



Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee	Agenda Item
13 November 2023	8

Title:	Climate Projects Update
Report of:	Steve Cox, Interim Director, Place and Connectivity
Lead Member:	Cllr. Bridget Smith, Chair of Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of voting Members

Recommendations:	
A	That the Sustainable Land Use Advice programme is used for: (a) a Biodiversity Net Gain register, (b) advice to farmers on accessing the Fund for Nature; and (c) support for farming groups looking at landscape-scale solutions.
B	To extend the delivery period for the Care Homes Retrofit Programme to December 2024
C	To extend the Doubling Nature metrics survey programme to January 2026
D	To note the progress on climate-related projects

Strategic Objective(s):	
The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):	
✓	Achieving good growth
✓	Enabling resilient communities

1. Purpose	
1.1	This report provides an update on the climate projects funded by the Combined Authority and sets out the rationale for programme alterations where appropriate.

2. Proposal	
2.1	The Combined Authority provided budget allocations for climate related projects in 2022. An update on each project/programmes progress is given below. Where necessary this highlight those projects requiring programme profile adjustments to reflect changing circumstances since the budget allocations were made.

2.2	<p>Sustainable Land Use Advice (150k)</p> <p>As reported to the June Committee a budget allocation was made for a Sustainable Land Use Advice project. After consultation with the sector it was clear that there was an appetite for advice to focus on navigating the emerging funding opportunities presented by sustainable farming measures, such as biodiversity net gain. Given the opportunity presented by the emerging work on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (as reported elsewhere on the Agenda) discussions have been undertaken with the LNRS Steering Group on aligning these activities. Based on those discussions it is proposed for the programme to undertake three related strands of work: (a) support for Natural Cambridgeshire's Biodiversity Net Gain Register; (b) providing assistance to farmers/landowners in accessing the Fund for Nature; and (c) facilitating groups of farmers to come together to identify landscape-scale actions.</p>
2.3	<p>Care Homes Retrofit Programme (2000k)</p> <p>An online survey went to each of the 32 eligible independent care homes in the CPCA area (the basis of our focus) to gauge their interest in the investment programme. 10 care homes expressed interest. Each of the 10 interested care homes were provided with an on-line application process, following which the Programme Manager has contacted each one and initiated visits to discuss the requirements of their care home. One formal application has been received to date. A change request is proposed to extend the programme funding period into 24/25 to allow sufficient time for procurement and delivery of individual retrofits.</p>
2.4	<p>Based on the current expressions of interest, it does look likely that the Care Home programme allocation of £2m would be significantly underutilised. Additional publicity and engagement with the sector will be undertaken, but if no additional expressions of interest are received in the next two months then a recommendation will be brought to the Committee in January on whether to re-allocate an element of the programme funding, or broaden the eligibility criteria.</p>
2.5	<p>Cultural Services Cambridge City and the wider Region (597k)</p> <p>A budget allocation has been made for a programme that enhances the cultural services offer provided by the City Council. The revised business case for this project will be considered at the January meeting of the Committee.</p>
2.6	<p>Doubling Nature Metrics (125k)</p> <p>The project, being delivered by the Wildlife trust and CERC has two main elements that together will improve accuracy of the data available on natural habitats in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The first is on the ground, field-survey work of many sites, and the second is using Geographical Information Systems to organise and map the data. The project has submitted a change request arising from the Habitat Survey Officer resigning in August to take up a permanent position elsewhere. Recruitment of the Habitat Survey Officer post will take place late winter 2023/early 2024. This means the project period will extend until January 2026 (as opposed to the original March 2025 completion date) to include the next survey season. An additional Survey Assistant role will be also recruited. The additional survey season will enable the project to be completed as originally envisaged.</p>
2.7	<p>Chalk Stream Programme (420k)</p> <p>In March 23 the City Council appointed an experienced project officer to lead this 3 year project, who has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Environment Agency, water companies, community groups and landowners to help shape and steer a programme of deliverable projects in both South Cambs and the City. A partnership steering group and themed working groups have been set up to ensure coordinated delivery and communications going forward.</p>
2.8	<p>Since the initial Chalk Stream Audit that inspired the project, and secured Combined Authority funding, knowledge of chalk streams, and the considerable pressures they face, has increased significantly. This has identified the need for an evidence-based approach as being critical for the long term success of the project. We have collated existing datasets from multiple organisations and are using this evidence base to build on the original stream audits to prioritise projects. This holistic approach has attracted much support from stakeholders and considerable match funding and volunteering effort is being offered.</p>

2.9	Many of the pressures facing our chalk streams are whole catchment based, requiring landscape scale interventions, for this reason the Council have selected a suite of demonstration projects that will provide case studies tackling the key issues of water shortage, water quality, invasive species and barriers to fish passage, as well as more traditional in channel and riverbank habitat enhancements.
2.10	In addition to these identified key projects there will be technical support, funding advice and a small grant budget to help existing and new groups to deliver local enhancements to their chalk streams. It is hoped that this exciting project will be the catalyst for further investment, landowners and community engagement, research and ongoing monitoring of our precious chalk streams.
2.11	<p>Huntingdonshire Biodiversity for All (1350k)</p> <p>The programme is testing various approaches to achieving measurable net gain in biodiversity across Huntingdonshire. This includes developing green skills, support for graduate ecologists, community engagement with land assets and ecological surveying to establish key baselines. Due to delays in contracting the business case and staff turnover there has been a reprofiling of capital and revenue from year 1 (22/23) into year 2. The programme is generating significant community interest and support.</p>
2.12	<p>City Portrait to inform Cambridge's sustainable and inclusive growth (80k)</p> <p>This project is complete. The Cambridge 'State of the City' report and dashboard provide a data-led overview of what Cambridge is like economically, socially, and environmentally. It also compares Cambridge to other cities in England and Wales. It will be updated by the City Council at least annually as new data becomes available, and to produce a summary State of the City report each year to help identify trends and significant changes. Continual updates will help track changing outcomes for people, the economy and the environment over time, and can inform the collective work that the Council and partners are doing. The evidence draws on publicly available, nationally comparable data, and is based on a 'Six Lenses' framework. The website is available here: Cambridge City 'State of the City' online dashboard</p>
2.13	<p>Logan's Meadow Local Nature Reserve wetland extension (280k)</p> <p>The project to enhance this riverside reserve in West Chesterton is nearing the implementation stage, following successful public consultation, securing of planning permission and appointment of an experienced, specialist river restoration contractor. Additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Green Recovery Fund has assisted with design work, species surveys and initial tree works for vehicle access. Unfortunately there have been delays over summer 2023 due to an Anglian Water asset under the reserve being identified as in poor condition. The project manager is currently working with Anglian Water on how to overcome this complication.</p>
2.14	<p>Meanwhile at Core Site, North East Cambridge (1120K)</p> <p>Meanwhile is a project proposed on part of a major development site to champion new systems of environmental and social sustainability by offering shared space facilities. A change request is currently being considered and will be reported to a future meeting.</p>
2.15	<p>Natural Cambridgeshire (210k)</p> <p>The Combined Authority has provided ongoing revenue support to Natural Cambridgeshire (the Local Nature Partnership) over three years to March 2025. This has enabled it to establish itself as a charitable body and deliver a diverse range of activities in support of its charitable objectives and the adoption of the vision to 'Double Nature' across the area, which has one of the lowest percentages of rich wildlife areas. This was influential in the development of the environmental principles for the Oxfordshire to Cambridgeshire region. Natural Cambridgeshire are delivering the Fund for Nature for the Authority, and co-chairing the LNRS Steering group.</p>

2.16	<p>Fund for Nature (1000k)</p> <p>The Fund for Nature is managed by Natural Cambridgeshire. Three applicants have been selected for the first tranches of the Fund for Nature (large-scale) investment and are currently in contract development. The smaller community-scale programme is open for applications and offers grants of up to £5,000 for communities who wish to do more for nature where they live https://www.cambscf.org.uk/fund-for-nature . The deadline for this first round of projects is 1st November, for projects due to start in Spring 2024; there will be a further call for projects next year the deadline for which will be 1 May 2024. Applicants will need to show how their project will directly contribute to ‘Doubling Nature’ and make reference to objectives contained within Natural Cambridgeshire’s ‘Local Nature Recovery Toolkit’.</p>
2.17	<p>Net Zero Villages Programme (1000k)</p> <p>This programme offers small capital grants to village community projects to demonstrate progress towards net zero. The programme is currently being developed and the budget allocation carried over from 22/23. The Combined Authority contacted all constituent councils to check alignment with any locally based schemes. Limited overlap has been identified. Talks have also taken place with GSENZH on how their community support offer (which is revenue funding) can lead into proposals for the Net Zero Villages Programme (which is capital funding). The programme will launch shortly.</p>
2.18	<p>Waterbeach Depot Solar Smart-grid Project (2700k)</p> <p>WREN is a joint project between SCDC and City to develop an integrated renewable energy and storage solution to serve a fleet of circa 50 electric Refuse Collection Vehicles at Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service Depot at Waterbeach. Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (GRSWS) project team has reviewed project progress and the future risks to the project and as a result of this review GCSWS will not be proceeding from Call off Contract 1 to Call off Contract 2 with the existing main contractor as principal designer and contractor. This will result in a further period of design with the project start on site proposed for Summer 2024. A change request has been agreed to this timeline change resulting in the CPCA grant spend moving to 2024-25 (instead of the proposed 2023-24).</p>

3. Background

3.1	The Combined Authority has budget allocations in the MTFP for climate-related projects. These were established in MTFP agreed by the Board, January 2022.
3.2	The climate-related projects align with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Climate Action Plan.

4. Appendices

4.1	None.
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	Spend to date on these projects are set out in the Budget Monitoring report (on the Committee Agenda).
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Legal Implications

6.1	None.
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Public Health Implications

7.1	None.
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
8.1	As described in the project descriptions. These projects/programmes are in support of tackling climate emissions, adaptation and environmental crisis.
Other Significant Implications	
9.1	None.
Background Papers	
10.1	Board MTFP approval Jan 2022