

## Cabinet

15 March 2023

County Durham Partnership Update

Ordinary Decision



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### Report of Corporate Management Team

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

**Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council**

**Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships**

#### **Electoral division affected:**

Countywide

#### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

#### **Executive summary**

- 2 The extensive nature of partnership working across the county is enlightening and inspiring. Our partnership boards continue to deal effectively with a range of strategic issues affecting the county, some of which will affect the way public services operate for years to come.
- 3 At a local level, our communities are healthy, strong and resilient and the many initiatives, both large and small, show the significant progress made at a local level in improving outcomes for our local people.
- 4 The **County Durham Partnership event** took place on 30 November and focused on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges.
- 5 The **Horden Together Project** demonstrates how we can empower local communities to develop and deliver solutions to the problems that matter to them.

- 6 The Council's **community engagement review**, undertaken by consultants ERS has now been completed.
- 7 The **fun and food programme** delivered 69 projects over the October half term and 98 projects over the Christmas holidays alongside a wide range of community partners. Free swimming was also available for Children and Young People across the holidays.
- 8 The annual County Durham Environment Awards 2022 ceremony, organised by the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**, was held in person for the first time since before the Covid-19 pandemic on 28 February 2023.
- 9 Durham County Council declared an ecological emergency in April 2022, and in response an Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) is now in place.
- 10 There are currently 175 premises registered across the County on Locate, including 39 DCC libraries, as a **warm space**.

### **Recommendation**

- 11 Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) note the contents of this update.

## Background

- 12 The **County Durham Partnership** including the board and forum (which bring together the board and local communities), five partnerships (**Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe Durham Partnership, Economic Partnership, Environment and Climate Change Partnership** and **County Durham Together Partnership**), **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership** and the **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership, Better Together VCS Forum** and all **Area Action Partnerships** lead on key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

## County Durham Partnership board and forum

- 13 The **County Durham Partnership** Board met in November and January.
- 14 At the November meeting, partners shared their financial outlook, plans and pressures to enable partners to understand each other's saving and efficiency plans and impact. It is important that partners work together to reduce duplication in services and estates and eliminate cost shunting, where possible.
- 15 Meetings continue to have regular updates from Thematic Chairs to focus on key areas of their work for the County Durham Partnership. The November meeting focused on the work of the **Economic Partnership** and the importance of the partnership approach to developing the Inclusive Economic Strategy for the County to ensure coherence and buy in from those involved in its delivery.
- 16 The Economic Partnership has supported the development of the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which has been approved by government. The government guidance sets out a formal role for partnerships and Durham's existing structures and relationships gave us a good foundation for this work.
- 17 At the January meeting, discussion took place with partners around the devolution deal and what this means for the region and the consultation process with the public.
- 18 There was also a focused discussion around the Horden Together Project and how a place-based approach is being adopted to deliver a range of services focusing on supporting people and improving places in that area.
- 19 The Horden Together partners are working with central government departments to support the Partnerships for People and Places programme which aims to promote greater coordination within and

between central government and local places. It empowers local communities to develop and deliver solutions to the problems that matter to them, whilst being supported in an efficient and joined-up way by both central and local government.

## County Durham Partnership event

20 The **County Durham Partnership** event took place on 30 November and focused on supporting our communities through the cost-of-living challenges and was organised jointly with Advice in County Durham, a voluntary sector-led partnership of local advice providers.

21 Approximately 120 people attended the event which included representatives of the County Durham Partnership as well as voluntary and community organisations and groups.



Listening to a speaker at the County Durham Partnership Event

22 The event sought to inspire those present to take action within their geographical areas and organisations and provided them with the information and contacts to do so. The event also generated discussion and ideas on how to better support our communities.

## Devolution deal

23 Plans to bring billions of pounds and more power to the North East have progressed, with the Government offering a provisional **devolution deal** for seven of the local authorities in the North East, including County Durham.

24 The new deal will see the formation of a new combined authority, headed by an elected 'Metro' mayor and cover the LA7 area of County Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Northumberland.

25 An LA7 deal will give access to significantly more funding, additional powers and more opportunity for deeper devolution. The deal means County Durham are part of the fourth largest devolution deal in the country, providing the opportunity for greater influence at a national level.

- 26 A public consultation is currently taking place and will close on 23 March. Details of the consultation can be found at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/NorthEastDevolution>

## Review of Community Engagement

- 27 Following agreement by Cabinet in March 2022, consultants ERS were appointed to undertake an impartial and unbiased review of the Council's community engagement functions including the work of AAPs. The review commenced in June 2022 and concluded in January 2023.
- 28 Overseen by a member/officer steering group, ERS delivered a robust, open and inclusive consultation and engagement process with a strong focus on engaging stakeholders with an existing appreciation of how AAPs currently operate and how community engagement is currently delivered. For example, including, but not exclusive to staff, AAP board members, partners and elected members.
- 29 The final report detailing the consultant's findings and recommendations analyses the data from interactions with hundreds of stakeholders, through interviews, focus groups, surveys and observations and identifies that AAPs evoke a diverse range of opinions. Against the context of increasing budgetary pressures, the report makes a number of recommendations which may help improve our focus on community development and enhance the capacity of local communities and individuals to become more involved in improving their area.
- 30 The report has been considered by the Steering Group and was shared with stakeholders in February. Any recommendations proposed to be implemented and leading to any changes will be subject to an extensive consultation exercise that will be carried out during March and April.

## Fun and Food programme

- 31 Durham County Council's Poverty Action Steering Group have allocated £425,000 to Fun and Food to fund enriching activities and food for the four half terms February 2023 to February 2024.
- 32 The **fun and food programme** delivered 69 projects over the October half term holidays alongside a wide range of community partners with 4,065 children and young people attending the sessions.
- (a) 2983 primary school and 844 secondary school;
  - (b) 283 nursery age attended with older siblings;

(c) This included 904 children with additional needs.

33 Free swimming was also available for Children and Young People across the holidays.

34 Over the Christmas period, 98 projects were delivered from community partners through the AAPs; Community arts; Christmas parties at leisure centres and free swimming, with 4568 individual children and young people attending the sessions:



Meeting Santa at Christmas Fun and Food

(a) 3336 primary school and 763 secondary school with 7813 and 2089 associated attendances;

(b) This included 1230 children with additional needs;

(c) 8399 meals were served.

35 The Christmas Fun and Food video is now live on our webpage [Videos of previous fun and food activities - Durham County Council](#)

36 We have now received our holiday activities with healthy food grant determination from the DfE for 2023 (Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays) which has been confirmed as £2,338,210.

37 **Bishop Auckland and Shilton (BASH) AAP** provided a grant to Auckland Youth and Community Centre (AYCC) for their Christmas Fun and Food project.

38 The project consisted of one full day, split into four separate sessions. The sessions were attended by AYCC youth groups (age range 9 years to 17 years old), afterschool's (age range 4 years old to 11 years old), Shildon Youth Initiative (age range 8 years to 17 years old) and buttons disability group (age range 7 years to 25 years old).

39 Each session included:

(a) access to a variety of bouncy castles in the sports hall to promote physical exercise that is fun;

(b) activities in which children had something to take home:

(i) making a Santa stop here;

- (ii) making edible candy cane reindeer and hot chocolate reindeer cone;
  - (iii) designing and creating a 2023 calendar;
  - (c) Christmas movie in a quiet space;
  - (d) making a gift that children could give to a loved one for Christmas (bracelet/pocket hug);
  - (e) hot food, snacks which would include foods that are not always readily available to provide different taste experiences and refreshments would be provided at each session.
- 40 Children were encouraged to participate in all activities but were free to come and go between each activity as they wish. This encouraged independence, responsibility and individual creativity to flow throughout the sessions creating a fun social experience for all.
- 41 The children and young people were thrilled to be able to make gifts for their family and friends with an 8-year-old quoting **“have you got a box I can decorate so I can make my own Christmas eve box and put this stuff in because I’ve never had one and my mam said she can’t afford one”**.
- 42 Staff assisted the young person to make and fill a Christmas eve box for themselves and their siblings.

### **Vision 2035: More and better jobs**

- 43 A bold and ambitious new strategy that will shape County Durham's economy over the next decade and beyond has been published. The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy sets a clear, long-term vision for the area's economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. The vision within the strategy is built on five key areas:
- (a) **People** - supporting people into education, training and jobs and enabling them to excel in their careers and in business;





(b) **Productivity** - supporting business innovation, growth and higher levels of productivity;

Members of the Economic Partnership and pupils from Neville's Cross Primary School at the launch of the Inclusive Economic Strategy

(c) **Places** - improving places and planning infrastructure so that people and businesses can access opportunities;

(d) **Promotion** - promoting the county, its assets and opportunities to businesses, investors, visitors, developers and residents;

(e) **Planet** - investing in people, technologies, research, development and businesses in order to help achieve net zero emissions in County Durham by 2045.

44 A detailed delivery plan will now be developed by the **Economic Partnership**, which includes partners from the private, charity and community sector, giving stakeholders another chance to help shape and deliver the strategy.

45 The **Environment and Climate Change Partnership** and the **Health and Wellbeing Board** have formally offered to be part of the process to develop the delivery plan to ensure there remain strong connections between health, environment and the economy.

46 The delivery plan will be reviewed regularly so that it can respond to economic changes and to allow priorities to be reassessed and reset. This will ensure the strategy is a live document that can drive growth and aspirations for the county throughout its lifespan, while also offering a targeted response to the current cost of living crisis.

47 The announcements on 19 January 2023 confirmed that all five Round 2 Levelling Up Fund bids were unsuccessful. We are taking some time to review our ambitious Levelling Up Programme and to consider carefully alternative potential suitable future funding opportunities and delivery mechanisms.

48 A plan outlining how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), will be invested in County Durham, developed by the **Economic Partnership**, has been approved by government.

49 £30 million has been allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for our UKSPF Investment Plan. The plan sets out how the funding will be invested into the county over the next three years, following the themes of communities and place, supporting local businesses, and people and skills.



- 50 Investment through the UKSPF will be used to support the growth of the county's economy by focusing on:
- (a) strengthening local businesses and helping them to set up, sustain, grow, and innovate;
  - (b) activities focusing on green technology and decarbonisation, supporting our Climate Emergency Response Plan in which it has pledged to achieve net zero in its operations by 2030, and make the county carbon neutral by 2045;
  - (c) revitalising town centres across the county by enhancing community and neighbourhood infrastructure, increasing a sense of pride in local communities;
  - (d) boosting the county's tourism, cultural, and heritage offer; building on our existing festivals and events programme to raise its profile as the culture county and further attract visitors at a local and international level;
  - (e) supporting people into employment by increasing life and work skills within communities. We will use the money to provide a broad employment and skills support offer, with activities focusing on addressing sector pressure and skills shortages.

51 **Mid Durham AAP** supported Bridge Creative to deliver a volunteering project providing tailored 1-1 support for autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities, to find meaningful and fulfilling volunteering opportunities in their community, ideally leading to employment.

52 Many volunteering opportunities are not accessible for people with learning disabilities unless they have support to help them. The funding awarded to the project enables them to work with individuals to support them with every stage of the volunteering process, from finding the right opportunity, to filling in application forms and supporting people to attend and 'settle in' to their placement until people are confident enough to attend alone. The project also delivers employability workshops, supporting people with confidence-building, interview techniques and Curriculum Vitae checks.



Taking part in a Bridge Creative activity

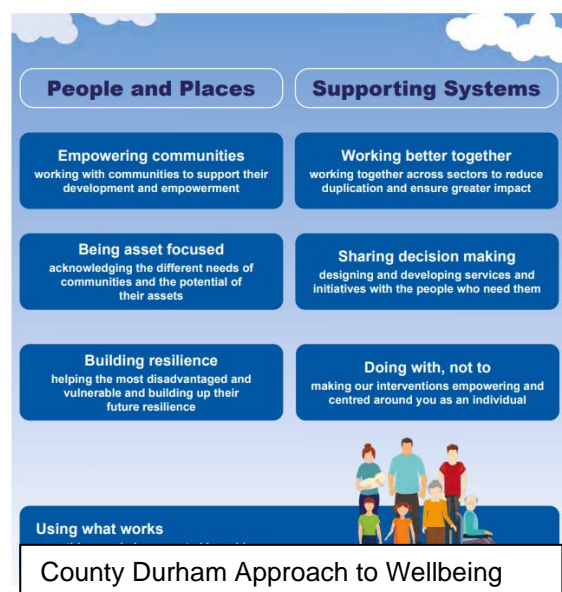
- 53 **Derwent Valley Partnership (DVP)** has allocated funding to DurhamWorks (a partnership employability programme aimed at vulnerable young people aged between 16 and 24 living in County Durham). Funding will be used to set up a specialist training and equipment budget, this could be used for transport, specialist equipment and payment for childcare and courses that are not available other than through private procurement methods. Through this funding 25 young people living in the DVP area will be assisted into work, volunteering, or further training.
- 54 **4 Together AAP** supported the Reach project, which provided residents from the 4Together areas with a range of support including training, 1-2-1 mentoring support and links to live job vacancies linking with partners; Livin Housing, National Careers Service and Reed in Partnership.
- 55 The programme ran the following training:
- (a) Security Industry Authority Door Supervision;
  - (b) Level 1 Health and Safety in Construction and Construction Skills Certification Scheme test and Card;
  - (c) First Aid;
  - (d) Food Safety;
  - (e) Nail Technician;
  - (f) Beauty.
- 56 Public transport is poor so getting out of small villages proves difficult and expensive. A lot of people do not drive or cannot afford to run a car. Having local opportunities allows participants to meet new people, gain vital qualifications and knowledge to move them closer to the labour market whilst removing barriers such as transport.
- 57 The programme has also supported participants who are struggling with their mental health and has signposted to partners for additional support, booked meeting rooms in local venues and either provided additional support through the Cornforth Partnership or via specialist partners.
- 58 One participant who joined to develop his digital and budgeting skills was suffering with family relationship issues. As a recovering drug addict, they suffered badly with their mental health. They did relapse but contacted Cornforth Partnership who linked them into Humankind for support around substance misuse and also with a move into supported accommodation. The participant and Cornforth Partnership

met their worker together and they meet at Cornforth House every 2 weeks now with additional support provided by the partnership whenever needed.

- 59 The participant stated "**Thank you so much for all your help. I don't know what I would of done without you's. It's horrible being lonely, but I know I can just ring you or my support worker when I need to**".
- 60 **Weardale AAP** is working up an offer to transform a much loved but little used church in Muggleswick. The concept is Champing, the aspiration is to refurbish part of the church with energy efficient heating and sympathetically enhance part of the interior to support walkers staying overnight.
- 61 The refurbishment will be undertaken by approved local builders and installers, this concept will offer a model that can be transferred to other rural hamlets, thus increasing the local economy and offering some sessional work for locals (for turn around days).

## People live long and independent lives

- 62 A case study from County Durham in relation to the inclusion of non-statutory membership of the **Health and Wellbeing Board** has been used in the Department of Health and Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Boards guidance as an example of good practice.
- 63 The County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board membership includes County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Housing representation to ensure the health and care needs of residents are identified and addressed as part of the wider system.
- 64 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** champions using the Approach to Wellbeing, and work continues to action the recommendations from the Approach to Wellbeing evaluation report carried out by Teesside University. The Wellbeing Principles have been embedded across the County Durham Partnership and an interactive Self-Assessment Framework form has been developed and made available on the County Durham



Partnership website to support further engagement  
<https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/county-durham-together-partnership/approach-to-wellbeing/>

- 65 The Inclusive Economic Strategy, Growing up in County Durham Strategy and Physical Activity Strategy have used the Approach to Wellbeing to support a more collaborative approach to the strategy development process. This includes the concept of working with local people, not doing to, as well as co-producing the strategic documents alongside local people.
- 66 Further practical implementation is being promoted through presentations and workshops in staff development days and the commissioning support team is piloting the inclusion of the Self-Assessment Framework in contract management meetings with Public Health service providers.
- 67 **Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP)** has made a funding contribution of £14,000 towards the development of a Youth Partnership in Teesdale. The project is a joint venture between YMCA (Teesdale), UTASS (Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services) and TCR The Hub and will see co-ordinated youth delivery across Teesdale. There are a number of elements to the project including:
- (a) forming a youth partnership,
  - (b) networking with youth organisations across Teesdale,
  - (c) youth voice forum activities; and
  - (d) youth worker training programme.
- 68 Funding from TAP will specifically be used to train 12 local residents as level 2 youth workers to fill identified gaps in youth provision across the AAP area. A further £167,000 has been secured to support the project from the National Lottery Community Fund Partnership.
- 69 Durham Deafened Support (DDS) have received funding from **Stanley AAP** to deliver their Life after Deaf project which will give support to deafened and hard of hearing adults. This is a holistic approach to hearing loss, dealing with all the needs of the person and any causes of social isolation and exclusion not just the hearing loss. Each service user will have access to a benefit check, equipment loans and support for their mental health. Late deafened people become socially isolated even within the family unit due to a breakdown in communication. A sudden loss or further deterioration of hearing can have a debilitating effect, psychologically, emotionally, physically and destroys their social

foundation. Even with the best hearing aids available people still struggle.

- 70 The funding will also allow DDS to continue to run their pre-existing Local Community Support Group including Lip Reading at The Venue in Stanley, as well as developing further support groups that have been requested by Service Users who shape the services that are delivered. This includes a specific support group for younger people with acquired hearing loss.
- 71 **Great Aycliffe & Middridge Partnership (GAMP)** has funded the Reunite and Reconnect project, led by Groundwork North East, which looks to engage the local community and bring them together tackling isolation and loneliness and encouraging new connections and friendships. They have continued to run a successful coffee morning, with around 20 regulars attending each week and an average of 3 new members each week. During coffee mornings attendees have built up some strong friendships and bonds with all of the individuals. The project has recently teamed up with neighbourly and now collect the surplus food from Sainsbury's to give out during coffee mornings.
- 72 The project provides outreach sessions each week, making contact with individuals who find it more difficult to attend the coffee mornings, this has been done via door stop visits and phone calls. Craft sessions have also been delivered each month in Avon Court and Oswald House Care Home. Since working in partnership with Oswald House Care Home they have been able to sign one of their clients up as a volunteer and he has been helping out at coffee mornings.
- 73 Feedback from members is always very positive. ***'I look forward to coming every week as it's helped us to make new friends, we would normally be sat at home doing nothing'***.
- 74 Over the 2022 summer holidays, funding from **Durham AAP** allowed Harbour Support Services (service for those affected by domestic abuse)) to offer short breaks for families at Crimdon Dene. Harbour hired a caravan over the holidays and equipped it with games, beach toys and basic supplies. The short breaks gave the families a chance to do something 'normal' as many of the children had never been on a holiday before. As one refuge client said, ***"it was 'magical' and made her feel free"***.
- 75 A Veterans' Health Needs Assessment has been carried out with help from the **Armed Forces Forum**. Findings and recommendations are due to be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in the Spring.
- 76 The latest census reveals that five per cent of the population of County Durham has served in the Armed Forces, that's over 22,000 people. A

new statutory duty in the areas of education, healthcare, and housing, to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant came into force at the end of November. We are expected to consciously consider the Covenant when developing, delivering, and reviewing policies and decisions which may impact the **Armed Forces Community**. Armed Forces Champions have been appointed within each directorate to raise awareness of the new duty and [Statutory Guidance](#)

## Connected communities

77 Anti-social behaviour is a key priority for the **Safe Durham Partnership**. The anti-social behaviour (ASB) strategy was subject to consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including AAPs, Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Better Together Forum and the Youth Council during September to November 2022 and the final Strategy was agreed at the **Safe Durham Partnership** in January 2023.

### Safe Durham Partnership

#### Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2022-25

*"Improving lives, through tackling anti-social behaviour"*



78 The strategy sets out its vision "Improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour" and guiding principles on how we will work together to identify those issues that have the most impact on residents and visitors within County Durham.

79 It establishes how we investigate and resolve reports of ASB and highlights the values and beliefs of the partnership to serve as a guideline for operational decision making. It also provides the framework by which the **Safe Durham Partnership** will work together to prevent and deal with ASB across County Durham whilst embracing the following eight principles:

- (a) Working in Partnership;
- (b) Champion the Victims' Voice;
- (c) Provide the Best Victim Support;
- (d) Provide Victim Centric Community Trigger and Community Remedy Processes;
- (e) Implement Preventative Measures;
- (f) To make full use of the tools and powers;

- (g) Maximise use of digital technologies;
- (h) An inclusive approach.

- 80 From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives, sets out the government's intention to cut crime and save lives by reducing the supply and demand for drugs and delivering a high-quality treatment and recovery system. This strategy commits the whole of government and public services to work together and share responsibility for creating a safer, healthier, and more productive society. The strategy is underpinned by a clear recognition that illegal drugs damage society.
- 81 The guidance also sets out the Drugs Strategy requirement to develop a Combating Drugs Partnerships in each locality which address the whole of the strategy; breaking supply, treatment, and recovery, and reducing the demand for drugs.
- 82 Addressing alcohol harm reduction is not specifically highlighted in the headline narrative for the new national proposals; however, it is included in the delivery element for the new plans and will be a key priority for the local Combating Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership.
- 83 The Combating Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership, which covers County Durham and Darlington, will develop and implement a whole systems approach to track progress across both areas towards better outcomes and avoid any unintended consequences, such as widening inequalities. This new partnership reports into the **Safe Durham Partnership**.
- 84 Durham Constabulary - Crook Neighbourhood Team were allocated funding from the **3 Towns Partnership** for the Safer Homes Project. The project is widely used in Durham Constabulary by both the Neighbourhood Teams and Response Teams.
- 85 Funding was used to purchase equipment for the project, this includes door alarms, light timers and shed alarms. The equipment is mainly used for victims of crime and vulnerable people in the community to help them feel safer in their own homes. By gaining more equipment it allows Crook Police to be more proactive instead of reacting to crimes. Officers also inspect fire alarms as well as identifying any fire hazards. Following this the resident's details will be tagged for the Fire Service to attend the address and complete an entire fire risk assessment and if required will provide a new fire alarm.
- 86 The project has been successful, and it has impacted the community in a positive way. The neighbourhood team has been in the 3 Towns area and set up a safer homes stall to offer advice and give out some



equipment. It has also allowed the police to communicate and build a rapport with the community and this has built the confidence within the community. Feedback from victims and vulnerable adults include them feeling safe within their homes with the provision of a new door or window alarm.

87 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** funded a Youth Forum and Cyber Crime Project. This project was delivered using a partnership approach between Durham Constabulary and Investing in Children (IiC). It involved filming an animated video working closely with a local animator who supported the project. The video was circulated for promotion around various contacts and partners, shared with the young people IiC work with, and uploaded to the IiC and AAP Facebook pages. [https://fb.watch/c3\\_n2XsK4X/](https://fb.watch/c3_n2XsK4X/). In addition, funding also enabled presentations to be delivered which showcased the video and to share advice about how young people can keep themselves safe online.

88 The annual County Durham Environment Awards 2022 ceremony, organised by the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**, was held in person for the first time since before the Covid-19 pandemic on 28 February 2023, at Hardwick Hall Hotel.

89 Now in its 33rd year, the event celebrates the county's community groups, individuals, businesses and other organisations that demonstrate great design, environmental guardianship, and community spirit across the county. There were 56 nominations received, with a panel of expert judges whittling down the applications of individuals, businesses and organisations across the county to identify the category winners, who were presented with their awards on the day.

90 Winning the Schools and Colleges category at the event was Woodland Primary School in Teesdale, for its carbon reduction project. A grant of more than £100,000 has been used for a green retrofit at the school, which had traditionally relied on an oil-filled boiler for both heating and water. Under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, an air source heat pump, ground level solar panels and LED



Winners from Woodland Primary School accepting their trophy at the Environment Awards Ceremony

lighting have all helped to reduce the school's energy consumption, making it more sustainable.

91 Other winners included the Building our Planet (BOP) Festival, which was held at Glenholme Park, Crook, in the summer by Jack Drum Arts and was named the winner in the Volunteer Group of the Year category. The free, family-friendly festival of live music, art and street theatre was set around the theme of going green.

92 Winning entries for each category were:

- (a) **Climate Change** – North Pennines AONB Partnership peatland programme;
- (b) **Community Partnership** – Peterlee Community Garden Group at Woodhouse;
- (c) **Greener Business** – there were two winners: Dalton Park outlet shopping destination and The Little Retail Shop;
- (d) **Places and Spaces** – St. John's Hall Meadowfield;
- (e) **Schools and Colleges** – Woodland Primary School carbon reduction project;
- (f) **Volunteer Group of the Year** – BOP Fest (Building Our Planet festival);
- (g) **Volunteer of the Year Over 18** – Carole Lattin;
- (h) **Volunteer of the Year Under 18** – there were two winners: Charlie Dyce and Jack Hopper.

93 Durham County Council declared an ecological emergency in April 2022, and in response an Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) is now in place.

94 The Ecological Emergency is focussed on the initial actions of the Council and the EEAP identifies three key areas of Council activity which is required to deliver against the emergency:

- (a) **Land Management** is regarded as the main area within which the Council should deliver for biodiversity. Land use change and alterations in the way land is managed are key drivers of changes in biodiversity at global, national and local scales. These drivers are cited as one of the major reasons for biodiversity losses, especially in the UK which is one of the most biologically impoverished countries in the world. Actions within the action

plan aim to result in significant improvements in the management of the estate for biodiversity;

- (b) **Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change** is essential for the sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity and its conservation. A lack of awareness of biodiversity and its importance through the ecosystem services it provides to our wellbeing and quality of life is a common occurrence. The future of biodiversity will depend on the collective action of an educated society and a key challenge will be to draw attention to the importance and urgency of the biodiversity emergency to the residents of County Durham. Actions within the action plan therefore aim to raise awareness of the issues surrounding our biological resource enabling individuals to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge to make informed and responsible decisions;
- (c) **Policies and Strategies** shall require further development to ensure there is rational decision making with regards to biodiversity, whilst strategy documents are likely to be needed to achieve specific aims or objectives. These policies and strategies could be used to guide development and the approach to procurement and land management. The action plan sets out to identify any policies and strategies required to deliver against the Ecological Emergency.

95 A wider ecological strategy, a statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), for the county will be produced by the Ecological Emergency workstream of the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**. The timescales for production of this document will be an estimated 12 to 24 months but this depends on the detailed requirements set out in Government guidance which is currently being issued.

96 At the National Recycling Awards, our Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) recycling project won Campaign of the Year. This project gives small electrical and battery-operated items the chance to become something new and was praised by an expert judging panel from across the recycling sector.

97 There are now 130 collection points across the county, offering residents the chance to recycle items including Freeview boxes, headphones, hairdryers, irons, toasters, digital cameras and mobile phones. As part of a spin-off of the project, repair cafés are also operating at locations across the county, at which experts are on hand to give broken items a new lease of life. Further details can be found at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/weee>



WEEE project – recycling small electrical equipment

98 We have also been successful in our bid to be part of the government's Local Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure pilot scheme. The £1.25 million funding allocated to the county will be used to create new EV charging infrastructure for residents, from faster on-street charge points to larger petrol station-style charging hubs. It will see 100 new EV charge points installed across the county, particularly in rural areas where there is less infrastructure and in areas where residents do not have access to off-street parking.

99 We are working alongside East Durham Trust, the Coal Authority, East Durham Business Services and community representatives to identify ways in which mine water heat can be used in Horden.



Planning for the Horden mine water project

100 The group has been successful in bidding for £110,000 from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Net Zero Hub, to carry out a feasibility study and community engagement. The feasibility study will

explore various ways to use heat from the mine water and examine the infrastructure already installed.

- 101 It follows the creation of a district heat network in Dawdon, which will supply low-carbon geothermal heat from a former coal mine to Seaham Garden Village, a new housing and community development.
- 102 **East Durham AAP** launched its green grant scheme which will look at issues of heating, lighting and equipment in order to reduce a building's carbon footprint and reduce costs in the long run. This will be done in conjunction with DCC Business Energy Efficiency Project team.
- 103 In October, DCC hosted Durham University partners and businesses from the county for COP26+1: the Countdown to 2030. The day consisted of reviewing progress since Durham COP in 2021 and explored how the University can work with the council and SMEs to further accelerate progress.
- 104 A second event was held, during which the University Estates team and equivalent staff from DCC met to discuss on our net zero actions and plans, with respect to decarbonisation of our respective estates, and explore how we can work collaboratively toward our joint goals. Partners from the NHS have expressed an interest in being involved in this collaborative work during 2023.
- 105 Pupils in County Durham have joined schools across the globe during COP27 to pledge to protect the environment. We have partnered with Durham University and OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) to present the ECO2COP27 International Schools Climate Conference.
- 106 The conference connected the county's schools with those in France, Spain, Italy, Costa Rica, Romania, India, Hungary, and the place of this year's COP27 summit, Egypt.
- 107 With 100 schools taking part, pupils were given a range of resources to learn about how climate change affects habitats and eco-systems through three themes: climate losses; climate solutions and climate hopes. Live interactive online conferences were held, where pupils had the chance to ask questions of a panel of representatives from DCC and the university.
- 108 At the end of each session pupils were asked to think about pledges they could make to reduce their emissions and positively impact on the climate in school and at home. Pledges included planting trees, setting up vegetable gardens to grow their own food, establishing eco-clubs to encourage climate communication and reducing the amount of energy and paper used.



109 **Chester-le-Street AAP** has agreed to support the climate friendly schools project to help the whole school community become more climate aware and to take climate action. Further details can be found on the dedicated website - [Climate Friendly Schools](#). The project will support a minimum of ten schools to establish a Climate Friendly Action Team within the school. OASES will support the team to complete a Climate Friendly audit of the school campus, curriculum, culture and the wider community and futures. They will work with the groups to develop an Action Plan for the school and community.



110 The outcome of this project is to educate young people and communities on climate change and the importance of taking action. OASES are pro-actively looking at opportunities for business engagement to provide further sponsorship and support to the school climate action team. Any in-kind or match funding will be used to support the school to address the actions outlined in the plan.

111 Although the project will work with smaller groups to develop plans, the aim is that it engages with the whole school and wider community. The expected beneficiaries for such a project include both members within the school and community and is expected to exceed 2,000 beneficiaries.

112 Funding will be used:

- (a) to allow schools to take action on climate change and the Action Teams to develop projects;
- (b) staff time from OASES to provide wrap-around support and advice to the Action Teams;
- (c) staffing costs for monitoring, evaluating, reporting and sharing good practise between the Action Teams;
- (d) promotion and recruitment materials for the project;
- (e) administrative and management/co-ordination of the project.

- 113 Our series of Breakfast Seminars which bring together elected members, officers, partners, and individuals from **faith and community groups** in roundtable conversations has continued with topics on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers in our communities and the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing.
- 114 The County Durham Faiths Network held an event for Inter-Faith Week where speakers from seven different faith and belief groups addressed the topic of 'Helping those in Need', looking at how **faith communities** are responding to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 115 **The Better Together VCS Forum** which brings together senior leaders from the larger and/or specialist VCS organisations across County Durham continues to meet to share good practice and look for opportunities to collaborate. Recent forums have considered the effects of the cost-of-living crises for beneficiaries, the VCS workforce, and volunteers including Winter responses and Warm Spaces; reflection on the latest [Third Sector Trends Study](#) and consideration of how organisations can support one another through turbulent times; and VCS responses to supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

- 116 The **Warm Spaces Network** project reported to Cabinet in the previous update report has now been launched, and there are as of 16 February 2023, 175 premises registered across the County on Locate, including 39 DCC libraries, as a warm space.



Having a chat and a cuppa at a warm space in Durham

- 117 The project, which provides local people with a place to go and keep warm and enjoy a little company, is jointly funded between DCC and County Durham Community Foundation. A local top up is available for those operating in the East Durham Trust area provided by East Durham Trust.
- 118 As of 16 February 2023, a total of 129 grants have been awarded across the County to a value of c£129,000. The project will continue to be promoted across the voluntary sector to encourage the take up by partners to provide a warm space and promotion to the public of the availability of the space will be undertaken by DCC Comms and through front line services.



- 119 Details of the warm spaces available can be found through Locate.  
<https://www.durhamlocate.org.uk/Search?CategoryId=152&SM=ServiceSearch&UDG=True&SME=True>
- 120 **Spennymoor AAP** has provided funding to Moors In the Community which is affiliated to Spennymoor Town Football Club. This project aims to tackle the cost-of-living crisis for those who need it most, by launching and developing a “Moors in the Community Door-Step Delivery and Warm Hub”.
- 121 The project will provide hot meals for 100 service users either through a delivery service to their homes, or by attending a warm, comfortable space at The Brewery Field.
- 122 Spennymoor AAP has provided funding for this project to purchase dining furniture and contribute towards running costs for the development of a sit in meal service which will operate for two days per week. The project will support vulnerable residents to access a community activity which will improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing following the Covid pandemic.

## **Conclusion**

- 123 There has been significant progress in partnership working both at a strategic level and on the ground. All 14 AAPs have made significant progress in their communities, and this report only shows a flavour of the many projects that are taking place across the county at a community level.
- 124 Looking ahead, our review of community engagement will strengthen the value of good partnership working and community engagement by ensuring that our structures and mechanisms are fit or purpose for the future.

## **Background papers**

- None.

## **Other useful documents**

- None.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

Area and neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the Council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

### **Consultation**

The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the thematic partnerships and the working practice of AAPs.

### **Climate Change**

This is recognised throughout partnership activities.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce re-offending. In County Durham, the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

**Risk**

None.

**Procurement**

None.