



Growing our Natural Environment

Thematic Progress Update

17 January 2023

A Plan for West Devon



Lead Member Introduction

Our Plan for West Devon was adopted in September 2021 and I am pleased that since then we have made real and positive progress against our ambitions for the natural environment.



Cllr Lucy Wood
Lead Member for growing our natural environment

Of course, there is always more we can and must do to ensure that our natural environment is able to adapt for the future and within this update we set out some of the steps we've taken since our last update to Scrutiny in January 2022.

This is by all means not all that we are doing and I continue to provide regular updates to Overview and Scrutiny and Hub on progress against our detailed Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan.

There are a number of achievements during this period including:-

- ✓ Successful consortium bid to the LGA for support in developing a plan for encouraging greater uptake of retrofitting measures. A trial design has been proceeding at pace with a trial in the field expected in early 2023.
- ✓ Secured £9,000 through the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund to produce a heat decarbonisation plan for our leisure centers.
- ✓ Received a review of our fleet following a commission to the Energy Saving Trust, this was done for free.
- ✓ Submitted a £75,000 bid under the Innovate UK Net Zero Pioneer Places programme for an engagement and capability study, potential to lead to an £8 fund if successful.

Activities on Track 7	Activities off track 3	Activities not yet due to start 0
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Over the coming pages, we set out more in-depth updated for each action within our Natural Environment theme.

Cllr Lucy Wood

Cllr Lucy Wood

Lead Hub Member for Natural Environment



Action NE1.1 Phased conversion of our environmental management fleet to a greener fleet

Key Highlights

The action consists of a number of different strands of work – logistics, HR, procurement- and will be delivered as a project. Whilst we were unable to fill a short-term role to carry out some of fleet planning work, we commissioned the help of the Energy Saving Trust to undertake a review of our fleet and various options available. There is also now sufficient capacity in the organisation to move this work along, we are now in the process of forecasting a vehicle replacement schedule along with costs forecasts and developing a plan to come electrical supply constraints

There will be costly grid reinforcement that need to occur to charge the fleet. We currently have seconded our electrician to a new role to lead this work alongside a new member of staff in the assets team to layout the scale of the issue.

Key Risks / Issues

The lack of existing EV charging infrastructure, limited range of some EVs and the large area covered by some roles/vehicles represents a challenge in terms of ensuring that service delivery remains efficient with an EV fleet.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Forecasting vehicle replacement schedule and understanding budget pressure associated with fleet charging infrastructure in more details

Overall Rating

Amber – while some of the project is on track to deliver, such as the fleet plan, the grid upgrades, associated charging infrastructure and full fleet to EV is currently at risk of not occurring in full by 2024

Action NE1.2 Increasing availability of electric charging points across the borough

- 5 more EV installations in Public Car Parks

Key Highlights

Key Risks / Issues

We are facing challenges relating to wayleaves at the Tavistock car parks which could affect the ability to install and commission whilst adhering to the funding deadline.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

A review of the sites will be required and will take place

Overall Rating

Amber – slightly off track

Action NE1.3 – Carry out a feasibility study of renewable energy schemes on our Council land

Key Highlights

Agreed to provide funding to support the installation of solar panels on Leisure Centres within the Borough which forecasts saving 135kge of CO2 per year across Meadowlands and Parklands Leisure Centres



At O&S in November it was noted that 'Fusion were sourcing alternative companies to provide solar panels on the roofs and hopefully this work would commence in April 2023.' Latest update is that both companies have completed their site surveys and will be submitting their final proposals and costings to Fusion by January

Funding has been secured through the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills fund to pay for heat decarbonisation plans for the leisure centres to compliment the solar installation

Key Risks / Issues

Supply chain issues for ordering and delivery of the panels.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Complete heat decarbonisation plans (March 2023)
- Work with fusion to finalise Solar proposals

Overall Rating **GREEN – ON TRACK**

Action NE1.4 - Promote recycling and reduction of waste (at source) to our residents

Key Highlights

We have continued to promote recycling across the Borough running campaigns at key points of the year such as Halloween and in the run up to Christmas, Easter and we will also be supporting Devon County Council's campaigns, 'love food – hate waste' campaigns.

Waste recycling rates have remained consistent throughout the year in West Devon. In October, Recycling Advisors visited areas that have lower recycling rates to talk through the challenges and encourage more recycling. The target for the year is 57% with Q1 being 54.9% and Q2 being 54.8%

Key Risks / Issues

- We are slightly below target but will continue to encourage residents to increase recycling through engagement and roadshows in the Spring and events.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- We will carry out more communications to residents through January and February using the information from the Waste Composition Analysis which was carried out in West Devon in October that provided a breakdown of the different materials found in the refuse.
- Communication and engagement to continue with the key messages and to improve recycling and understanding/ education

Overall Rating **GREEN – On Track**

Action NE1.5 – A 10% increase in biodiversity on Council land

Key Highlights

- 28 trees planted at Bishopsmead greenspace in Tavistock
- Funding secured for 26 large standard trees at Monkmead and 15 large standard trees at Bishopsmead to be planted in winter 22/23.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grounds Maintenance operatives relaxed cutting frequency at some sites during summer 2022, reportedly without local complaint, this providing shelter, breeding and food sources. 	
Key Risks / Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equipment availability – deriving maximum biodiversity value from relaxed cutting regimes requires collection of grass. WDBC do not have and unlikely to have the equipment to facilitate this. May look to hire equipment from SHDC once they purchase suitable equipment. - At most Council sites, a significant change in management is unlikely, or there may be local opposition. Need to consider on a site by site basis. 	
Looking ahead to the next 6 months	
Start to review Council land to look for easy wins in terms of relaxing cutting regime.	
Overall Rating	Amber – slightly off track

Action NE1.6 Support delivery of a mix of woodland, on street habitat corridors and hedgerows through the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest	
Key Highlights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - C.55ha of planting undertaken in Year 1 (21/22) within the Community Forest area. - Allocated over £1.1m by Defra to support woodland creation in the Community Forest. - Grant scheme now open and welcoming applications, with recent events for landowners. 	
Key Risks / Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging with landowners and delivering the scale of woodland proposed - Ensuring appropriate engagement with young people 	
Looking ahead to the next 6 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of 22/23 programme of planting - Ongoing engagement with landowners and working up deliverable projects - Engagement with children and young people to consult upon, and contribute to vision of the programme - WDBC have submitted grant applications for two natural regeneration sites, and continue to work with the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest team to refine these bids into suitable projects to deliver under the scheme. 	
Overall Rating	Green – On Track

Action NE1.7 Support Nature recovery through larger wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors and nature preservation schemes	
Key Highlights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Tamar Valley AONB has been offering support to farmers and landowners regarding Countryside Stewardship options and applications, through the Tamar Landscape Partnerships New Approaches project. - Three 3 year Tamar Farming in Protected Landscapes 3yr funded scheme is now fully allocated, supporting nearly 40 projects on farms in the Tamar Valley, including schemes for woodland creation and management, meadow creation and hedgerow management, enhancing orchards. - The Tamar Valley AONB are working on development of a Nature Enhancement and Recovery Plan. - We are at the early stages of working with Higher-Tier Authorities on considering what a Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy may look like in response to the Environment Act. 	
Key Risks / Issues	



Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Continue to work with Higher-Tier Authorities on Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy as guidance is forthcoming from Defra
- A Devon Tree Strategy is in the early stages of being worked up by partners across Devon.

Overall Rating	Green – On Track
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Action NE1.8 Map our ecosystems, species, waterways and other natural capital to better inform future land use**Key Highlights**

- First iteration of Devon Nature Recovery Network map was made available in 2022, including nature areas, and habitat suitability mapping.

Key Risks / Issues

- Alignment of the NRN map with the emerging Local Habitats Map requirements in the context of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, in advance of forthcoming Defra guidance.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- The application of tools to enable habitat prioritisation and connectivity modelling are being investigated by Devon Wildlife Trust supported by the NRN steering group.
- Devon Wildlife Trust are undertaking further work on river and coastal habitat suitability mapping.

Overall Rating	Green – On Track
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Action NE1.9 – Work with partners to promote tree planting within the Borough**Key Highlights**

- Funding has been secured by the Council from the Forestry Commission (Urban Tree Challenge Fund) to support planting of over 70 new large trees at three green spaces in Tavistock; Bishopsmead, Monksmead (Borough Council owned) and the Meadows (Town Council owned).
- Further to a bid to the Forestry Commission (England Woodland Creation Offer), bids have been made to the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest with an ongoing dialogue to refine these bids into deliverable natural regeneration projects and two Borough Council owned sites.

Key Risks / Issues

Cost of deer fencing is expensive, therefore the need for ongoing dialogue to reach a preferred approach to the natural regeneration projects.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Promote any available tree planting schemes via communication channels
- Secure grants to support the natural regeneration sites.
- Deliver the Urban Tree Challenge Fund planting in Jan/Feb 2023.

Overall Rating	Green – On Track
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Action NE1.10 – Work with landowners and partners including Tamar Valley AONB, Dartmoor National Trust, English Heritage, Westcountry Rivers and the Biosphere**Key Highlights**

See NE1.7

Key Risks / Issues**Looking ahead to the next 6 months**

Overall Rating

Green – On Track

