

2 October 2014

Landscape Scale Projects

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

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the Landscape Scale projects prior to an overview presentation by Sue Mullinger, Landscape Delivery Officer, Regeneration and Economic Development.

Background

- 2 Members will recall that at previous meetings of the committee you have received reports and presentations on various landscape scale projects delivered by various partnerships. It was therefore thought appropriate when refreshing the work programme for 2014/15 to provide members with an overview of landscape scale programmes, identifying the various projects and partnerships involved within the County, examples of various projects they have delivered and next steps.
- 3 Arrangements have been made for Sue Mullinger, Landscape Delivery Officer, Regeneration and Economic Development to attend the meeting on the 2 October to deliver a presentation focusing on:
 - landscape-scale and what it means
 - why we need an integrated approach to the delivery of heritage initiatives
 - the benefits of landscape scale delivery
 - landscape scale projects within the County
 - keys to successful landscape scale working
 - landscape scale project legacy – lasting benefits from fixed term funded programmes

Landscape Scale Projects – Background

- 4 Despite some recent improvements, our attempts to reverse decades of decline in our wildlife, the habitats in which it lives and unique landscape features and character have not had a significant impact. A more sustainable approach is needed which thinks and acts on a larger scale beyond maintaining individual sites. A landscape scale approach involves considering the whole landscape and recognises that addressing single issues in isolation does not reflect the way nature and people work in a system.

- 5 Common ground between disciplines such as ecology, archaeology and history has potential to provide an integrated way of thinking to help guide the delivery of heritage initiatives. Durham County Council has a long and successful history of delivering such projects – and the term ‘landscape scale’ can probably be used to describe a number of initiatives which predate widespread usage of the term – such as the Turning the Tide project and Durham Hedgerow Partnership.
- 6 Popularity of the phrase ‘landscape scale’ has been boosted, no doubt, by the Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Programme which was introduced about a decade ago. This fund is for schemes led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests which aim to conserve areas of distinctive landscape character throughout the UK. Grants are for up to £3million. The County Council has been and still is, involved in the development and delivery of a number of such schemes. The Mineral Valleys project was led by Natural England with a total budget of £5.2 million. Durham is currently leading on the Limestone Landscapes Project which is a three year project worth £2.9million – about to end later on this year. The Council is also helping to develop the Land of Oak & Iron project which will be led by Gateshead Council.
- 7 There are a number of benefits to this approach. It provides a focus and addresses priorities on a larger scale – which results in greater habitat connectivity, placing ancient monuments in their historic setting and ‘joined up’ access and interpretation. It can also encourage understanding and engagement. There are also multiple gains to be made from partnership working – such as broader expertise and resources, increased efficiency and reduced risk.
- 8 With a number of successful Landscape Partnership Schemes now delivered, major funders such as Heritage Lottery have begun to look at landscape legacy – or the enduring benefits which result from fixed term funded programmes. Legacy can relate to the landscape as a whole, such as improved relations between partners and methods of working; or can be from individual benefits such as habitat and access creation. The Coastal, Heritage and Landscape sub-group of the County Durham Environment Partnership has also been considering lasting benefits beyond HLF schemes – with particular interest given to the Limestone Landscape Partnership which has recently gone through a forward planning exercise and looks set to continue beyond the current programme.

Recommendations

- 9 That the members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and comment upon the information provided in the attached report and presentation.

Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

None

Staffing

None

Risk

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Consultation

None

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

None

Legal Implications

None