

Meeting: Environment & Climate Change Partnership Executive Board

Date & Time: 21st November 2024 at 10.00am

Venue: Online Via Teams



Present:	Name	Organisation
	Jim Cokill (JC) Chair	Durham Wildlife Trust
	Alan Patrickson (AP)	Durham County Council
	Joy Evans (JE)	Public Health, Durham County Council
	Cllr Mark Wilkes (Cllr MW)	Durham County Council
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	Durham County Council
	Simone Abram (SA)	Durham University
	Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action
	Ellie Grimes (EG)	Durham County Council
	Chris Woodley Stewart (CWS)	NP AONB
	Stuart Priestly (SPriestly)	Durham County Council
	Phil Marsh (PM)	Durham University
	Paul Leadbitter (PL)	Presenting agenda Item 3
	Glenn Robinson (GR)	Durham County Council
	Angela Brown (ABro) (Minutes)	Durham County Council
Apologies:		
	Amanda Healy	Durham County Council
	Steve Bhowmick	Durham County Council
	Stephen McDonald	Durham County Council

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
1.	Welcome and Introductions	<p>JC welcomed everyone to today's meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for the meeting were noted.</p>		
2.	Minutes of last meeting – 10th June 2024	<p>Minutes from the last meeting held on 10th June 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>		
3.	Green Finance Review	<p>JC mentioned that Green Finance is on the agenda today to look at the current activity that is underway, to see if there is anything we can do to get things moving.</p> <p>EG shared presentation</p> <p><i>Questions/comments</i></p> <p>CWS said from a local network perspective it isn't all about public money to do green things about getting private sector finance to support green agenda. The £40 million for peatland is not really there. They are cutting nature for climate which the £40 million represents. Finance will actually be reducing. It's not as rosy as suggested.</p> <p>EG mentioned she was not aware of this. She mentioned they need to make sure all applications are good quality and thinks they are well placed but will be calling on people for support.</p> <p>PL shared presentation</p> <p><i>Questions/comments</i></p> <p>Cllr MW commented that he was blown away by the work and asked once all the work is done, if we get it all done, at what point in the raised</p>		

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		<p>water table will there be runoff in high rainfall? how do you manage the levels so that it does not end up flooding?</p> <p>PL replied that sphagnum is like a sponge and when there is down pour it reduced the amount of runoff, creating a buffer from peak runoff.</p> <p>Cllr MW asked in relation to staffing - do they have capacity to deliver the work?</p> <p>PL said that staffing is not a real problem as it has grown as things have emerged. But the team may get smaller next year if funding is not available, and he felt it needs 10 years of funding to build up the momentum.</p> <p>Cllr WK said when partnerships were discussed there was no mentioned of Northumbrian Water.</p> <p>PL replied that Northumbrian Water have been there from day one and are continuing to fund the work, as are the Environment Agency, and they are involved with governance.</p> <p>SP said the work the CDEP and Environment are linked, and asked to what extent do they have county economic data at local level as she would be interested in chat around this.</p> <p>PL mentioned that NPP cover 4 counties. Can pick these things out ecological monitoring of staff, have interviewed contractors who are local and use staff from the area. Starting to pull things together.</p> <p>SP felt it was a big piece of work and thinks the work is worth doing and would be happy to explore this further.</p> <p>Cllr MW felt that, after seeing how critical it was, he would want our</p>		

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		<p>officers to look at growing sphagnum as a priority. There is a lot going on and it would be beneficial to utilise local people.</p> <p>PL mentioned they are working with University of Leeds economic specialists. He has had conversations about this and, whilst it is complicated, there are opportunities to develop in this area of work.</p> <p>KB said it would be really interesting to see what happens with that data around social value. Economic benefits, health and wellbeing and reduction to flooding are all opportunities which we have locally to help tell the story for future funding.</p> <p>PL mentioned when they apply for funding from Natural England looking at greenhouse gasses, they have a matrix for funding which can be used to support bids.</p> <p>SA – are you talking to uni staff about social value and peatland restoration links?</p> <p>CWS said they are working with Durham University - maybe more on earth science/geology not social value side. Cashflow is a real issue and with reduced government funding they could potentially lose 4 peatland staff from a team next year.</p> <p>JC mentioned using private finance for economic benefits – nutrient neutrality accessed government funding to buy land which facilitates housing developments. Have achieved this by buying farms but its time limited. Have reached peak already but are benefits generated for the county. Biodiversity net gain 10% uplift in biodiversity at the end of development. Its an opportunity for landowners to show nature recovery on their own land. The Wildlife Trust were involved in this.</p> <p>There are issues around biodiversity net gain – which is slower than we would like to see. There is an increase in number of categories in</p>		

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		<p>applications exempt from biodiversity net gain. There are barriers around skills of people to do surveys and issues with planning. Major barriers with finance – can we package works together to get scale? Which is often not big enough, e.g. with NHS/Uni.</p> <p>SP asked in relation to expertise in applying for funding what is the issue there?</p> <p>JC replied lack of capacity and not enough people with the relevant skills which leads to costs to get them skilled up.</p> <p>SPriestly agreed with JC and confirmed that the process is sluggish at the moment. Need habitat management plan. The Local Authority are the only people that can deliver these and have staff issue, so it is taking time. 6 or 7 private organisations are looking to develop biodiversity units across the county. Capitol costs to deliver biodiversity units is an issue such a slow process, but it is getting there, and we should see improvement in 4-6 months.</p> <p>AP mentioned that SPriestly had covered a number of things that are due to resources internally. As an organisation this has come at us quickly, but we need to resource effectively. Its good thing biodiversity being brought into new developments. Now system is in place can bring this into the partnership but are tricky due to resources at the moment.</p> <p>CWS mentioned they have taken on a trainee for next two years to look at green finance.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PL agreed to send link in relation to Sphagnum • SP would be interested in chat with PL in relation to this piece of work if they would find it useful 		

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4.	ECCP Workstream Updates	<p>Place, Health, and Communities Workstream – Kate Burrows</p> <p>The group have met twice since the last ECCP Board. Place Health and Communities workstream provides the connections and continuity to try and find those opportunities to align things the best we can. Continuing to review plan on page to amplify some of the successes and progress. Have spent time looking at the actions the group are taking a lead on in the CERP3.</p> <p>Discussed the Durham Pound and associated work - where the environmental benefits are. And then discussed the Durham City Green Corridor project - where can we join these to show interconnective benefits. We've been looking at the opportunities for expression of interest to the national lottery heritage fund and the nature towns and cities projects - getting groups to collaborate, hoping that the expression of interest will move us forward with the work we want to do. Investment plans for towns and villages - what are the opportunities. And continuing to have regular updates on the housing and homelessness strategy, as this is where some of key drivers have been</p> <p>JC asked if they could share information on bids? KB will speak to SB about what can be shared.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KB will speak to SB to see what information they can share on bids <p>Climate Emergency Workstream – Ellie Grimes/Simone Abram</p> <p>Interviewing tomorrow for county wide officer to focus on the countywide projects, including partnership projects, which should help with capacity issues, have some really excellent candidates.</p>		

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		<p>Maggie Bosanquet has moved into a different role in the Team so EG has now stepped into the NetZero Team Leader roll full time, and Maggie will be focusing on Strategic Partnerships, looking at ways we can all work more closely together.</p> <p>CERP 3 was released in October - a launch with Climate Action Durham at Durham Town Hall. There was a panel session and discussions, looking at what we wanted to focus on was how can we deliver improvements and reach targets.</p> <p>We are also looking at project bid for biochar, which is organic waste. The waste undergoes a process called pyrolysis, which turns it into biochar otherwise known as carbon black. This can be used to enhance soil, used as an electrode in organic solar cells and used for water treatment. We will be reaching out to various partners over next few weeks to see if there is any interest in supporting the bid. If you are interested in getting involved let EG know.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are interested in getting involved with biochar project let EG know <p>Questions/Comments</p> <p>PL said he had met with Stephen McDonald, Nadia, and Jeff Knight this week around biochar. They are trying to find more information on this.</p> <p>CWS said he had been contacted by private sector regarding biochar project so will send this information to EG.</p> <p>SA mentioned key person for biochar would be Karen Johnson in the Uni Engineering Department.</p>		

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		<p>Ecological Emergency Workstream – Chris Woodley Stewart/Stuart Priestly</p> <p>The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is the focus of the meetings currently, looking at priorities and measures.</p> <p>SMcD asked the group to provide external scrutiny for the delivery of the CERP which they will do, CWS asked if someone could remind him what they would be monitoring and what they would like them to provide.</p> <p>Cllr MW said they also have the Climate scorecard at DCC. May want to feed into that.</p> <p>SP gave update on LNRS - now got draft priorities/measures which will go to the Ecological Emergency Board Jan 17th for agreement. Background information currently being drafted. Mapping has been contracted out to local record centre – ERIC. Have carried out resident consultation, council workshops and farming and landowner workshops. The plan at the moment is to try and get draft out by late April which will go to consultation. Late Summer/Autum for final document. Good progress so far with lots of input from partners.</p> <p>Cllr MW reminded the group that there will be a pre-election period in May, which could cause delays. He mentioned that they recognise the enormous amount of work done and thanked the group for this work and felt it's important that we get public involved.</p>		
5.	ECCP Workshops with Health & Wellbeing Board and Economic Partnership	GR mentioned they were planning to hold a joint development session week commencing 7 th April between ECCP and Health and Wellbeing Board. Currently looking at potential venues. We will be in touch to identify a date and book a venue.		

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		<p>JC mentioned that we need to get people behind this and attend the development session.</p> <p>JE said she had met with GR and done piece of work around co benefits on carbon reduction on health.</p> <p>GR mentioned that the plan is to do something similar with CDEP later on in the year.</p>		
6.	Any Other Business	<p>JC mentioned the communication event that took place earlier in the year were met with comms, he said since that meeting, they have struggled to get people to follow up with commitments. Will be in touch with Board members to support us to try and get their organisations to re-engage.</p> <p>ClIr MW said there are a lot of reviews going on in in DCC with regards to communication and there is some new consultation online and new website, so going forward we will have a much better system to get public more involved. He suggested it maybe worth having conversation with DCC PR team about how we are going through that process as this new system will make it a lot easier to get people more involved with consulting on issues.</p> <p>KB said they are hearing a lot from National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) at Newcastle University about Climathons which is an international approach. Its about generating community action and thinking and producing innovative solutions. Just wanted to raise as could be an opportunity for inter connection, are the group wanting more information?</p> <p>AP said he would support KB to follow up on this. He mentioned there was an appetite at the last meeting to get more information on waste management. Food waste creates 3 times more emissions than aviation</p>		

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		<p>does. Big changes are coming for businesses in the way manage their waste.</p> <p>SA mentioned they are trying to start some research around Pathways to Repair and are working closely with people in Bristol and Glasgow on this issue.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add waste and recycling to future agenda. 		
	Date and time of Next Meeting	TBC		

Summary of Actions (as meeting date above)

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1	Green Finance Review - PL agreed to send link in relation to Sphagnum.	PL	
2	Green Finance Review - SP would be interested in chat with PL in relation to this piece of work.	SP	
3	Place, Health & Communities Workstream - KB will speak to SB to see what information they can share on bids.	KB	
4	Climate Emergency Workstream - If you are interested in getting involved with biochar project let EG know.	ALL	
5	Any Other Business – Add waste and recycling to future agenda.	GR	