

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



10 April 2014

## Refresh of the Work Programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

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

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#### Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with information contained within the Council Plan 2014-2017 that is relevant to the work of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for Members to refresh the Committee's work programme to reflect the five objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan for the Council's 'Altogether Greener' priority theme.

#### Background

2. The current work programmes of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.
3. In relation to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that its work programme was refreshed at the Committee meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013, to ensure that areas of focus were in line with current and forthcoming priorities within the Committee's remit. Further areas of focus for the committee have been added throughout 2013-2014 at the request of members.

#### Council Plan 2014 – 2017

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which now covers a four year period in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan and is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out how the Council will consider the corporate priorities for change and the key actions the Authority will take in delivering the longer term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2010 -2030) and the Council's own change agenda. Attached as Appendix 2 is the 'Altogether Greener' section of the Council Plan for Members to consider.

5. Within the Council's Altogether Greener priority theme, the focus is ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges.
6. To help address these issues the Council has rationalised the structure of our objectives and outcomes framework to concentrate on three objectives. The "Reduce waste" objective has been removed from the Plan. Whilst this remains an important area to monitor, as all work in this area such as the introduction of the new waste management contracts has now been implemented. The objective around Durham's built environment has also been removed from the Plan as it was felt that there are no significant Council actions for the future in this area. However, this objective has been retained by the Environment Partnership as it is a big area for change for several partner organisations. The rationalised set of objectives and outcomes are set out below:

**Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment**

G1 – Reduce environmental crime

G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management

G3 – Community participation in activities to improve the environment

**Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment**

G4 – Enhance mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

G5 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.

**Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change**

G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events

G7 - The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient

G8 - Improved infrastructure to support sustainable transport

7. Over the next four years, the Council will strive to ensure an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and will contribute to tackling global challenges, by focusing on the actions required to achieve the above objectives. The Council Plan contains a series of High Level Action Plans, detailing the work which needs to be undertaken by the Authority in order to deliver the outcomes identified above, see Appendix 2 (copy attached).

**Current Work Programme**

8. During 2013/2014, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, an in depth scrutiny review, a systematic six monthly review of progress against recommendations and has received a number of overview presentations, in relation to the following areas:

**\*Denotes inline with Council Plan 2014-2017.**

### **In Depth Scrutiny Reviews**

- \* • Flooding – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events

### **Systematic Review**

- \* • Development of Renewable Energy Technologies in County Durham - Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- \* • Reducing the Council’s Carbon Emissions – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 - The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.

### **Overview Activity**

- \* • County Durham Climate Change Delivery Plan – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- \* • Waste programme Update – Deliver a cleaner, more attractive sustainable environment – G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management.
- \* • Potholes – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G8 – Improved infrastructure to support sustainable transport.
- \* • Garden Waste – Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment – G2 – A sustainable approach to waste management.
- \* • Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 - The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- \* • Warm Up North – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- \* • Environmental implications of the County Durham Plan and renewable energy standards in new homes – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change – G7 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- Culture and Sports Services Update – (Services within the project fall under the remit of Neighbourhood Services and therefore fall to the Environment OSC for consideration).

- \* • Limestone Landscapes - Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment G5 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- \* • Local Nature Partnerships – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment G5 – Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- \* • Flooding – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change- G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
- \* • Climate Change Strategy – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events. G7 – The Council, homes and businesses are more energy efficient.
- \* • Winter Maintenance Plan – Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
- \* • Tyne & Wear Aquifer Protection Scheme – Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment – G5 - Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- \* • Contaminated Land Strategy – Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment – G1 – Reduce environmental crime. Maximise the value and the benefits of Durham's natural environment – G5 - Natural assets are valued and conserved.
- \* • Air Quality Management – Durham City – Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment – G1 Reduce environmental crime.

### **Budgetary and performance monitoring**

- Quarterly budgetary and performance monitoring for Altogether Greener.

### **Areas for consideration in the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny work programme**

9. In addition, the Altogether Greener Section of the Council Plan for 2014 – 17 identifies the following new high level actions which have not already been considered by committee that could be included in the 2014- 2015 work programme:

#### **Council Plan**

##### **Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment**

- Delivery of the Landscape –scale partnership plans including the AONB Management Plan – Overview of plan and role of DCC.

- Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership – Overview of the work of the Partnership.

### **Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment**

- Environmental improvement campaign/projects – An overview of various projects undertaken together with detail of future projects/ initiatives.
- Clean and Green Team – An overview of the role of the team and the work undertaken.
- Increase community ownership and involvement in the management of allotments – Overview of the management of allotments and the process to increase community ownership and involvement.
- Through the Community Action Team (CAT) deliver a programme of targeted interventions around environment, health and consumer protection – Overview of the work of the team in relation to targeted interventions.

### **Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change**

- Deliver the Clean Bus Technology project across Durham City – Overview of the project.

### **Cross Cutting Themes**

10. Below are areas which have cross cutting issues from other 'Altogether' themes that link into Altogether Greener.

<b>Altogether</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Link to Altogether Greener</b>
Wealthier	Thriving Durham City	Improved infrastructure to support economic growth. W3	G8 - Improved infrastructure to support sustainable transport.
Safer	Reduce Anti-social Behaviour	Reduce incidence of anti-social behaviour and low level crime. S2	G1 – Reduce environmental crime
	Protect vulnerable people from harm	Community and organisational resilience for emergency preparedness, response and recovery. S5	G6 – Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.
Healthier	Improve the mental and physical wellbeing of the population	Increased physical activity and participation in sports and leisure. H15	G5- Natural assets are valued and conserved.

Better for Children and Young People	Children and young people make healthy choices and have the best start in life	A range of positive activities are available for children and young people. C7	G5 - Natural assets are valued and conserved.
Altogether Better Council	Working with our communities	Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with ABC4	G3 – Community participation in activities to improve the environment
		Effective Partnership Working ABC5	G3 - Community participation in activities to improve the environment G6 - Communities are more aware and resilient to the impact of extreme weather events.

### Next Steps

12. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee work programme for 2014 - 2015, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraphs 9 and 10 above.
13. Members will receive a further report at the next Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2014-2015 based on today's discussion and agreement.

### Recommendations

14. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in Altogether Greener priority theme of the Council Plan 2014-2017, Appendix 2 (copy attached)
15. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee refresh the work programme for 2014-2015 by discussing and considering those actions identified in Appendix 2.
16. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 3 July 2014, receive a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2014 - 2015.

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**Appendix 1: Implications** (The following implications are taken directly from the report to Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014: The Council Plan and Service Plans 2014 – 2017).

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**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 management.

**Equality and diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty**

Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Medium-Term Financial Plan which also underpins the Council Plan. 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 equality of life for those with protected characteristics.

**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**

The priorities and actions in the Council Plan are in line with relevant articles of the Human Rights Act, for example, many of the actions support the right to family life.

**Consultation**

Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including consultation 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.

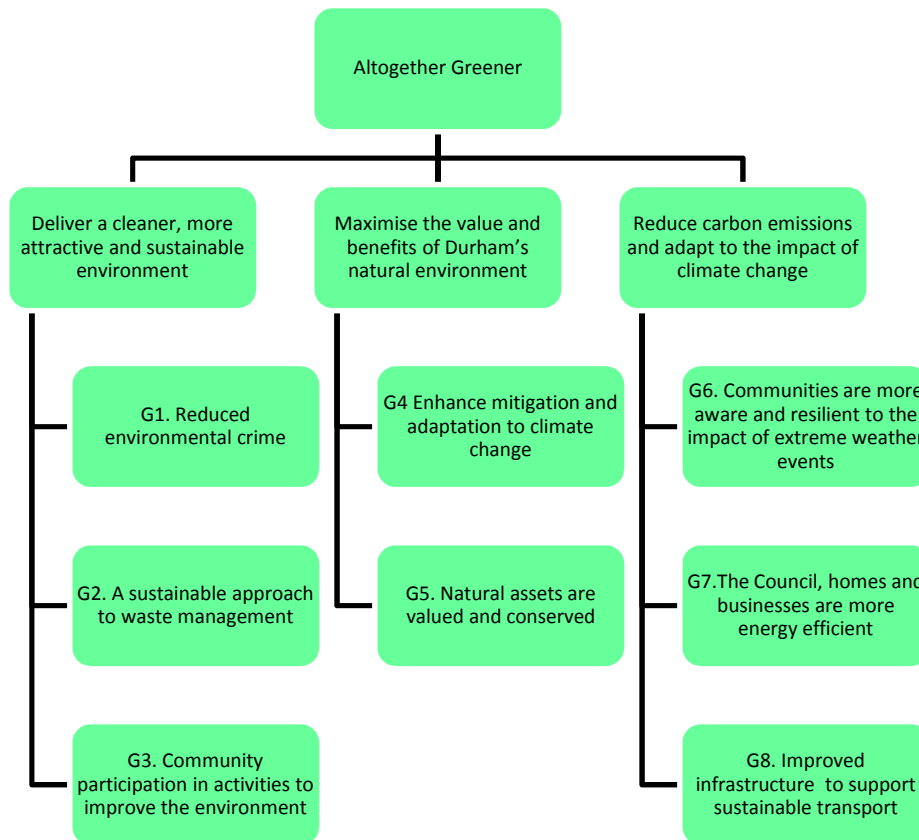
**Disability Issues**

See equality and diversity implications above.

**Legal Implications**

None.

# Altogether Greener



Each objective is underpinned by a number of outcomes and we recognise there are cross-cutting issues and complex relationships across the theme. We also recognise that the Altogether Greener theme interlinks with other priority altogether themes and contributes to the wider determinants of health.

We accept that to be truly successful in this area, we must harness the contribution that everyone can make and we are committed to supporting and working in partnership with both the community and the voluntary sector, involving all in the decisions that affect them.

## 1. Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment

The appearance of our local communities plays an important role in many aspects of our daily lives and the quality of our public spaces, both perceived and actual. It is a major influence for residents when determining which areas they intend to use, in what capacity and when. Well maintained streets, free from litter, dog fouling, graffiti and fly-tipping, and attractive, inviting green spaces that are not blighted by dumped rubbish and abandoned vehicles, are consistently ranked as important to our residents.



However, an attractive environment is not solely about the council improving its operations. To be truly effective and sustainable we need to harness the contribution that everyone can make. For this reason, we will continue to both support and work with our communities, partner organisations and the voluntary sector to ensure our local environment is clean, attractive and shaped around community needs.

The new contracts that we have put in place in deal with the disposal of our waste have resulted in over 70% of waste calculated across the county being diverted away from landfill. We believe sending rubbish to landfill is not sustainable for a number of environmental, financial and practical reasons and we support the principle that it is better to minimise the amount of waste being produced and to recycle materials into new products before resorting to any other treatment method.

We are committed to delivering improved recycling and waste management services tailored to our local circumstances and based on principles of sustainable living. We accept that there will always be materials that can't be recycled and whenever possible we will divert these materials from landfill and instead use to generate energy.

### **Going well**

- Delivery of successful initiatives to tackle environmental issues, including high profile campaigns and 'weeks in action'.
- The percentage of household waste collected from the kerbside and recycled has continued to increase since the introduction of Alternate Weekly Collection.
- Many local environmental improvements have been made by working with our communities including:
  - 14 of our parks and open spaces have been awarded green flag status; the highest of all local authorities in the North East. Eight of these related to our cemeteries and crematoria.
  - Durham City was awarded a gold award and Chester-le-Street a silver award in the 'large town' category of Northumbria in Bloom Awards 2013.
  - Sunderland Bridge was successful in the 'best small village' category and Brandon Village Community Association in 'best group horticultural project' category of Beautiful Durham Awards 2013.

### **Cause for concern**

- An increase in fly-tipping incidents.
- High levels of contamination within household recyclate collected from the kerbside, primarily pet waste, nappies and food waste.
- Waste volumes have decreased year on year, partly due to the economic climate. If economic recovery is accompanied by an increase in the volume of waste then there will be pressure on service delivery.

### **Did you know?**

- We generate enough renewable electricity from the gas produced by old landfills to power more than 2,000 homes each year.
- We have the power to ensure householders keep their gardens and yards tidy: during 2013/14 we cleared 2,500 gardens and yards that were classed as in a 'poor state'.
- We have introduced a 'Litter Awareness Programme': first time enviro-crime offenders (aged 10-17 years) will have the option of attending a 90 minute educational session and litter pick as an alternative to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).
- We can introduce a number of measures at hot-spot locations for fly-tipping. This can range from barriers to physically prevent people from entering the location to installing covert CCTV cameras to identify and prosecute offenders.
- During the 2013 Big Spring Clean, 1397 volunteers gave up a combined 2,106 hours to collect 1,086 bags of rubbish at 85 locations.

### **Look out for:**

- The opportunity to participate in Altogether Greener Week 2014, incorporating World Environment Day (June).
- Projects and individuals nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014). Categories include volunteering (under 18, over 18 and group) as well as community participation.
- Environmental campaigns in your area including:
  - Local litter picks
  - Dog fouling campaign (February 2014).
  - Big Spring Clean (April - May 2014)
  - Litter from cars campaign (August 2014)
- The opportunity to run a community allotment, e-mail [civicpride@durham.gov.uk](mailto:civicpride@durham.gov.uk) for details.
- Your new collection calendar for garden waste which will run between 18 March and 7 November in agreed collection areas.

## High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Produce a new Waste Management Strategy for County Durham	Head of Projects & Business Services	June 2014
Deliver the Waste Transfer Stations Capital Improvement Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annfield Plain, Stanley</li> <li>• Heighington Lane, Newton Aycliffe</li> <li>• Stainton Grove, Barnard Castle</li> <li>• Thornley (demolish and rebuild)</li> </ul>	Head of Projects & Business Services	December 2014 December 2014 December 2014 March 2015
Increase community ownership and involvement in the management of allotments	Head of Direct Services	December 2014
Host the 25th Environment Awards.	Head of Planning & Assets	December 2014
Through the Community Action Team (CAT), deliver a programme of targeted interventions around environment, health and consumer protection	Head of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection	March 2015
Reduce incidents of environmental crime through targeted activity delivered jointly with Social Landlords within locality 'hotspots' using high profile campaigns and organised events.	Head of Direct Services	December 2015
Develop a Waste Transfer Station Strategy and action plan to maximise their potential	Head of Projects & Business Services	March 2016
Develop and implement the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision plan	Head of Projects & Business Services	September 2016

## **2. Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment**

Not only is there evidence that communities with shared natural areas demonstrate more social interaction and vibrancy but also that well managed green environments can provide significant social benefits, for example, deterring crime and anti-social behaviour (contact with nature has been shown to reduce aggressive behaviour) or aiding the recovery of hospital patients (if the patient has access to views of nature). The natural environment is an ideal place to take exercise and it has been noted that higher levels of physical activity exist within those communities that have access to natural space. For those walking outdoors, exercise becomes a secondary motivation as it is surpassed by the attraction and enjoyment of contact with nature.

By utilising the benefits of the natural environment we can increase the resilience of our communities to extreme weather events. As eco-systems absorb roughly half of all man-made carbon emissions, peatlands, wetlands, soil, forests and water all play a crucial role in adapting to and mitigating against climate change.

### **Going well**

- We created 10 new community woodlands (covering a total area of 350 acres) in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. (in partnership with the Woodland Trust)
- We are proposing to create three new woodlands near Castleside and improve the management of ancient woodlands near Allensford as part of the Heritage Lottery funded 'Land of Oak and Iron' project.
- We will be carrying out major thinning and management works on a number of other woodlands in the coming years, mostly conifer plantations on former colliery reclamation sites, to improve their amenity and wildlife value.
- The number of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), under the control of DCC or managed by partners, in positive conservation management

### **Cause for concern**

- Inability to influence those Local Wildlife Sites not under the our control
- Fragmentation and poor condition of parts of our woodland resource.

### **Did you know?**

- Incidents of environmental anti-social behaviour along the coastline can be reported via a hotline.
- Every Tuesday and Wednesday, a group of volunteers (Volunteer Countryside Rangers) contribute to the protection and enhancement of our coast and countryside by picking litter, clearing gorse, keeping footpaths open, managing magnesian limestone and woodland habitats, looking after wetland areas and improving animal habitats. New recruits are always welcome (details are available on the DCC website).

- 'Country Durham', the newsletter of our Countryside Service, is available from the DCC website. It contains details of sites, events, walks and volunteering opportunities throughout the County.
- Viewing platforms have been installed at Crime Rigg, Thrislington, Old Quarrington and Coxhoe (Raisby) quarries. We have also created a fossil hunting bay at Cassop Primary school, where pupils and visitors can hunt for fossil fish in the famous marl slate.

**Look out for:**

- Wildflower planting on selected verges and open spaces across the county (March and September)
- Poppies along the central verge of the A691 between County Hall and the DLI Museum to commemorate World War 1
- Projects nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014) in the 'Natural Environment' category.
- The Heathland and Open Habitat Mosaics project in Derwentside (winter 2014)
- Our 'Guided Walks Programme' which details more than 130 walks, including specialist walks that incorporate art and photography, and family walks (little legs, big fun) which incorporate scavenger hunts, games and quizzes along the route (<http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=468>)
- Changes at Wharton Park. The £2.2 million refurbishment will include a visitor centre and extension, play equipment upgrade, trim track, climbing wall and improvements to the amphitheatre.
- Information panels at each quarry viewing platform (see above) and the availability of downloadable information booklets for each site. Once this work has been completed, we will organise school visits and community visits to the sites.

## High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Establish a carbon reduction baseline and subsequent targets for 2014 onwards in relation to the new Waste Service contracts	Head of Projects and Business Services	August 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline</li> <li>• Targets</li> </ul>		June 2015
Delivery of landscape-scale partnership plans, including the AONB, Limestone, Oak and Iron, Heritage Coast and Heart of Teesdale	Head of Planning and Assets	March 2017

### 3. Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change

One consequence of climate change is a likely increase in extreme weather events, e.g. flooding, heatwaves, storms, subsidence and water-shortage. With a changing climate and predictions of wetter winters, warmer summers and greater frequencies of extreme weather, it is important that local communities are able to interpret these headline warnings, understand the likely impacts to themselves and prepare appropriately.

One of the major contributors to climate change is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and there are many ways in which we, our communities and local businesses can reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> produced.

Increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings will not only reduce CO<sub>2</sub> but will also provide a financial saving. Choice of transport is another major factor relevant to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Developing and delivering practical, cost-effective initiatives that enable many more people to travel by foot, bike or public transport will positively influence our carbon footprint.

#### Going well

- The Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme to replace or retrofit 41,000 lamps with Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) is underway. The result will be fewer harmful emissions, a reduction of 7,500 tonnes of energy each year and a financial saving of £24 million over the next 25 years.
- We have reduced carbon emissions by 787 tonnes per year by carrying out a number of improvements at four of our most popular and high energy consuming buildings. Crook Civic Centre, Stanley Indoor Bowls Centre, Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre and Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre have been made more energy efficient through the installation of combined heat and power, lighting upgrades, building management systems, insulation, boiler optimisation and ventilation upgrades.

- County Durham has the highest uptake of energy efficiency installation measures in homes in the North East and between 2008 and 2013, the energy efficiency of more than 54,000 homes was improved.

### **Cause for concern**

- Increase in severe weather events, including prolonged winter snow, heavy rain storms, high winds and the impact of these changes.
- Increased demand on service delivery due to climate changes. For example increased verge/weed maintenance, gully cleansing.

### **Did you know?**

- Leisure centres at Teesdale and Spennymoor have been fitted with solar photovoltaic panels.
- Free energy efficiency heating improvements, including gas boiler replacements, are available to eligible households as part of the Warm Up North scheme.
- An Archimedes Screw hydroelectric power system, capable of generating about 75 per cent of the energy requirements of the 8,000 square metres of office space, is being installed at Freeman's Reach in Durham City.
- The Oakenshaw Wind Turbine, jointly managed by the landowner and Oakenshaw Community, will result in up to £800,000 being invested in the local community.

### **Look out for:**

- Projects nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014) in the 'Climate Change category.
- The 'Warm Up North' scheme which will provide grants for households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes

## High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Deliver the Clean Bus Technology project across Durham City	Head of Transport & Contract Services	September 2014
Deliver the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project over 6 years from 1 April 2013 to 31st March 2019	Head of Technical Services	March 2017
Prepare an Air Quality Action Plan for Durham City and identify a range of required actions to improve air quality and to meet specific air quality objectives	Head of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection	March 2015
Deliver the Warm Up North project across County Durham to improve domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency across County Durham	Head of Planning and Assets	March 2017
Implementation of the Climate Change Strategy to achieve the County Durham carbon reductions of 40% by 2020 and 55% by 2031 – March 2017	Head of Planning and Assets	March 2017