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| <b>Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee</b> | Agenda Item |
| <b>11 March 2024</b>                                     | <b>5</b>    |

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| Title:               | Place & Connectivity Directorate Monthly Highlight Report: March 2024 |
| Report of:           | Judith Barker, Executive Director – Place & Connectivity              |
| Lead Member:         | Councillor Bridget Smith, Lead Member, Communities and Environment    |
| Public Report:       | Yes   |
| Key Decision:        | No  |
| Voting Arrangements: | No vote required  |

**Recommendations:**

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| A | Note the content of this report. |
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**Strategic Objective(s):**

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| The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s): |   |
| x  | Enabling resilient communities            |
| x  | Achieving best value and high performance |

**1. Purpose**

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| 1.1 | This report provides a general update on the key activities of the Place and Connectivity Directorate in relation to Environment and Sustainable Communities, which are not covered in other reports to this Meeting. It also provides information on some key developments, risks and opportunities that have emerged. |
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**2. Combined Authority scheme updates**

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| 2.1 | <p>This section provides updates on climate activities not otherwise covered by the main Agenda Papers.</p> <p><b>Climate Emergency</b></p> <p>Following the climate emergency discussion at the January Committee, officers have taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and others on the appropriate next steps. Initial advice is that any decision brought to Committee and then to Board to declare a climate emergency must have a clear rationale and be evidence based.</p> <p>The rationale and evidence base would be strengthened through the Innovate UK funded work on Locally Determined Contributions (LDC). The important role LDCs will have in setting and shaping local climate targets and priorities going forward was noted at the January Committee. It is proposed therefore that</p> |
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the next steps on declaring a climate emergency be considered as part of the LDC project and aligned with its work programme. Further advice is also being sought on the process that other MCAs followed in declaring climate emergencies.

### **Locally Determined Contributions**

The LDC project was launched in February and is funded to June 2025. The LDC is an approach that considers local targets and climate action plans with national commitments and reporting requirements. Like the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which is reported annually at the UNFCCC international conferences, an LDC will consist of targets, commitments and the implementation plans for achieving them. Because there are no current standard reporting requirements or guidelines, nor any common approach on investment in place-based delivery, this project is developing guidance on what a LDC could look like and how it could be implemented. In particular it will develop and test a toolkit for a Cambridgeshire LDC, using work on Local Area Energy Plans as an example. The three themes of investment, alignment with national reporting and replicability will be core to the toolkit development.

### **Net Zero Villages Programme**

The climate allocations include a programme to provide grants to community level net zero projects in villages. The £1m programme is intended to be run as a competitive grant pot, with circa 50 awards between £15k and £30k. Match funding will not be a requirement but will be part of the weighted scoring analysis. The programme will be focused on demonstrating suitable projects in areas that may have more limited options to implement climate focused choices. The urban areas of Peterborough City, Cambridge City, and those towns receiving support through the Market Towns Programme will be excluded from the programme (as other funding routes are available/activities underway). Capacity was not available to launch the programme in 23/24, it is intended to launch the programme after the pre-election period has concluded in May.

### **Centre for Green Technology**

Demonstrating the importance of the link with skills, construction is underway on the £13.5m Centre for Green Technology, a key project for Inspire Education Group (IEG) delivering green skills and student capacity for the future at the Peterborough College campus. A dedicated green curriculum, the only one of its kind within 50 miles, will deliver skills which are sought after by local business across Peterborough and the wider region. It will equip students with cutting-edge knowledge and skills in modern construction methods, emerging technologies, alternative heat sources, and electric vehicle technology, ensuring they are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities in the ever-evolving construction landscape. The Project consists of a 3-storey new build, totalling 2,435 m<sup>2</sup>. The facility provides a mixture of large and medium workshop space, classrooms, staff room space and a lab. The space will be shared by electrical vehicle and other engineering and new construction technologies. The project will comply with BREAMM, will have several renewable energy initiatives and be gas free supporting the IEG's drive to Net Zero. Due for completion in November 2024.

### **Communications activities within Climate agenda**

The workshop for development of the functionality of the new climate website is being arranged during March. A monthly catchup has been arranged with the C&P Climate Coalition representatives to exchange information and support communications.

### **Overview & Scrutiny Committee 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Climate activity will be one of the agenda items for the next Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting. They will be provided with the climate emissions data (as reported to ESC Committee in January), budget position and a copy of the paper before this Committee today on the Climate Action Plan Review.

## **2.2 Infrastructure Delivery Framework**

The consultants undertaking the Infrastructure Delivery Framework (IDF) have gathered site data from each council. They are undertaking an additional round of discussions with council officers to ensure that the sites, potential areas, and infrastructure barriers are correctly reflected. The first phase of the assessment tool has been developed and discussed at the Steering Group. The next phase is to run all the sites through the tool to test the 'readiness' index that the consultants have developed. This will categorise the individual barriers to delivering sustainable growth and also the cumulative or tipping point barriers. The work remains on track to report to Committee in June 2024.

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| 2.3 | <p><b>£100K Homes at Fordham:</b></p> <p>Following the January Committee, a meeting has taken place with the Housing Association that is the freeholder of these homes to explore the option of transferring the Combined Authority’s responsibilities. The Housing Association will consider implications, and the proposal will be escalated within that organisation for a decision in principle.</p> <p>Officers from East Cambridgeshire District Council have confirmed that £100k Homes were approved as an acceptable form of affordable housing tenure for the development. Officers are now clarifying the Combined Authority’s position in respect of nominating purchasers for these homes.</p> <p>It is envisaged that a report shall be presented to Committee in June 2024.</p> |
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### 3. Strategic Partner or other major scheme updates

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| 3.1 | <p><b>Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects update</b></p> <p><u>Medworth Energy from Waste, Wisbech</u></p> <p>On 20 February the Secretary of State granted development consent for the development, which would generate electricity and steam from non-recyclable (residual), non-hazardous municipal, commercial and industrial waste. The facility will have the capacity to process up to 625,600 tonnes of residual waste per annum and a generating capacity of over 50 megawatts of electricity available to export to local users (including via a Combined Heat and Power connection) and the electricity distribution network. Fenland District Council has resolved to explore the option of a legal challenge to the decision.</p> <p><u>Sunnica Solar Farm.</u></p> <p>On 8th December the Secretary of State re-set the statutory deadline for taking a decision on the proposed Sunnica Energy Farm from 7th December 2023 to 7th March 2024.</p> <p><u>Fenland Reservoir.</u></p> <p>Following its first consultation in 2022, Anglian Water is continuing with the technical design of the reservoir, ahead of the second of three consultation phases due in 2024. This will include the design of the reservoir, how it will be accessed, supporting infrastructure, and recreational opportunities The application is expected to be submitted in 2025.</p> <p><u>Cambridge Waste Water Treatment relocation.</u></p> <p>Currently in the six-month examination phase of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process which began in October 2023 and expected to close April 2024.</p> |
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### 4. Appendices

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| 4.1 | None |
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### 5. Implications

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| Financial Implications                      |  |
| 5.1   | None   |
| Legal Implications                          |  |
| 5.2   | None   |
| Public Health Implications                  |  |
| 5.3   | Climate and infrastructure developments can have major positive and negative impacts on public health. These would be described under the Significant Implications sections of relevant reports. |
| Environmental & Climate Change Implications |  |
| 5.4   | Climate and infrastructure developments can have major positive and negative impacts on public health. These would be described under the Significant Implications sections of relevant reports  |

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| Other Significant Implications |      |
| 5.5                            | None |
| Background Papers              |      |
| 5.6                            | None |