

# Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee



5<sup>th</sup> March 2015

## Local Nature Partnerships

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

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an introduction to a presentation update on the work of the Local Nature Partnerships.

#### Background

2. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed as part of its refresh of the work programme 2014/15 to receive an update on the Local Nature partnerships (LNP).
3. In accordance with this decision arrangements have been made for the Director of the North Pennines AONB Partnership, Chris Woodley Stewart on behalf of the Northern upland Chain LNP and Claire Thompson on behalf of the Three Rivers LNP will attend a meeting of the committee on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to give an update on progress. This will explain how Local Nature Partnerships grew out of the Natural Environment White Paper of 2011 as strategic bodies with a focus on conserving and enhancing the natural environment and the many goods and services that nature provides to society.
4. The two Local Nature Partnerships that cover County Durham - The Northern Upland Chain and the Three Rivers LNPs - have presented to the committee in the past and the presentation will show that both have continued to make good progress in the past year. The Northern Upland Chain is a partnership covering the Protected Landscapes of the Northumberland National Park, North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Nidderdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB. The area is bound together by a common set of species and habitats and a common set of ecosystem goods and services, and similar economies based primarily in farming, land management and tourism.
5. The area of river basins north of the Tees in County Durham to south of the Tyne is primarily assigned to the Three Rivers LNP and is characterised by a higher resident urban population and more intense use of its rural landscapes and farming patterns than its upland equivalent.
6. Key highlights are: that the Northern Upland Chain's main work this year has focused in developing an approach to High Nature Value Farming, including

fostering greater collaboration between farmers and conservation bodies and a comprehensive study has led to a farmers' forum which will help to shape this work. The LNP partners are also behind an £8m bid to the EU LIFE fund to further their work on peatland restoration; the outcome will be known shortly. The partners are doing considerable work on gathering new data and evidence this year. This is informing two new pieces of work in particular: a prospectus for woodland creation in the area (two new woods were planted through an LNP initiative this winter) and the development of a Natural Capital Investment Plan for the LNP. This latter piece of work is part of a national project led by the NUC which will produce a framework for such plans for LNPs nationally.

7. The three Rivers LNP is engaging with health providers to promote the natural environment as a means of achieving mental and physical health benefits and is also engaging with the partners planning authorities to help consolidate evidence to promote a greater green infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage policy position within development plans. The role of the partnership in supporting and co-ordinating the delivery of landscape scale partnerships across the area is continuing e.g. by taking a leading role in preparing a new HLF bid for the regeneration of the River Skerne river basin area.
8. The presentation will also demonstrate how the two local LNPs are working collaboratively to develop a shared portfolio of projects for the NE LEP and a joint conference and nature and health is also to be hosted in the coming year.

#### **Context for Local Nature Partnerships in County Durham**

9. A key function of an LNP is to take a strategic overview of the local natural environment and look for ways to manage, enhance and promote it that will produce outcomes that integrate the needs of nature, people and the economy. Government is keen for each LNP to deliver their role in the way that best suits their local needs, taking into account how those needs will change over time in anticipation of things like climate change and local population growth. Each LNP will determine what their priorities are and how they will work.
10. In County Durham there are two LNPs which wholly or partly cover the geographic area, the Land of the Three Rivers LNP covering lowland areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside and the Northern Upland Chain LNP covering upland areas of the North Pennines AONB, protected landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales, Northumberland National Parks and Nidderdale AONB. These partnerships facilitate and co-ordinate decision making on the natural environment for their geographic areas.
11. The LNP look at how they can support the work of the landscape scale delivery projects such as the Limestone Landscapes Partnership and continue to attract funding for various projects. The LNP work in collaboration on various projects and have established relationships with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Recommendation**

12. Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note and comment on the presentation and a further update be provided to the committee in the future.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**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**