DCC as the future topic for focused scrutiny review.

Focus of the Review

- 3 The aim of the review is to investigate how DCC strategically manages the woodland estate for which it is responsible and identify any future improvements.
- 4 The review pursued the following lines of enquiry:
 - Are DCCs current policies, strategies and plans effective in managing the woodland estate?
 - Is partnership working within the County in relation to management of the woodland estate robust?
 - How will DCC fund woodland management in the future including opportunities for income generation?
 - Should DCC be seeking to create new woodland that meets multiple objectives on DCC estate where appropriate?
 - How DCC and partners encourage, engage with and support communities within County Durham to participate in woodland projects and initiatives?
 - DCC's current and future arrangements for the diversification of the woodland estate?
 - How DCC and partners promote biodiversity within the woodland estate?

Methodology

A review group of 10 members was established from the committee's membership.

- 5 The review group gathered evidence over six meetings and carried out two site visits to see timber extraction undertaken and biodiversity schemes within DCC's woodland estate. The meetings and visits were held between January and June 2015 with the evidence provided via presentations and reports from the following DCC officers and partners:
Sue Mullinger - Landscape Delivery Officer – RED
John Bragg – Senior Forester – RED;
Ged Lawson – Principal Landscape Officer – RED;
Darryl Cox – Head Ranger – Neighbourhood Services;
Maggie Bosanquet – Sustainability and Climate Change Team Leader – RED;
Andrew Jackson – Technical and Service Development Manager - Neighbourhood Services;

Rodger Lowe – Senior Tree Officer – RED; Zoe Thirlaway – Senior Policy Officer – RED; Terry Coult - Principal Ecologist – RED; Richard Pow – Partnership and Expertise Manager, Forestry Commission; Jim Cokill – Director Durham Wildlife Trust; and Andrew Kitching - Projects Manager, Northwoods.

Key Findings & Conclusions

- 6 DCC owns and manages approximately 2000 hectares of woodland within County Durham with a further 214 hectares managed on long-term lease arrangements with partners making a total of 118 sites all providing public access. Management of DCC's woodland estate is spread across two Service Groupings; Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Economic Development. Each Service Grouping has adopted its own model of management resulting in the lack of a co-ordinated response to woodland management within the authority in terms of management, expenditure and revenue generation. Consideration should be given to how woodlands are managed over both service groupings to ensure that common areas of woodland management are efficiently and effectively administered and a strategic approach to management is considered. This would allow a pooling of resources such as contractors and enable us to look at different management models for the various types of woodland within the county and explore funding options.
- 7 DCC is in the early stages of undertaking a comprehensive audit of the woodland estate providing an opportunity for DCC to review the current management approach and consider various management models including those used by partners such as Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) which manage woodland sites owned by Gateshead Borough Council who are unable to manage several sites themselves due to capacity issues. DWT are able to access funding routes that are not open to local authorities and take an approach which will secure the future long term ecology sites under their management (see page 13 of report for case study). It was suggested by the review group that members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept updated on the progress and key findings of the woodland audit.
- 8 Currently, DCC does not have a corporate strategy/policy for the management and protection of woodland although elements of management and protection are contained in several existing DCC plans and strategies including the County Durham Landscape Strategy, the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the emerging County Durham Plan. The woodland audit will provide an opportunity to develop and implement a streamlined DCC corporate policy/strategy for the management and protection of woodland owned by DCC.
- 9 Opportunities exist for income generation and increased employment from timber extraction undertaken on DCC woodland estate with two contracts let in 2014 and a further four contracts to be revisited in 2015. DCC has received £10,000 income for the sale of timber from the two let contracts with a further £70,000 to £80,000 anticipated from future sales. The four contracts to be revisited are expected to generate a further income of £20,000-£50,000 in total. DCC needs to maximise income generation and employment

opportunities including consideration of new management models for the marketing and extraction of timber (SIMWOOD project – see page 13 of report for case study) from appropriate DCC forest sites.

- 10 In 2014 six contracts were issued for timber extraction however only two were let. DCC needs to ensure that contracts for timber extraction are advertised appropriately to maximise interest and target the private sector and that the procurement process and the required documentation is simplified to make the contracts more attractive to the private sector.
- 11 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme for England provides funding to support woodlands via capital grants for woodland management and creation to farmers, land managers, land owners and tenants. The European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)(low carbon economy strand) may provide funding for forestry projects, however this is proving difficult to access with discussions currently taking place as to the type of project which would gain funding. DCC needs to maximise all funding opportunities available via the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the ERDF (the low carbon economy strand) of the ESIF Programme 2014-2020 when funding becomes available.
- 12 The Countryside Service has 300 Volunteers active within the Durham Voluntary Countryside Rangers Service (DVCRS) together with a further 100 volunteers from specific groups including corporate groups, work experience groups and restorative justice groups. The Countryside Service needs to promote the volunteering opportunities available via the Durham Community Action's Do-it website, Area Action Partnerships, Durham County News, County Council staff both current and former, Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Council members. This approach for greater community involvement aligns and supports the Council's Ask initiative. In addition, to further promote volunteering the contact details of the Countryside Service should be clearly visible at woodland sites ensuring that the service can be easily contacted by the general public to ask advice or enquire about volunteering opportunities.
- 13 Ancient woodland is denoted by sites of continuous woodland cover since 1600. County Durham has a number of small fragmented ancient woodlands that have survived. Although biodiversity of ancient woodlands is protected, the size, fragmentation and isolation of the sites has led to the loss and migration of some species, with development on the periphery having a further impact. In addition, the popularity of wood burners has seen an increase in fallen timber taken from these sites although it is illegal. Members of the public may have limited understanding of biodiversity in ancient woodlands and DCC needs to publicise the benefits of biodiversity, woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That Durham County Council as part of the audit of the woodland estate considers:

- The future strategic management of the woodland estate.
- The partnership management approaches adopted by key partners within County Durham such as Durham Wildlife Trust.
- The development and implementation of a streamlined corporate strategy/policy framework for the management and protection of woodland owned by Durham County Council.

Recommendation 2

That Durham County Council maximise the income generation and employment opportunities from timber extraction on existing and potential new sites including consideration of new management models for the marketing and extraction of timber such as the SIMWOOD project.

Recommendation 3

That Durham County Council's procurement process for the letting of timber extraction contracts ensure that:

- Contracts are advertised to target and maximise interest from the private sector.
- That in conjunction with the Corporate Procurement Manager the required documentation and process is simplified to make contracts more attractive to private sector companies.

Recommendation 4

That Durham County Council maximises the funding opportunities available via the Common Agricultural Policy (Countryside Stewardship Scheme for England) and the European Structural and Investment Fund (Low Carbon Economy Strand) if and when such funding becomes available for the benefit of the Durham County Council woodland estate.

Recommendation 5

That Durham County Council continues to actively encourage and promote the volunteering opportunities available within the woodland estate via the Durham Community Action's Do-it website, AAPs, Durham County News, Durham County Council Staff (current and former), Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Council Members.

Recommendation 6

That Durham County Council ensures that the contact details of the Countryside Service are clearly displayed on Community Woodland Sites for use by the general public and that Durham County Council publicise via factsheets information in relation to the benefits of biodiversity; woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.

Recommendation 7

That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet including as part of this process an update on the progress of the audit of the woodland estate.

Detailed Report

Woodland in County Durham

- 14 Woodland is a habitat where trees are the dominant plant form. 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 benefits: regulation of water, absorption of pollutants, taking carbon out of the air, and habitats for wildlife, provision of fruit, wood fuel and timber. Woodland also contributes to the beauty, diversity and distinctiveness of rural landscapes.
- 15 The National Forestry Inventory (NFI) March 2012, showed that the total woodland area of County Durham is 19,133 hectares (1 hectare is equal to 10,000 metres squared) representing 7% of the total land area within County Durham. The county has seen an increase in its recorded woodland area of 3,592 hectares since the previous woodland survey undertaken in 2002. However woodland cover in the county is lower than the UK average of 9% and the England average of 8% with existing woodlands within the county often being in relatively remote and sparsely populated areas.
- 16 The majority of woodlands in the county are plantations established for timber, shelter, amenity or game. Older woodlands were planted with native species or with broad leaved trees such as sycamore or beech. Conifers such as scots pine or larch were planted for the pit wood market which became widespread during the 19th and 20th centuries with the development of large Forestry Commission (FC) forests such as Hamsterley. The NFI 2012 shows that conifers occupy 52% of the stocked area and broadleaves 48% based on field samples, aerial surveys and includes felled open spaces.
- 17 Ancient woodland is defined as that which has existed continuously since 1600 when good maps started to become available. Most ancient woodlands in the county lie on land that is unsuitable for agricultural development, on steep valleys and ravines along rivers and streams and consist of oak and birch due to the acidity of the soil. Ash woodlands can be found on the limestone upland gills, ravines and coastal denes.
- 18 Within County Durham 2,096 hectares (10.9%) of the woodland is owned (or leased) by the FC, with the main woodland area comprising of Hamsterley Forest near Bishop Auckland. The remaining 17,036 hectares (89.1%) is owned by private landowners, other government bodies, local authorities, non-government organisations and charities (National Trust, Woodland Trust etc.) and businesses.
- 19 FC data (Managed Woodland Headline Performance Indicator) shows that of the 19,133 hectares of woodland in County Durham only 8,790 hectares are

managed, leaving 10,343 (54%) unmanaged. DCC currently owns and manages around 2000 hectares of woodland within the county.

- 20 The NFI data also provides data on the size of the woodland areas within County Durham, with the average size of privately owned woodland being around 3.68 hectares, compared to the average size of woodland owned by Durham County Council which is 11.2 hectares.

DCC Approach to Woodland Management

Key conclusions:

- Management of the DCC woodland estate following Local Government Re-organisation in 2009 is split between two Service Groupings, Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Economic Development and falls under three specific teams – Clean and Green; Countryside Service and Landscape and Forest Service.
- This is further divided across service areas; Culture & Sport, Planning & Assets and Direct Services. As a result, there is an inconsistent response to woodland management in terms of management, expenditure and revenue generation.
- DCC continues to undertake further woodland creation within the County increasing the amount of woodland it owns and manages.
- The value of timber products has increased making timber extraction viable and a source of income for DCC.
- A woodland audit of the entire woodland estate owned and managed by DCC is currently being scoped and will evaluate individual woodlands in terms of their biodiversity, economic value, recreational value, landscape value and community value.
- The audit provides an opportunity for the Authority to consolidate and prioritise management operations and resources and look at alternative management approaches for use by DCC.

- 21 The management of DCC's woodland estate is split across two Service Groupings within DCC, Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) and falls under three specific teams –the clean and green team within Neighbourhood Services attend to the maintenance of trees on highway verges, parks and residential estates, the Countryside Service manages community woodland and the Landscape and Forestry Service are responsible for the management of 61 large afforested sites across the county.

- 22 The Countryside Service sits within Neighbourhood Services and manages 'community woodland' or woodland with community benefits. It ensures that: access for all to woodland is enhanced wherever possible; biodiversity gain is achieved and links to communities are strengthened through information, events and volunteering.

- 23 The entire estate under the management of the Countryside Service comprises of 57 sites and includes a mixture of: Special Scientific Interest sites (SSSI), Local Nature Reserve sites (LNR), Local Wildlife sites (LW) and picnic sites with significant biodiversity value; 75 miles (120 km) of railway path; 7 viaducts; 55 bridges and 38 car parks.

- 24 The Countryside Service woodland estate is spread across the county with the majority in the central area with annual visitor numbers to the 57 sites totalling over four million (2012).
- 25 The Countryside Service prioritises a number of activities in managing woodland sites. An annual review of management of these woodland sites is undertaken by the Countryside Service.
- 26 The Landscape and Forestry Services sits within RED Service Grouping and are responsible for the management of 61 sites within County Durham. The sites are located across the County on brownfield sites such as pit heaps and brickworks and were landscaped and afforested throughout the 1970s to 1990s. Since their establishment there has been little active intervention with only basic maintenance taking place.
- 27 Each area of the forest estate has a management plan that covers all aspects of its management including safety, reclamation, landscape and future actions. The management plan identifies priorities for individual sites which include wildlife diversity, public access and leisure, landscape quality and timber production as priorities. All of these priorities have equal bearing.
- 28 The MTFP budget savings limits proactive work such as maintenance and community engagement. The service currently prioritises the work on sites benefitting from external funding e.g. Land of Oak and Iron project.
- 29 The public has access to all DCC woodland including 118 managed sites across the county.
- 30 The current management of the DCC woodland estate is spread across two Service Groupings each with different management, expenditure and revenue generation priorities. This has resulted in a lack of a co-ordinated response to woodland management by the two Service Groupings with each service identifying its own priorities and approach.
- 31 Consideration is needed in relation to how woodlands are managed over both Service Groupings to ensure that common areas of woodland management are efficiently and effectively administered and a strategic approach is used. This would allow for the pooling of resources in relation to the contractors, the joint exploration of funding streams due to capacity issues within both Service Groupings and consideration of different management models for different types of woodland.

Audit of Durham County Council's woodland estate 2015

- 32 Durham County Council owns and manages a substantial area of woodland in the county in the region of 2000 hectares. Other areas of DCC owned woodland are on long term lease arrangements. This includes 134 hectares of new woodland with the Woodland Trust (WT) and over 80 hectares with Beamish Museum. Further substantial areas of woodland have been created through the Mineral Valleys Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Programme of 200 hectares and more woodland creation is planned with the Land of Oak and Iron project consisting of 15.41 hectares of native woodland creation which falls under the forestry team.

- 33 DCC continues to undertake further woodland creation within the County increasing the amount of woodland under its ownership and management. The value of timber products has also increased within the last two years making timber extraction from the woodland estate viable and a source of income for the Authority. The Service Groupings therefore consider it is timely for DCC to undertake an audit of the entire woodland estate.
- 34 DCC officers are in the early stages of undertaking a comprehensive audit of the woodland estate. A project team consisting of staff from both Service Groupings has been established with the team currently scoping out the aim, objectives and areas of focus for the project initiation document.
- 35 The comprehensive audit of the woodland estate will look at the entire DCC woodland resource and evaluate individual woodlands in terms of their biodiversity, economic value, recreational value, landscape value and community value.
- 36 It will also provide an opportunity to develop new woodland creation partnerships within the county and look to the forest estate as a stimulus for wider projects to develop timber supply chains, deliver low carbon growth and contribute towards sustainable economic development across rural and urban communities.
- 37 It is anticipated that the comprehensive audit will take approximately eight months and it was suggested by the review group that members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept updated on the progress and key findings of the audit.
- 38 The audit will enable the service to consolidate and prioritise management operations and resources leading to more efficient management within Durham County Council, identify alternative management approaches and models for working with partners such as Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT – See page 13 of report for case study).

Recommendation 1:

That Durham County Council as part of the audit of the woodland estate considers:

- The future strategic management of the woodland estate
- The partnership management approaches adopted by key partners within County Durham such as Durham Wildlife Trust.
- The development and implementation of a streamlined corporate strategy/policy framework for the management and protection of woodland owned by Durham County Council.

Recommendation 7

That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet including as part of this process an update on the progress of the audit of the woodland estate.

Policies and strategies for the management and protection of trees and woodlands

Key conclusions:

- DCC does not have a corporate strategy/policy for the management and protection of woodland.
- There are elements of woodland management and protection contained in several DCC plans and strategies including: the County Durham Landscape Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the emerging County Durham Plan.
- The Corporate Tree Management Policy 2014 manages and protects trees under DCC's ownership.
- The audit of DCC's woodland estate will provide an opportunity to develop and implement a streamlined corporate policy/strategy for the management and protection of woodland owned by DCC.

National policy context

- 39 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 FC. The panel published its final report in July 2012 putting forward 31 recommendations which covered issues in relation to the future of the public forest estate, woodland creation and management, economic development of the forestry sector, payment for ecosystems, community involvement in local woodlands and tree health.
- 40 In relation to the management of woodland, the 2012 report recommends that there is an increase in the area of woodland managed to the UK Forestry Standard (the standard for sustainable forest management in the UK) from around 50% to 80% of total woodland over the next ten years.
- 41 Following the publication of the report, the response by the Government was positive and they agreed that a new woodland culture should be developed with the woodland and forestry sector becoming more resilient.
- 42 A refreshed government forestry policy 'Woodland and Forestry Policy Statement 2013' produced by the Forestry Commission and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), was published which sets out a clear hierarchy of priorities which include protecting, improving and expanding public and private woodland assets.
- 43 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. It also identifies the need to work with the forestry sector to explore the scope for exploiting opportunities such as fuel markets or rural tourism and suggests the promotion of greater involvement of communities.
- 44 Town and country planning legislation also provides protection to selected trees and woodlands via Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The legislation states that TPOs are legal documents which are administered by the local planning authority (LPA) and should be used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public.

Regional policy context

- 45 In response to the national policy statement a North East strategy and action plan 'Roots to Prosperity' for the growth and development of the forestry sector in Northern England for the next ten years was commissioned. Work was led by an industry led group which included the Forestry Commission, representatives from the forestry industry and local authorities.
- 46 The North East strategy identifies a number of barriers that can affect the management of small woodlands including:
- Access and infrastructure within woodlands - many forests and woodland in the private sector have poor access and infrastructure reducing the potential for harvesting timber and adversely affecting the financial viability of management work.
 - Owners being unengaged and ill-informed about the benefits of management –several decades of low timber prices has led to owners having little knowledge about woodlands and woodland management which has resulted in lower levels of management and a loss in value of these woodlands.
 - Under capitalised contractor base for small scale woodland management – larger scale commercial timber harvesting and extraction has been the subject of significant investment, innovation and mechanisation. However smaller scale, lower intensity harvesting and extraction has not benefited from the same level of capital investment. This lack of investment has limited the uptake of management in smaller privately owned woodlands.
 - Lack of collaborative working amongst woodland owners – many small woodland owners undertake very little if any collaborative working. Links among small woodland owners within discreet geographical areas would ensure activities are undertaken in an efficient and rational manner with reduced costs which would maximise income for the owner.
- 47 The Secretary of State and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) supported the launch of the Roots to Prosperity action plan and strategy in August 2014. The North East strategy and action plan focus on: the forest resource of the North East; opportunities for timber production; investment within the supply chain and processing sector; potential for bio-energy; further woodland creation and the development of tourism and recreation opportunities. The action plan is currently in the implementation stage.
- 48 From a local policy context DCC does not have a corporate strategy/policy for the management and protection of woodland owned by DCC although there are elements within several existing DCC plans and strategies. The review group considered the following relevant plans and strategies:
- County Durham Landscape Strategy 2008
 - County Durham Green Infrastructure Strategy 2012
 - Corporate Tree Management Policy 2014
 - County Durham Plan (emerging)

- 49 The County Durham Landscape Strategy was adopted by DCC in 2008 and is a non-statutory plan which addresses issues that affect the varied landscapes of County Durham and contains a strategy for woodlands and forestry. The strategy also promotes: the supply and utilisation of woodland products for wood fuels and wood crafts; an increase in woodland cover within the county identifying priority areas for the creation of new woodlands; the use of sensitive forest design; the protection of ancient woodlands; conservation of existing woodlands and provides opportunities for access to the countryside around towns and villages. The strategy forms part of the evidence base for the emerging County Durham Plan.
- 50 The Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) 2012 has been developed by DCC in partnership. The GIS offers the potential of dealing with landscape, bio-diversity, access and regeneration issues in the countryside around towns in a systematic way. The strategy resists development that has a significant detrimental effect upon trees and woodland, requires new woodlands to be planted where appropriate, for example restoration schemes, and institutes policies for new tree planting. The GIS also forms part of the evidence base for the emerging County Durham Plan.
- 51 In 2014 the Council developed and agreed a county wide tree management policy for the management and protection of all trees under Durham County Council ownership and for those trees which pose a safety risk to the public highway. It sets out a risk based programme of inspection with highways trees and where public safety is at risk considered as the highest priority. The policy also details the requirements in relation to Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas. In County Durham it takes approximately four days to process a TPO and there are currently 750 TPOs in operation with more being added each year. There are potentially unlimited fines for breaches of TPOs but the upper limit is usually in the region of £20,000. During 2014 138 applications were received for additional TPOs and 95% of those were granted consent.
- 52 The emerging County Durham Plan (identifies where development within the county will take place over the next 20 years) policy 40 lays down specific requirements for development proposals which may impact on trees, woodlands, forestry and hedges including ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNW) and planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS). In relation to PAWS the policy is more comprehensive than the National Planning Policy Framework. The policy requires new development to retain existing woodland and integrate them fully into the design of sites. Development would 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 can be undertaken.
- 53 The current policy framework is good, but distributed over several policy documents, however there is a need for a streamlined corporate management policy/strategy for the management and protection of DCC owned woodland. This policy/strategy would bring together all of the existing plans, strategies and policies including policy 40 of the emerging County Durham Plan (which focuses on limiting the effects that development would have on woodland) and would provide detail of woodland management in relation to biodiversity, access etc.

- 54 It was suggested by the review group that as part of the audit of the woodland estate the opportunity is taken to develop and implement a streamlined DCC corporate policy/strategy for the management and protection of the woodland estate.

Partnership Working

Key conclusions:

- DCC's woodland audit will include investigating and considering options for the future management of DCC's woodland estate including management models adopted by partners such as Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT).
 - DCC share with Northwoods (SIMWOOD project) barriers experienced in relation to the marketing and extraction of timber.
 - DCC consider the management model used by the SIMWOOD project for the future management, marketing and extraction of timber on DCC smaller forest sites.
- 55 DCC works with a number of key partners within the county on the management of various woodland projects including the Woodland Trust on Jubilee Woods at Coxhoe, Quarrington Hill and Cassop; Land of Oak and Iron at the Derwent Valley, and Durham Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust on the Minerals Valleys project in Weardale. During the review process it was recognised by partners that DCC works well with them in managing woodland projects within the county.
- 56 As part of the review process members were given detail via case studies of the woodland management approach used by DWT and a focused study for County Durham undertaken by Northwoods involving private woodland owners and looking at barriers to woodland management, marketing and timber extraction.

Case Study: Approach to the management of woodland estates by Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT)

Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) is one of 47 Wildlife Trusts within Great Britain. Its purpose is to protect wildlife and promote nature conservation in County Durham, the City of Sunderland and the boroughs of Gateshead, South Tyneside and Darlington. The Trust delivers conservation projects to protect the regions wildlife and provides education and volunteering opportunities for thousands of children and adults every year.

DWT manages several woodland sites within Gateshead which are owned by Gateshead Borough Council and were previously under the management of the council. Gateshead BC was unable to manage several sites due to capacity issues and the sites attracted external funding from Countryside Stewardship making it viable for DWT to manage the sites. As a charity DWT have access to funding streams that are not open to local authorities. The Trust receives agri- environment scheme (schemes which deliver effective environmental management) income for the sites that it manages, combines this with funding it receives from the sale of timber at its own woodland site in Gateshead, to fund an officer post within DWT which promotes volunteering opportunities and assists in managing the woodland sites under DWT's control.

DWT works in partnership with Woodland Trust (WT) within the North East region. The WT has a large number of woodland sites but limited staff resources which has resulted in DWT undertaking the management of and/or general maintenance duties on sites owned by the WT. DWT is looking at opportunities as part of the Land of Oak and Iron project to provide management support to private woodland owners developing partnerships or co-operatives to market and sell timber products.

- 57 The scope for DCC's woodland audit will include the investigation and consideration of options for the future management of the entire woodland estate including management models adopted by key partners.

Case Study: Woodland management model (Northwoods – SIMWOOD project)

Northwoods is a North East region woodland initiative with the remit of supporting tree and timber businesses. The initiative supports the whole of the forestry sector and its associated supply chain.

The majority of Northwood's projects are publically funded with the initiative managed by the Rural Development Initiatives Limited (RDI), a not-for-profit company with staff delivering projects in support of forestry, farming and land-based industries. The Northwood team comprises of one full-time project manager who is supported by other RDI staff.

Northwoods is currently 18 months into a four year project, the SIMWOOD (Sustainable Innovative Mobilisation of Wood) project 2013- 2017 which is funded via the EU Framework Programme. The overall aim of the project is to investigate and test new novel ideas which could be replicated elsewhere in the UK and across Europe, to mobilise more timber to meet the growing demand.

The project is the result of the sector's forecasts for the coming decades which predict a substantial increase in the demand for wood with the highest growth rate expected to come from the bioenergy sector with wood energy playing a critical role in Europe's future renewable energy supply and the achievement of climate change protection objectives.

The focus study for County Durham will take a specific geographical area within County Durham and undertake a survey of private woodland owners to get a better understanding of their motivation and identify the barriers to the management or the non-management of their woodlands. A pilot project will look into the current practices for managing these small woodland holdings and investigate alternative methods of management, marketing and harvesting across a range of woodland types.

- 58 Although it was recognised that the SIMWOOD initiative related to small private woodlands, it was suggested by the review group that DCC share with Northwoods barriers which the authority has experienced in relation to the marketing and extraction of timber. It was also commented that DCC consider the management models produced by the SIMWOOD project for the future management, marketing and extraction of timber on DCC smaller forest sites.

Future Funding of Woodland Management

Timber Extraction

Key conclusions:

- The restructure programme of the forest estate initiated in 2011 focused on establishing whether DCC forest estate sites were economically viable for timber extraction, and led to the development of plans for timber extraction at specific sites.
- Only two contracts were let in 2014 from the six contracts issued for timber extraction from DCC's forest estate.
- The procurement process and documentation is complex for contractors particularly small contractors. The current procurement process and documentation needs to be simplified to make it more attractive to the private sector.
- There is £10,000 income in the system from the sale of timber from the two let contracts with a further £70,000 to £80,000 anticipated from future sales. A further £20,000-£50,000 of income is expected from the letting of the remaining four contracts.

59 DCC woodland estate contains many mature woodland sites which have only had basic maintenance taking place. The trees are of even age and densely planted and at risk from windblow, tree disease and of poor growth as a result of competition for light, rooting space and nutrients.

60 In 2011, DCC decided to undertake a restructure of the forest estate under the management of the RED Service Grouping (Landscape and Forestry Service Teams). The restructure was focused on establishing whether forest estate woodland sites within DCC's ownership were economically viable for timber extraction. It was determined that those DCC forest estate woodland sites over one hectare in size across 61 separate sites within the County would be considered within the restructure.

61 DCC needed FC approved plans in order to receive the required felling licenses for the restructure of the forest estate. Due to the complex nature of the documents a consultant was appointed specifically to work on the documents. A key aspect of the consultant's work was to estimate the quantity of timber that could be extracted from the various DCC forest estate sites and the income which could be generated from the sale of the timber.

62 The forestry consultant was engaged through procurement in early 2012 and spent 18 months carrying out surveys and submitting plans to the FC. The cost of the consultant was £8,500 of which £6,000 was grant aided by the FC. The consultant worked with the council's procurement team to draw up the contracts for the sale of the timber from the identified sites.

63 The contracts for the sale of timber were released in early 2014. The structure of the contracts was designed to ensure the less productive DCC woodland sites were managed alongside the more profitable sites and that smaller local forestry businesses had the opportunity to express an interest in the contracts as well as large scale contractors.

64 Timber from DCC's forest sites is divided into two markets: softwood and hard wood. Softwoods from the sites are sent to processors locally and further afield in Cumbria and Southern Scotland and are used for wood fuel and firewood. Good quality hardwood has a number of uses including roof trusses, timber frames (construction timber) and furniture. This wood attracts premium values however this high grade timber can take up to 30 years to grow and mature.

65 A number of issues have to be considered in determining whether a woodland site is suitable for timber extraction. A key issue is access to the site with many of the sites under the management of DCC hard to reach. There is limited access especially with the specialist and heavy machinery required for timber extraction such as tractors, log loaders and skidders. Other technical issues also need to be considered including weight limits on bridges and the regulations and requirements from the Health and Safety Executive. The above picture shows timber extraction undertaken at the Croxdale site by the contractor.



66 Six contracts were issued for the sale of timber from DCC forest estate in 2014 however only two of the contracts were let. Feedback from contractors on the procurement process indicated that the procurement paperwork was too complex and that there was a need to simplify the procurement process and documentation to make the contracts attractive to the private sector. Discussions are taking place with a timber auction company concerning the re-advertising of the remaining four unlet contracts to ensure they are advertised appropriately maximising private sector interest. It is anticipated that the contracts will be re-visited in spring 2015.

67 The two contracts let are for timber extraction in the Annfield Plain area (Burnopfield and Westwoods) and the Brandon area (Deerness and Croxdale) of County Durham. In relation to the contract for the Annfield Plain area (Burnopfield and Westwoods) DCC is receiving £11 per tonne which based on estimates will generate DCC £40,000 income from the site. For the Brandon area contract (Deerness and Croxdale), DCC is receiving £17.83 per tonne for high grade timber at Croxdale down to £4.02 per tonne for the young conifers at Deerness. The total income from this contract for DCC is also estimated to be £40,000.

68 There is £10,000 income in DCC's 2014/2015 budget from the two let contracts with the remaining sales income expected in 2015/16 to total a further £70,000 - £80,000.

69 A further £20,000 - £50,000 of income in total will be generated as a result of the letting of the remaining four contracts. It was also commented that the letting of the four contractors would create further employment opportunities

within the forestry sector. It was suggested by the review group that DCC maximise the income and employment opportunities available from timber extraction on appropriate DCC forest sites.

Recommendation 2

That Durham County Council maximise the income generation and employment opportunities from timber extraction on existing and potential new sites including consideration of new management models for the marketing and extraction of timber such as the SIMWOOD project.

Recommendation 3

That Durham County Council's procurement process for the letting of timber extraction contracts ensure that:

- Contracts are advertised to target and maximise interest from the private sector.
- That in conjunction with the Corporate Procurement Manager the required documentation and process is simplified to make contracts more attractive to private sector companies.

EU Funding

Key conclusions:

- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) consists of two pillars with funding for woodlands under pillar two (new rural development programme for England), with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme providing funding to support woodlands.
- The Countryside Stewardship Scheme applies to eligible farmers, land managers, land owners and tenants and provides capital grants for woodland management and creation.
- That DCC as a woodland owner and manager maximise the funding opportunities available via the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to support DCC's woodland estate.
- The low carbon economy element of the ESIF programme 2014-2020 potentially presents significant opportunities both regionally and locally with £70m available to the NELEP and £18m available to County Durham.
- It is anticipated that the English Operational Programme will be agreed and adopted in June 2015.
- DCC and partners have already begun to identify and develop eligible project opportunities including the possibility of developing the biomass supply chain for County Durham (see paragraphs 93-97 for details of project).
- DCC needs to maximise the funding opportunities available for the woodland estate if and when funding becomes available via the low carbon economy element of the ESIF programme.
- Overview and Scrutiny members are updated on any relevant County Durham woodland related projects that may receive funding via the ESIF programme.

70 There are two potential sources of EU finding available to support woodlands; The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) falling under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which is open for applications; and European Structural

and Investments Funds (ESIF) Programme 2014-2020 under the new European Regional Development Programme (low carbon economy strand) if and when it becomes available.

- 71 At the time of the review funding arrangements for woodland management was in a state of flux. Changes to the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) became effective from December 2014 and therefore a range of new funding arrangements became available. However due to the time lag on some of these new arrangements; there was a cross over period where previous arrangements were still in place.
- 72 The CAP will retain its two pillars with pillar one for direct payments to farmers and market control measures and pillar two to promote rural development. In total the CAP for England will make £14 billion of funds available with 70% of the £14 billion falling to pillar 1 and 30% of the £14 billion falling to pillar 2. The Government informed the European Commission in 2013 that for England, they would for each year of the CAP period (2014-2020) transfer 12% of the budget from direct payments (pillar1) to rural development (pillar 2).
- 73 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme which is part of the new Rural Development Programme for England is a new environmental land management scheme that will contribute approximately £900m to rural business to help them improve the countryside environment. The scheme is open to eligible farmers, land managers, land owners and tenants. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is the source of government funding for woodland management within the new Rural Development Programme for England.
- 74 The main priorities of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme are biodiversity and water quality however it will also help to improve flood management, the historic environment, landscape character, genetic conservation, education access and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme replaces funding opportunities provided by the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, English Woodland Grant Scheme and Capital Grants from the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Programme.
- 75 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme will provide a range of capital grants to support farming and forestry that benefit the environment. The range of capital grants available to support woodlands includes grants for: hedges and boundaries; tree health; woodland management; woodland creation; feasibility studies and implementation plans. In addition, further funding is provided via the Countryside Stewardship Scheme for the most environmentally important sites and woodland which need complex management such as habitat restoration, woodland creation or tailored measures for priority species.
- 76 Capital grants for woodland creation are available for planting, protecting and maintaining woodlands for 10 years to ensure the establishment of the trees planted. The applications for the capital grants should be for areas of woodland at least 3 hectares. There are exceptions to this such as where the woodland creation is part of work to address water quality or flood risk issues, in these cases applications of 1 hectare would be considered.

- 77 The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programme 2014-2020 represents 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). For the NELEP area the 2014-2020 ESIF programme amounts to £462m including £135m for County Durham as a Transition Region. In relation to the environmental strand of the ESIF programme, £70m is available to the NELEP for the low carbon economy element with 15% (£18m) of Durham's total allocation ring-fenced for this element.
- 78 The government is continuing to negotiate the England Operational Programme (OP) with the EU pending final agreement and formal adoption is anticipated in June 2015 with an early round of calls for projects launched in March. On 20 March 2015 a revised draft English OP was circulated setting out the areas of activity that can be supported under the ESIF programme and the rules and parameters of spending that the EU Commission will agree to in the UK.
- 79 Work is already taking place within DCC in anticipation of the approval of the OPs. DCC officers for the past 16 months have engaged with key partners within County Durham to identify and develop eligible project opportunities suitable for funding from the low carbon economy element of the ESIF programme. DCC officers have identified the development of a biomass supply chain for County Durham as a potential project however discussions are taking place with DEFRA and DCLG to identify if any funding via the ESIF would be available for this project (See page 22 for details of project).
- 80 The review group highlighted the need for DCC in its role as a land owner and manager to maximise the funding opportunities available via the Countryside Stewardship Scheme together with any funding opportunities available via ERDF programme (low carbon economy strand). In addition, members requested that they are kept updated on any relevant County Durham woodland related projects receiving funding via the ESIF programme in the future.

Recommendation 4

That Durham County Council maximises the funding opportunities available via the Common Agricultural Policy (Countryside Stewardship Scheme for England) and the European Structural and Investment Fund (Low Carbon Economy Strand) if and when such funding becomes available for the benefit of the Durham County Council woodland estate.

How DCC and partners promotes volunteering

Key conclusions:

- The Countryside Service has 300 volunteers within the Durham Voluntary Countryside Rangers Service (DVCRS) together with a further 100 volunteers from specific groups.
- DCC's volunteering figures have been fairly static however they are expected to have declined in 2014/15 which is reflected in figures from Natural England showing a gentle decline in conservation volunteering.

- There are several active local voluntary groups working in community woodland within County Durham. These groups manage woodland sites with the support of DCC staff and receive income from Forestry Commission grants or from selling timber and other products.
- The contact details of the Countryside Service need to be visible via signposting on woodland sites.
- Volunteering opportunities need to be promoted by the Countryside Service via AAPs, Durham County News, and County Council staff both current and former, Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Councillors.

- 81 The Countryside Service which sits within the Neighbourhood Services Grouping of DCC depends upon 300 volunteers known as Durham Voluntary Countryside Ranger Service (DVCRS) who engage in various activities on DCC woodland sites including:
- Practical work – the service is fully skilled and able to carry out the full range of maintenance work.
 - Lead and steward the guided walks programme.
 - Assist with events and educational sessions.
 - Undertake site patrolling functions.
 - Provide administration assistance.
- 82 On a weekly basis the service has a practical task group session which involves up to 20 volunteers and can be anything from step and stile construction, clearing scrub on grassland sites or removing invasive species from woodlands. The service also has regular small activity group sessions when resources are available with DCC ex-staff helping to run and supervise the sessions with volunteers undertaking habitat work, infrastructure improvements and seasonal maintenance.
- 83 The service engages with and facilitates participation/volunteering from specific groups which include: corporate groups such as Northumbrian Water which send staff twice a year to undertake plant clearing; supported learners groups; work experience groups and restorative justice groups. This brings the total volunteers helping the Countryside Service on community woodland sites within the county to approximately 400. The value of the work undertaken and the support provided by volunteers to the Authority has been estimated at £350,000 per year.
- 84 In addition to the DVCRS there are several active local voluntary groups working in community woodland throughout the county. These local voluntary groups manage the various woodland sites and undertake work to meet the aims/objectives which are specified within the management plans for the individual woodland sites. The following community woodland sites have active local voluntary groups who undertake a range of activities:
- Bearpark Woods – managed in part by a local group /community association known as ‘The Friends of Bearpark Woods’. The group with the support of DCC has developed a new management plan for a FC grant for the creation of an orchard and garden with seats which will be located within the woodland.
 - Pelaw Woods – managed by ‘The Friends of Pelaw Woods’. The group has a management plan in place and is in the process of applying for grants from the FC to undertake conservation work.

- Flassvale – managed by ‘The Friends of Flass Vale’. The group has been established for several years with the woodland located within Durham City. The group has conservation and access as aims with its management plan. The group has recently received grants for sycamore thinning and to open up wetland areas.
 - Hedleyhill Woods Local Nature Reserve – managed by East Hedleyhope Community Association. The group within its management plan has a focus of conservation and has recently received FC grants for the development of footpaths and the thinning of woodland.
 - Deerness Woods – managed by informal friend & volunteers locally. The group has a focus of ecology and access. DCC is currently providing support to this group to thin out conifers and to further diversify habitats.
- 85 The local voluntary groups are led by a few locally influential individuals with the group’s focusing on conservation, ecology and access. These groups receive income from grants normally via the FC or from selling timber and other products such as fruit.
- 86 DCC provides support to the local voluntary groups via a member of staff from the Forestry Service who assists with grant applications and provides support and advice in relation to the development of practical skills.
- 87 It was commented by the review group that there is a need for the Countryside Service contact details to be visible on woodland sites for use by groups and individuals to get advice or to ask about volunteering opportunities. It was also suggested that the Countryside Service could actively encourage and promote volunteering opportunities via the Durham Community Action’s Do-it website, 14 Area Action Partnerships, Durham County News, County Council staff both current and former, Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Council members. This approach for greater community involvement aligns and supports the Council’s Ask initiative.
- 88 Due to the current national and local economic climate people can not afford the time or to commit to volunteer work in conservation. It was suggested that people are more inclined to volunteer in other sectors.
- 89 Information was also provided to the review group by Durham Wildlife Trust on their approach to volunteering (see case study on page 13).

Recommendation 5

That Durham County Council continues to actively encourage and promote the volunteering opportunities available within the woodland estate via the Durham Community Action’s Do-it website, AAPs, Durham County News, Durham County Council Staff (current and former), Resident Organisations, Community Centres and County Council Members.

Current and future arrangements for diversification

Key conclusions:

- Officers within DCC over the last 16 months have led the development of a number of potential low carbon economy projects for funding under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programme for 2014-2020.
- A Biomass supply chain project for County Durham has been identified as a possible project however there is uncertainty as to whether ESIF funding would be available.
- DCC should investigate existing local authority biomass supply chains and incorporate any suitable elements from existing schemes into any future County Durham scheme.
- The review group recognised that the project presented a number of opportunities for County Durham however funding issues needed to be resolved before it could progress.

90 Durham County Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Team have led on the development of a portfolio of potential low carbon economy projects for possible European Structural and Investment funds (ESIF) programme for the whole of the NELEP area. The team has worked over the past 16 months to engage key partners in County Durham and develop a number of eligible project opportunities in advance of the circulation of the draft English ESIF operational programme, which identifies the areas of activity which can be supported under the funding programme.

91 On the 20 March the draft operational programme was circulated setting out the areas of activity which can be supported under the programme and the rules and parameters of spending that the EU Commission will agree to in the UK which includes projects having a defined start and end date, must meet the eligible activity and secure 40% match funding.

92 The review group was informed that as part of the work undertaken to develop projects, DCC officers have identified the development of a biomass supply chain for County Durham as a potential project.

93 The aim of the project would be to manage DCC woodland resource and the heat demand in council owned buildings to create market conditions which would stimulate the creation of a private sector supply chain. Key areas of focus in developing the project are:

- Resource - appropriate management of the DCC woodland, investment in woodland creation and provide skills and knowledge to private woodland owners;
- Supply chain – investment in equipment appropriate for small woodlands, support collaborative working and provide business support and facilitation services;
- Processing the product – investment in processing equipment and storage facilities and business support;
- End use – conversion of existing heating systems at appropriate DCC property, training for staff and maintenance arrangements.

94 Currently European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) cannot be used to fund forestry projects however rural development funding could be used for such a project but is difficult to access and discussions are currently taking

place with DEFRA and DCLG to identify if any EU funding would be available for this project. It was recognised that match funding would be needed for any EU funding received (40% match funding required) and it was suggested by officers that various options would be pursued including discussions with both public and private sector and exploration of different grant schemes.

- 95 In advance of any funding bid being submitted for this project expertise would need to be bought in to develop a business plan which would identify potential pots of funding for the project to move forward.
- 96 Other local authorities within the country have already developed successful biomass supply chains (Barnsley) and it was suggested by the review group that DCC investigate those biomass supply schemes already in existence to see if any elements from existing schemes could be incorporated into any future County Durham scheme.
- 97 The review group commented that the project presented a number of opportunities for County Durham however there were issues to be resolved in relation to funding the project before it could progress.
- 98 The review group received evidence in relation to the extraction of timber currently taking place on the DCC woodland estate and detail of future proposals for further timber extraction and its proposed uses. (See paragraphs 59-69)

Woodland Biodiversity in County Durham

Key conclusions:

- Ancient Woodland is not just trees but the flora and fauna that live within it and the soil in which they live, it is irreplaceable, once it is gone it is lost forever.
- County Durham has relatively small areas of ancient woodland in comparison to other areas of England. The Derwent Valley area of County Durham has the most ancient woodland.
- Durham County Council practice coppice management on some areas of ancient woodland it owns. Fallen timber is left on the ground to provide ecological benefit to the woodland.
- The popularity of wood burners has seen an increase in timber being taken from woodlands. It is illegal to take fallen timber from any woodland.
- DCC needs to continue to publicise with the general public the benefits of biodiversity, woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.

- 99 Forests and woodland plantations such as those in Weardale are no more than crops. The same species of tree is grown and the ground on which they stand has little ecological value. However, ancient woodlands provide a rich variety of flora and fauna and are diverse in the sense that it provides a home to many species of plants, insects, birds and mammals. Ancient woodland sites are usually found in valleys, gorges, ravines and river corridors where timber extraction would be difficult. They are native woods that have been in continual existence since 1600 and in some cases are much older.

- 100 Most ancient woodlands in County Durham remain as isolated fragments, the largest areas of ancient woodland occur in the Derwent Valley area of County Durham where there was much less expansion of settlements during the 19th and 20th centuries as there was in the east of the county.
- 101 Coppice management is practised by the County Council on ancient woodlands in their ownership to mimic wild woods with periodic felling of trees. In some cases felled trees are left to benefit eco systems within the woodland, dead trees are also left for the same reasons but this can cause problems with health and safety.
- 102 An issue with fallen timber being taken from woodlands has increased with the popularity of wood burning stoves. Many members of the public are not aware that it is illegal to take timber from woods without permission. The public also complain and question why trees have been felled as they do not understand that this is required for the woodland to survive and grow. There is a need for DCC to continue to publicise with the general public the benefits of biodiversity, woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.
- 103 Biodiversity of ancient woodland is protected by the national planning policy framework and locally the emerging local plan policy 40 provides guidance for developers and states that new development will not be permitted which would result in the loss, fragmentation isolation or deterioration of ancient woodlands. The minimum buffering for new development from ancient woodland sites is 15 metres which is quite close when considering the damage that could be caused by such as domestic pets.
- 104 Due to the size, fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodlands in County Durham species have been lost or migrated elsewhere. Development on the periphery of ancient woodland sites has impacted the wild life habitat.
- 105 Members of the review group visited woodlands at Hawthorn Dene to view biodiversity projects.

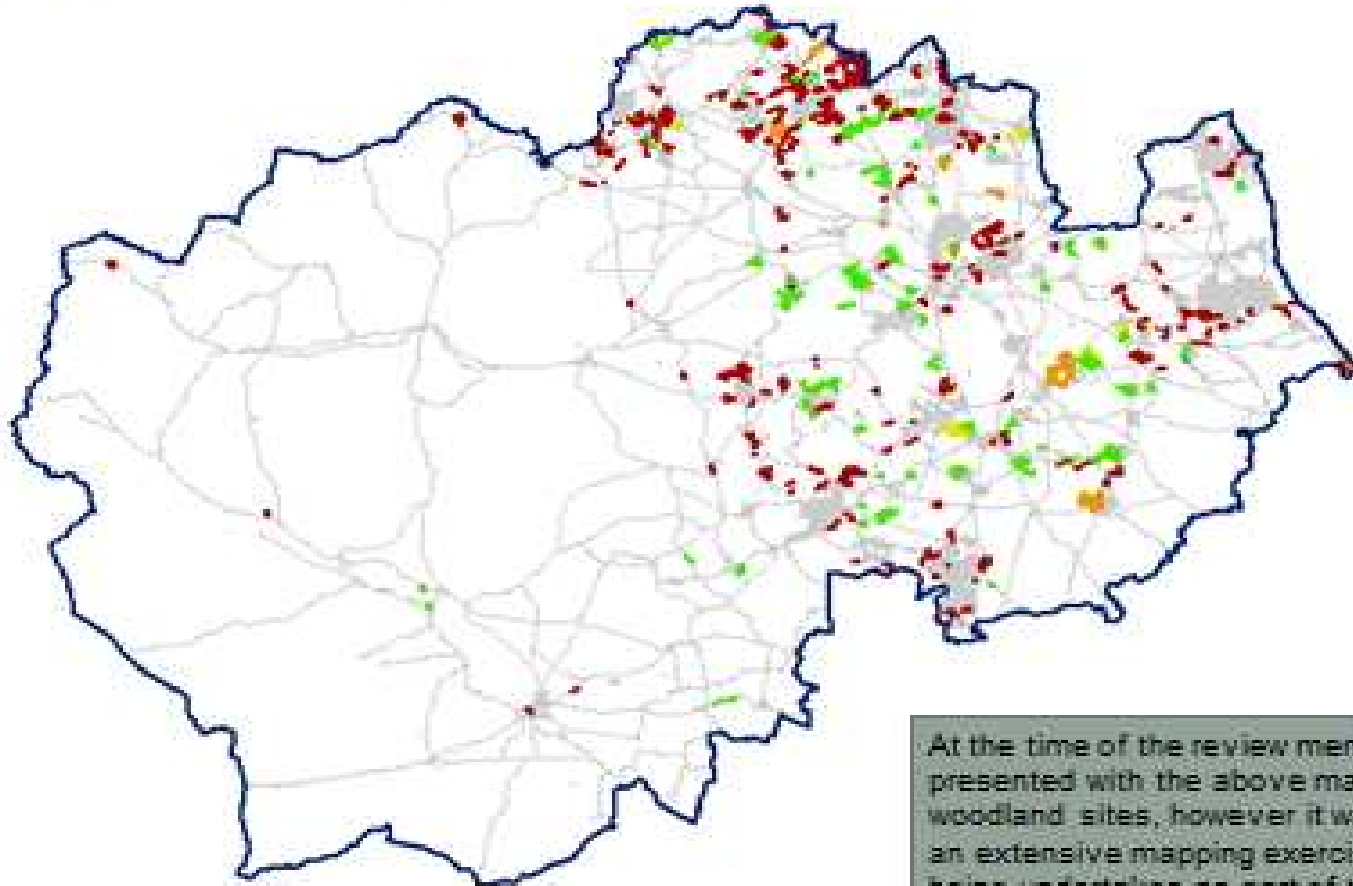
Recommendation 6

That Durham County Council ensures that the contact details of the Countryside Service are clearly displayed on Community Woodland Sites for use by the general public and that Durham County Council publicise via factsheets information in relation to the benefits of biodiversity; woodland management and the illegal status of fallen timber taken from the woodland estate.

Contact:	Diane Close,	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Tel:	03000 268 141	E-mail:diane.close@durham.gov.uk

DCC owned woodlands

Appendix 1



At the time of the review members were presented with the above map showing DCC woodland sites, however it was recognised that an extensive mapping exercise is currently being undertaken as part of the audit of the woodland estate which may result in changes to the above.

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



8 July 2015

**Scoping Report: Light Touch Review of
Parking on Council Land**

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose

1. To provide Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny members with a scoping document in advance of a mini review of Parking on Council Land including highway verges and council owned public open amenity space.

Background

2. At Council on 21 January 2015, Councillor Hopgood put forward a motion to council: *"This Council noting the recent agreement by it of a tree policy, agrees to investigate the creation of a policy for driving and parking on council owned grassed areas.*

This council recognises that many of these grassed areas are regularly used by residents and children for recreation and that inappropriate use by vehicles is causing significant danger as well as damage that is unsightly and expensive to repair.

This Council believes that the creation of a policy to address this issue would give council officers the power to have vehicles removed and enforce the non-vehicular access to our valuable green spaces."

3. The motion was withdrawn on the understanding that Overview and Scrutiny would investigate with the service grouping options available to members of the council to address this problem. The nature of the topic falls within the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Types of Parking Problems

Highways

4. Parking on highway verge can cause a nuisance for pedestrians if they are unable to pass the vehicle with a wheelchair, pram or pushchair. Vehicles inconsiderately parked are very hazardous to pedestrians, causing problems crossing roads as sightlines are impeded, pedestrians with poor vision might not realise the vehicle is actually on the path which may cause them to damage themselves or the vehicle.

5. This type of parking problem causes a greater problem on older housing estates where the road is very narrow; there are very few areas to park outside the curtilage of the property and to park at the kerb would cause an obstruction. Also, we live in an age where car ownership is high with some families owning more than one car and the car is used even on the shortest trip all adding to the congestion on our roads and parking space.
6. However, if all vehicles parked at the kerbside this could obstruct the highway for other road users including public transport, delivery vehicles and most importantly emergency vehicles which would find it difficult to weave through parked vehicles.

Environmental

7. Former council housing estates have large areas of amenity open space which was designed to add to the aesthetic of the estate. The open space is often to the front aspect of the houses.
8. As previously mentioned in paragraph 6 many households own more than one vehicle and may want the vehicle within sight of the property hence parking on land adjacent to their property.
9. This can lead to significant damage to the land including erosion of the grass causing an unsightly muddy mess not suitable to be walked on.

Limitations of a Review

10. Local Authorities have limited options available to them to tackle pavement parking and parking on council owned land. Current legislation offers some opportunities which can be explored by the Review which include. Local Authorities and the police tackling pavement parking in various ways, such as under legislation governing obstruction and dangerous parking; designating limited areas of 'no pavement parking' through a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO); or establishing a special parking area. Separately, it is an offence to *drive onto the pavement*, whether with intention to park or not.¹
11. County Durham has a diverse geographical nature which means that one solution does not fit all problems in relation to parking on council land resulting in a variety of options needing to be considered. It would therefore be extremely difficult for a County wide policy to cover all aspects of parking on council land. Initial research suggests that Local Authorities do not introduce policies for parking on council owned land due to the complexities involved. However, as part of the light touch review members will receive detail of the approaches used by neighbouring authorities.
12. There are alternative options available to address parking on council land which will be considered by the light touch review including the introduction of hard standing. However this type of engineering works attracts a large cost and where there are significant problems members may wish to consider using their own neighbourhood budgets.

Terms of Reference

13. Rationale

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny agreed that scrutiny would investigate parking on Council owned land and that as this fell under the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee they would lead the review.

14. Scope

The Light Touch Review will focus on identifying possible legislative and policy opportunities to tackle parking on council owned highway verges and open space amenity land.

15. Objectives

The aim of the review is to raise awareness to members of the council of the options available to address challenges and issues in relation to parking on Council land. The review will specifically address:

- What powers the Council has to prevent obstruction to footways from inconsiderate parking on highway verges and any challenges/issues?
- What options are available for dealing with parking on open space amenity land and any challenges/issues?

16. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the following outcomes will be achieved:

- Members of the Council will be fully aware of the powers and options available in relation to parking on council land.
- All enforcement and educational remedies in relation to parking on council land will be discussed together with the relevant issues/challenges identified.
- Members will have the contact details of those DCC officers who can provide advice and support.

17. Membership

The membership of the review group will be all of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the addition of Councillor Hopgood who raised the issues with the original motion to Council.

18. Reporting

On completion of the evidence gathering and formulation of recommendations a report will be drafted and sent to Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Management Team, and shared with Cabinet.

19. Approach & Timescale

The Light Touch Review will commence in September 2015 and will consist of two meetings:

- Meeting One: 14th September – Evidence presentation in relation to legal powers, policy and practice from officers involved.
- Meeting Two: 1st October – Findings and Conclusions.
- A report detailing the key findings and recommendations of the Light Touch Review will be shared with Cabinet in November/December 2015.

Recommendations

20. Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to set up a review group with all members of the committee with the addition of the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillor Hopgood.

¹ Parking: Pavement and On Street; House of Commons' Library; SN1170; 171114

**Contact: Tom Gorman, Scrutiny and Performance Manager, [Tel:03000 268027](tel:03000268027)
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Ann Whitton, Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 03000 268143, email:
ann.whitton@durham.gov.uk**

Appendix 1: Implications

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

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



8 July 2015

**Refresh of the Committee's work
programme 2015 - 16**

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide for Members' consideration an updated work programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny for 2015-2016.

Background

- 2 At the meeting on the 17 April 2015, the Committee considered the actions identified within the Council Plan 2015-2018 for the Altogether Greener priority theme and agreed to refresh its work programme to include a number of these actions. In addition, topics have also been identified that are in-line with the Council Plan, Cabinet's forward plan of key decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.

Detail

- 3 In accordance with this decision, a work programme for 2015-2016 has been prepared and attached in Appendix 2.
- 4 Members are also encouraged to identify an area for future Scrutiny investigation (in depth review) from the work programme.

Recommendation

- 5 Members of the Committee are asked to discuss and agree the new work programme as detailed for 2015-2016.

Background Paper(s)

Council Plan 2015-2018, Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee report-Refresh of the work programme-17 April, 2015.

Contact:	Tom Gorman	Tel: 03000 268 027
		E-mail: tom.gorman@durham.gov.uk
Author:	Diane Close	Tel: 03000 268 141
		E-mail: diane.close@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications (The following implications are taken directly from the report to Cabinet on the 18 March 2015, re the Council Plan and Service Plans 2015-2018)

Finance - The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan

Staffing - The Council's strategies are being aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Risk - Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk.

Equality and Diversity - Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Council Plan. The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has previously been undertaken for the Council Plan. The actions in the Council Plan include specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the quality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

Accommodation – The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Crime and Disorder - The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council's contributions to tackling crime and disorder.

Human Rights – None

Consultation - Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget. Results have been taken into account in developing our resourcing decisions.

Procurement – None

Disability Discrimination Act – None

Legal Implications – None

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<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015 TO 2016</p> <p>Environment & Sustainable Communities OSC</p> <p>Lead Officer: Tom Gorman</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Diane Close / Ann Whitton</p> <p>IPG contact: Alan Patrickson</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>O/S Review - A systematic 6 monthly review of progress against recommendations/Action Plan</p> <p>Scrutiny/Working Group – Indepth Review</p> <p>Overview/progress – information on an issue; opportunity to comment, shape, influence, progress with a scrutiny review</p> <p>Performance – ongoing monitoring (quarterly) performance reports/budgets</p>
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	When	Who	Outcome	Comment
O/S Review Updates				
Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions	9 Nov 2015	Maggie Bosanquet	To provide members of ESC OSC with progress made against the committee's recommendations	The committee will monitor progress of reducing the Council's carbon emissions.
Flooding	Special meeting 8 Feb 2016	John Reed	To provide members of ESC OSC with progress made against the committee's recommendations	The committee will receive information in relation to progress made against recommendations. Information will be received at a separate meeting in relation

					to the Flood Risk Management Authorities.
Woodlands	18 April 2016	Sue Mullinger	To provide members of ESC OSC with progress made against the committee's recommendations	The committee will receive a progress update on recommendations made in the review. This is the first progress update following the review being received by Cabinet.	
Scrutiny/Working Group					
Parking on Council Land – Light Touch Review	Special meetings on 14 Sept & 1 Oct 2015	Ian Houtt /Mary Readman / Brian Buckley/ Jimmy Bennett/ Clare Greenlay	Members will receive an overview presentation followed by a separate meeting to highlight key findings from which members will formulate recommendations.	Members will receive information in relation to legislation relating to parking on council land, actions that can be taken to resolve the situation such as enforcement and challenges. Recommendations will be made from the LTR for consideration by Cabinet.	
In depth Scrutiny review to be determined					

Overview/Progress					
Air Quality Action Plan & Consultation Strategy - Update	7 March 2016	Denyse Holman	To provide members of the committee with an update.	Members will be aware of progress made on the action plan and the outcome of the consultation	
Waste Programme Update	12 Oct 2015 & 7 March 2016	Alan Patrickson	To provide members of the committee with an update.	Members will receive information on various projects within the waste programme.	
Warm Up North Update	Special meeting 1 Dec 2015	Stuart Timmiss	To provide members of the committee with an update.	Members will receive information on the latest initiatives and their take up.	
European Structural and investment Fund (ESIF) - Update	12 Oct 2015 & 7 March 2016	Maggie Bosanquet	To provide members of the committee with an update	Members will receive information in relation to ESIF projects.	
Contaminated Land Strategy - Update	9 Nov 2015	Denyse Holman/Sarah Clement Dawson	To provide members of the committee with an update.	Members will receive information on how work is progressing on identifying, inspecting and assessing contaminated land.	
Garden Waste Update	12 Oct 2015 & 7 March 2016	Alan Patrickson	To provide members with an update.	Members will receive information in relation to the take up of the garden waste programme and how the programme is progressing.	

Community Action Team Update	8 July 2015	Joanne Waller/Jennifer Jones	To provide members of the committee with an update	Members will receive an update in relation to current projects and progress made.
Renewable energy Overview	Special meeting 6 October 2015	Stuart Timmiss/ Maggie Bosanquet/ Prof Gluyas	Members will receive an overview presentation detailing renewable energy initiatives within County Durham.	Members will receive information in relation to renewable energy projects within County Durham.
Fly-Tipping – overview of the task force	22 Jan 2016	Oliver Sherratt/ Ian Hoult	Members will receive an overview presentation.	Members will receive information on the latest figures for fly-tipping and actions taken to manage the situation.
Countywide Campaigns to tackle environmental crime Overview	22 Jan 2016	Oliver Sherratt/ Ian Hoult	Members of the committee will receive an overview presentation.	Members will receive information on current campaigns to tackle envro-crime.
Developments in Refuse Collection Routes - Overview	7 March 2016	Oliver Sherratt	Members will receive an overview presentation	Members will receive information on the revised routes for refuse collections and it implications for residents.
Environment Initiatives - Overview	22 Jan 2016	Oliver Sherratt	Members will receive an overview presentation	Members will receive information on the latest environment initiatives
Allotments - Overview	9 Nov 2015	Ian Hoult	Members of the committee will receive an overview presentation.	Members will receive information on the current and future policy relation to allotments.

Fuel Poverty Overview	Special meeting 1 Dec 2015	Stuart Timmiss/ Cliff Duff	Members of the committee will receive an overview presentation.	Members will receive information in relation to the take up of fuel poverty initiatives and current and planned campaigns.
Strategic cycle routes Overview	18 April 2016	Peter Ollivere/Ian Jopling	Members of the committee will receive an overview presentation.	Members will receive information relating to cycle routes in County Durham.
Climate Change Strategy & Delivery Plan - Update	9 Nov 2015	Maggie Bosanquet	To provide members of ESC OSC with progress made against the committee's recommendations.	The committee will receive information relating to the climate change delivery plan.
Bridge Inspections Overview	18 April 2016	Brian Kitching	To provide members with an overview of the work undertaken in relation to bridge inspections within the County.	Members will receive detail of the work being undertaken within the County concerning bridge inspections and maintenance.
Visit to flood mitigation work	TBC	Simon Longstaff	To provide members with the opportunity to see Flood mitigation work undertaken within some areas of the County.	Members will have the opportunity to see first-hand flood mitigation work undertaken with in the county.
Visit to strategic	TBC	Peter	To provide members with	Members will have the opportunity to see

cycle routes within the county		Ollivere/Ian Jopling	the opportunity to visit some strategic cycle routes within the county.	some strategic cycle routes within County Durham.
Performance		Mary Readman		Ongoing – to provide members with information on performance of the service grouping and highlight areas of prominence (those going well, and those giving cause for concern).
Q 4	July 2015			
Q 1	Oct 2015			
Q 2	Jan 2016			
Q 3	Apr 2016			
Budget Outturn		Phil Curran		Ongoing – highlight areas of concern. Committee to receive updates on the affects and implications of MTFP on service groupings
Q 4 & Q1	Oct 2015			
Q 2	Jan 2016			
Q 3	Apr 2016			



County Durham Environment Partnership Board Minutes

Thursday 12th March 2015
Mayor's Chamber, Town Hall, Durham

Apologies

Jim Cokill - Durham Wildlife Trust
Adrian Vass - Natural England
Jayne Watson - Durham County Council

Attendees:

Chair: Terry Collins - Durham County Council

Julie Form - Groundwork North East
Tara Duncan - Durham University
Julie Dingwall - Environment Agency
Claire Thompson - Durham Wildlife Trust
Oliver Sherratt - Durham County Council
Steve Bhowmick - Durham County Council
Gordon Elliott - Durham County Council
Kirsty Wilkinson - Durham County Council
Victoria Burrell - Durham County Council
Stella Hindson - Durham County Council
Beverley Clark (Minutes) - Durham County Council

Item No.	Subject	Action By
1.	Welcome and Introductions The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies noted. Introductions were given.	
2.	Minutes and Matters Arising Consideration was given to the minutes of 10 th December 2014. The winter edition of the Altogether Greener newsletter was distributed. Terry Collins to provide a full programme of Lumiere at the next board meeting.	Terry Collins
3.	Joint Health & Wellbeing Report – Update Response Claire Thompson provided an update on the response from the 3 Rivers LNP to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS). The main points included:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The JHWS vision is to ‘Improve the health and wellbeing of the people of County Durham and reduce health inequalities’. It states the intention of improving health needs for all with a focus on those at risk or of suffering from the greatest disadvantage. • Is it possible that the focus of the JHWS can be widened as it concentrates on health and disease. • The JWHS needs to focus more on prevention rather than treatment. There needs to be more focus on positive activities to encourage citizen participation. • A wider focus around mental health issues is required – especially in urban areas where there is less access to green space. • The impact of climate change on health should be included in the JWHS. <p>Claire added that she needs a greater understanding of the mechanisms of how the data included in the JWHS is compiled. Terry Collins is assisting Claire in meeting with the authors of the document.</p> <p>A discussion took place in relation to volunteering and the wider benefits it brings to physical and mental health as well as the social aspects e.g. being involved in the community.</p> <p>Gordon Elliott to meet with Claire to discuss the role of environment in the health and wellbeing/public health initiatives.</p> <p>It was discussed that a health representative would be beneficial to The Environment Partnership.</p> <p>Kirsty Wilkinson to speak to Anna Lynch in order to provide appropriate representation.</p> <p>Gordon to inform the group at the next meeting of the outcome of his discussion with Claire regarding the potential of AAPs being involved in health and environmental projects.</p>	<p>Gordon Elliott/Claire Thompson</p> <p>Kirsty Wilkinson Gordon Elliott</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy</p> <p>Kirsty Wilkinson gave background information stating that the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy was established in 2009 from the Safe Durham Partnership. She provided the group with an early draft copy of the ‘Altogether Greener’ element of the strategy. The objective being ‘to reduce the negative impact that alcohol has on the physical environment in County Durham’.</p> <p>The Environment Partnership Board discussed how the Environment agenda links with the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. The Board discussed various issues for example:</p> <p>There are now better working practices on intelligence sharing e.g. litter problems, recycling bins.</p> <p>It was asked if the issue around the riverbanks and students should be included in the ‘Altogether Greener’</p>	

	<p>element of the strategy.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the amount of alcohol being consumed at home leading to an increased amount of cans and bottles to be recycled. Areas discussed by the Board included whether it is possible to encourage people to get out of the house more. Is getting people involved in volunteering an option?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are crosscutting issues with neighbourhood protection and recycling especially when there are major sporting events e.g. the increase in bottles and cans – recycling and waste issues. • Work closely with CAT – flytipping and criminal damage. • Educational visits. There is a perception that only young people drink in fact it's not. • Promotion of sensible drinking - consider leaflets or talks regarding the harm of alcohol. • Serious health and environmental impacts. • Drinking in woods, cutting down trees to keep warm while drinking. • Trade waste licence checks for establishments that sell alcohol. • How does the issue affect Durham as a World Heritage Site – impact of these images affects the city plus also the noise impact. <p>Feedback on the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy is to be forwarded directly to Kirsty Wilkinson following the meeting.</p>	All
<p>5.</p>	<p>Updates from Group Chairs & Questions <u>Coast, Heritage & Landscape Group</u></p> <p>Oliver Sherratt circulated copies of The Coastal, Heritage and Landscape Steering Group Newsletter (Issue 7). He provided an update of the work being carried out by the group which included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Browney Sea Trout – radio tracked sea trout. • Limestone Landscapes Partnership has been extended for at least another year. • Wildflower meadows – 6 new potential sites have been identified. • Woodlands – looking particularly at DCC woodland assets (these are split between Assets, Countryside and Direct Services). • Wider woodland grant application – package application for further woodland management, some of which could be transferred to a third party. • Progress relating to Heritage at Risk. Work has included looking at a database of sites and as a result a shortlist has been drawn up for works to be carried out. Examples being the Stockton to Darlington Railway and Brusselton Railway Bridge. • The Skerne Landscape project 'Brightwater' is in 	

progress.

- Working in partnership with The Environment Agency regarding flytipping in the river Wear.

Environment in Your Communities

Julie Form reported that:-

- The flytipping sub group had held a discussion regarding hidden CCTV cameras. Oliver Sherratt stated that 23 cameras are in use across County Durham plus half a dozen from parish councils. There have been around 14,000 hits on the DCC video regarding flytipping.
- Work has been carried out by the Community Action Team (CAT) at Horden. It has been agreed that a carry on CAT will follow up work there once CAT has finished their work there. Durham City AAP has also approached CAT to carry out work in problem areas. Publicity around this work is to be issued soon.
- Growing for Health – the group is now working with a food strategy partnership. Delivering a programme called ‘Growing Together’ which is a 12 week course working with families.
- Working on a volunteer passport which includes working with local organisations regarding volunteering and a volunteering kitemark (being ready for volunteering).
- The Big Spring Clean started 2 weeks ago with photos to be taken on World Environment Day on 5th June.

Local Nature Partnership

An update was given by Steve Bhowmick who reported that:

- There is an Upland Chain LNP meeting today.
- 3 Rivers Partnership is working with partner authorities to try to obtain funding to keep the role of the LNP Officer.
- Development of a bid for the ‘Brightwater’ project is progressing.
- Health and wellbeing work is being carried out.

Climate Change Group

Tara Duncan informed the group that she had met with Oliver Sherratt and Steve Bhowmick to seek advice and guidance on setting up the Climate Change Group. The group consists of Tara Duncan (Chair), John Reed (Vice-chair), Graham Warren, Su Jordan, Maggie Bosanquet and Rich Hurst.

The first meeting of the group is to be held on 16th April and it will need to agree on the frequency of meetings, projects to be carried out etc. The group would like to add benefit to the structures in place.

	<p>A theme to run through projects is education and communication. Project ideas will be reported at the next board meeting.</p>	Tara Duncan
6.	<p>Environment Partnership Communications Stella Hindson circulated copies of the draft Spring edition Altogether Greener newsletter. A photo opportunity for a litter pick was discussed. Caring for your environment awards were deliberated by the Board. All nominations are to go through the group vice chairs and Neighbourhood Services Communications.</p>	
7.	<p>World Environment Day (5th June, 2015) A discussion took place regarding litter and it was asked if 5th June 2015 could be a day of co-ordinated action. Stella Hindson is to coordinate information for this event and liaise with highways, Environment Agency, schools, Students/University, Police, etc. to promote litter picking. Tara Duncan to look into the possibility of obtaining a quote from Bill Bryson for World Environment Day. Steve Bhowmick pointed out that the 5th June is also the launch date of the 2015 County Durham Environment Awards and will be an opportunity to get the book out in the public domain. The Environment Awards ceremony will be held on 9th November – more details to follow.</p>	<p>Stella Hindson & Vicki Burrell</p> <p>Tara Duncan</p>
8.	<p>AOB Julie Form stated that in April its Groundwork's 30th year in the North East. The first week in June is Volunteers Week. If board members/partners from the Environment Partnership have any memories of early stories details are to be sent to Groundwork as this will help in raising the profile.</p>	All

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