

CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor K Dye in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, E Bromley,
P Carlill, R Downes, A Rae, M Rafique,
A Rontree, M Shahzad, P Stables and
J Tudor

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Harrington and Councillor O Newton.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

3 **Notes of the Previous Meeting**

RECOMMENDED - To agree the meeting notes of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee held on the 22nd of July 2024, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 21 – To confirm whether *Calverley Flood Storage held back up to 1million meters²* should be metres³ and to update accordingly, and to correct meters to metres.

4 **Matters Arising**

The following points were raised under matters arising from the notes of the previous meeting:

Minute 18 – As previously raised under matters arising, there was outstanding information that had been requested by Members that was to be followed up with relevant Officers again, and it was hoped to be available for the next Committee meeting.

Minute 20 – As part of the Leeds Food Strategy Update, Members were reminded that suggestions were encouraged to connect the service with local growers and farmers.

5 **Open Forum**

At the discretion of the Chair, a period of up to 15 minutes may be allocated at each ordinary meeting for members of the public to make representations or to ask questions on matters within the terms of reference of the Committee. No member of the public shall speak for more than five minutes in the Open Forum, except by permission of the Chair.

The following submissions were made as part of the Open Forum:

Boston Spa Energy Efficiency Trial (BEET)

The issue of high voltage management within Boston Spa had previously been presented to the Committee as part of an Open Forum submission and had significantly developed, leading to the establishment of BEET. The local resident providing the deputation had served within the electricity industry, including roles in voltage management and designing networks. Upon identifying that households within Boston Spa had been experiencing high voltage levels, a challenge had been posed to the industry and electricity providers that needed to be addressed. Following research and dialogue BEET was developed which currently covered over 10,000 buildings across the Wetherby Ward, to safely decrease the voltage levels and overall energy usage. BEET had created an average of 4% savings on electricity bills for local homes and businesses, as well as reducing emissions through reduction in power usage and increased network capacity. Regulations did not include a requirement for providers to monitor voltage levels unless complaints were received but the issue had become apparent, assisted by the rollout of smart meters. The issue had been revealed to the regulator and the Northern Power Grid, with a project team developed in response in order to feed data back to primary sub stations where alterations can then automatically made. BEET had been commissioned on the 15th of January 2024 and so far, had been successful. The programme was to be built into Northern Power Grid business plans with a further roll out across the grid; it was hoped that the trail would influence other providers and amend regulations.

To supplement the deputisation, a video was played for Members to outline the rollout and processes for the BEET programme through the Northern Power Grid.

The Chair gave her thanks for the fascinating work and would be in contact to assist with further questions and promotion of the programme, alongside other Committee Members.

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)

As part of the National Education Nature Park programme, the Senior Programme Officer for Yorkshire and the Humber RHS, and local contact for the institution, provided details for upcoming events and ways to promote and engage with the events. The programme was launched on the 4th of October 2023 and was partnered with a number of larger organisations, being led by the Natural History Museum and commissioned by the Department for Education. The broad goals for the programme were to increase bio-diversity within the sites of educational institutions, facilitating climate based learning and outdoor education for children of all school ages. There were over 3000 education institutions engaged with over 1400 having confirmed their site boundaries which were needed to confirm land ownership and map natural features which could be enhanced or developed; notable habitats were grouped by area designation. For Yorkshire there were over 380 education institutions signed up, with 50 of them being within Leeds. The programme was student led and was to be run until summer 2027 with nature park grants of up to £10,000 being administered through the RHS, with further additions available after initial grants. 29 settings eligible for grants had been identified in Leeds, with the closing date for new applications noted as the 27th of March

2025. There was also the Climate Ambassador, Sustainability Support for Education and Let's go Zero 2030 programmes which linked to the National Education Nature Park programme. Members were encouraged to spread the word and to connect local schools to the programme.

Links for eligibility criteria and further details were provided:

National Education Nature Park website:

<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>

Nature Park Grants Eligibility list and criteria:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nature-park-and-climate-action-awards-funding-allocations>

Nature Park grant FAQ:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/schools/national-education-nature-park/national-education-nature-park-grant/frequently-asked-questions-2024-25>

Climate Ambassadors:

<https://climateambassadors.org.uk/>

Sustainability Support for Education:

<https://www.sustainabilitysupportforeducation.org.uk/>

Let's Go Zero:

<https://letsgozero.org/>

Contact the Yorkshire Nature Park team (Jen Horseman/Jen Davies):

yorkshirenaturepark@rhs.org.uk

The Chair outlined she had scheduled to meet with the Senior Programme Officer and Climate Ambassadors and Members outlined they would contact local schools and provide further details accordingly.

6 Working Groups Update

As Rachel Wainwright, Policy Officer (CEGS) was unable to attend the meeting, the Chair noted discussions had been held regarding date and topics for future Working Groups and upcoming dates were to be provided to Members via email.

7 Update on Nature and Tree-planting Initiatives in Leeds

The report of the Chief Officer, Climate, Energy and Green Spaces provided an update on woodland creation and on the programme of tree planting related initiatives. In addition, an update was provided on biodiversity net gain as well as an update on practical initiatives such as the establishment of wildflower areas in collaboration with Butterfly Conservation in Roundhay Park using seed sourced through Natural England in order to provide areas of managed habitat for native butterflies and other invertebrates which linked to the conservation work undertaken at Tropical World.

Tony Stringwell, Parks Operations Manager, Climate, Energy & Green Spaces, highlighted the following information for Woodland Creation:

- In response to the Council's 2019 climate emergency declaration there was a need for significant tree planting, woodland creation and improvements to existing woodland. Submissions to and agreements from the Executive Board had doubled the proposed number of trees to be planted through corporate funds, with a target of 5.8 million trees over 25 years.

- The Arium supported the programme, with trees grown there before being replanted by the operations team, as well as supporting public engagement and volunteering schemes.
- Infographics were shown to outline the scope of benefits provided through tree planting which were available to Members for promotion of the programme.
- The progression of tree planting since 2019 had been steady and for every 75 sites that were to be planted on, around 150 to 200 required prior identification as sites coming to fruition were often impacted by other service and utility requirements.
- Progress for the planting season for 2024/25 was outlined as 39 current schemes with 16 whip planting sites and 23 new standard tree installation sites comprising of 27.4 hectares.
- Internal and external consultations were held in order to seek opinions on sites planned for tree planting. The public consultation had closed on the 16th of September 2024 and results were 79% positive, 14% negative and 7% neutral out of the 327 responses.
- Beat-up surveys were used to assess the number of trees surviving at the end of the maintenance period and following surveying trees planted in 2022/23 an additional 37,039 trees were required to bring these sites up to standard. Significant rainfall had impacted upon tree survival rates.
- 1558 trees had been surveyed and audited with a fairly good success rate with 69% being healthy, however issues of vandalism were noted.
- A GIS platform was used to for data analysis and quality assurance to monitor sites across the city. The mapping system was also used as a tool for the public to suggest potential sites, with 216 being received.
- In order to limit the use of glyphosate, mulch matting trials were being run, including at a site Morwick Terrace, however, it was expensive, and glyphosate was often essential to meet targets. The trial had been positive, with a 68% survival rate and a further trial was proposed at a site in a more urban setting.
- Seed collection schemes had engaged with young people and received good publicity, with seed collection days being run by park rangers.
- An overview of the programme was displayed outlining key statistics of progress, which were overall positive.
- Members with thanked for their input and support for delivering woodland creation.

A progress update was provided by Emma Trickett, Parks Technical Manager, in relation to bio-diversity net gain (BNG):

- BNG was a planning regulation, introduced by the Environment Act 2021 and as of February 2024, it was mandated that a minimum 10% uplift in biodiversity was delivered on a given development site, or using BNG credits, where the Council would act as a broker, for sites deemed unsuitable for BNG.
- Delivery of BNG was through improvement to or creation of wildlife habitats, which were to be maintained for 30 years.

- Off site BNG delivery, using credits, was covered by the Council and was supported by the Parks & Green Spaces Strategy with the goal being to *increase wildlife and biodiversity and reduce the impact of climate change*.
- During the pre-mandatory stage, the planning department had requested voluntary commitments from developers which had been used as a trial for the BNG process. During this time 18 pilot schemes were agreed as part of approved planning permissions, involving 101 biodiversity units (equivalent to £2.3million), with 6 more likely to be agreed. So far, 47 units (equivalent to £1million) had been received for 7 schemes.
- The aim was to deliver BNG as close as possible to development sites, subject to suitability and capacity. Through consultation, 6 sites had been agreed for delivery, along with 30 year management plans, including a relaxed mowing scheme at Wyke Beck Valley, managed mowing at Asket Hill and three woodlands. Signage was to be installed to explain work and management processes to the public.
- For the mandatory stage, the 10% uplift was enforceable, and the additional rules meant delivery was to be through a Habitat Banking Vehicle (HBV), rather than directly through the Council. This process, of allocating land for BNG to be leased to a HBV and registered with Natural England, was in development in liaison with Planning and Legal services.
- BNG was to be like for like, so if hedgerows were removed then new hedgerows were required.
- Land allocated for BNG was preferred to be large and linkable to other sites. Work was ongoing to identify and prioritise BNG sites potential sites at Otley Chevin, Rothwell Country Park, Skelton Lake and Killingbeck Fields under consideration.

Isobel Smith, Senior Estates Manager, provided an update on initiatives to establish wildflower areas, Butterfly Conservation and conservation work undertaken at Tropical World:

- The Tropical World building, originally known as Coronation House and built in 1911, focused on conservation, preserving plant and animal species, with a role of educating the public on sustainable practices, biodiversity, as well as research projects. Members were encouraged to visit Tropical World and a site visit was proposed to be arranged.
- The Butterfly Conservation Project, in line with zoo licence requirements, aimed to provide conservation research and training, captive breeding and reintroduction. Butterflies had been housed and associated with Tropical World since the 1940s.
- Wildflower meadows at Roundhay Park were being established to provide habitat and food for native butterflies. Local community projects were run to involve people in protecting wild spaces and native species.
- Wildflower meadow development relied upon partnership work with knowledge shared between institutions, with the Butterfly Conservation Society assisting with the scheme and Natural England donating seed.

- Since the 1970s it was estimated that butterfly numbers and sightings had decreased by 80% and initiatives such as relaxed mowing assisted in reversing losses.
- Meadow development work began in April 2023 with the areas Lakeside Meadow and Castle Meadow being selected, in consultation with partners and the public. Following success, the areas were to be expanded.
- To encourage education and raise awareness, signage had been installed and zoo education, including workshops, were run at Tropical World. For future maintenance of the meadows, training and apprenticeships were available.
- A sculpture trail had been built around Tropical World and Roundhay Park to connect people to nature and the wildflower meadows.
- Butterfly populations were monitored as part of the conservation work requirements at Tropical World which included inclusive training, a transect walk and the annual Big Butterfly Count, with data uploaded to the Butterfly Conservation Society website, which allowed success to be monitored.
- Future plans to improve conservation work included expanding the development of the wildflower meadows, a new partnership with Wild Spaces, expansion of community events and expanding conservation work to include other species.

During discussions, the Committee considered the following points:

- Seeking alternatives to glyphosate for woodland creation was supported by Members, but where glyphosate was used it was important to provide clear signage for the public.
- Some concern regarding the capacity of overall suitable sites for woodland creation, given the need for some open green space provision and limitations for tree planting on land outside of Council ownership, were raised. In response it was noted that work in partnership with Asset Management and Regeneration sought to find the correct balance in spatial capacity for other purposes and needs from the corporate estate.
- Council owned parks and greenspaces were comprised of over 4000 hectares and a balance was needed for different habitats and Members were to be kept informed of forthcoming proposals or options.
- Engagement with private landowners was ongoing to identify sites with enough capacity for woodland creation and Members suggestions were welcome.
- The details for the metrics for determining BNG were defined by Natural England and required an ecologist to make an assessment of the size, value and rarity of a site and develop proposals for a 10% biodiversity uplift, with the methodology considered robust.
- The transect walk was on a defined route in order to provide equitable data for butterfly population monitoring over long time periods.
- Kick sampling was explained as water sampling to assess the health of water habitats to inform research and was conducted at sites including Gledhow and Wyke Beck.

- Although there had been some success in the mulch matting trial and further trials were planned, moving away from glyphosate in full posed difficulties in more urban settings. Glyphosate usage had decreased, and it was hoped that less reliance on it would be developed through further plans and consideration of other options.
- It was confirmed that the nature and sculpture trails were open and information on conservation work, along with education events, were provided to schools. Further engagement work with schools was agreed to be explored, including improved communication models and updating information on the toolkit for young people on the Leeds By Example website.
- The right balance for woodland creation against other community needs was important as open space was valuable and tree planting on Council housing land was not always appropriate. There had been objections noted to a tree planting consultation in Killingbeck and Seacroft and a response was to be followed up.
- If parks were oversaturated with trees, rather than open amenity space, it may cause people to travel out of the area which had a carbon impact. It was hoped more options for woodland creation on privately owned land could come to fruition.
- BNG was proposed to be delivered as close to a development site as possible but often limited space was available, it was noted that BNG was mandatory and could be provided anywhere across the city and could be added to existing high value sites. It was outlined that BNG credits were used to maintain and improve habitats and would not lead to a financial gain for the Council but would add value site management.
- As the woodland creation programme was ambitious, all proposed sites were open to public consultation and in most cases required some form of agreement with Elected Ward Members, in liaison with the local community.

RECOMMENDED – That the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

8 Leeds Household Waste and Recycling Collection Strategy Update

A verbal update regarding relevant national policy, strategy and legislation; together with a draft strategy for managing household waste in Leeds in a way that met national Simpler Recycling requirements and helped Leeds residents to reduce the amount of waste they produced that was not re-used or recycled was presented to the Committee.

John Woolmer, Chief Officer for Environmental Services, Communities, Housing & Environment, outlined the following information to Members:

- Environmental services covered refuse, fly tipping, litter bins and street cleansing and managed the Leeds Household Waste and Recycling Collection Strategy.
- The strategy had been presented in the previous week to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board, with that reported contained in the agenda for Member's information, which

outlined the current national position for waste management, applied to the context and ongoing work within Leeds.

- The Environment Act 2021, as agreed by Parliament, had brought new requirements for kerb side collection of glass, garden and food waste. The Act was underpinned by additional legislation and processes, including, extended producer responsibility for packaging (EPR), food waste policy and deposit return schemes (DRS) for plastic and metal beverage containers, which was also noted to potentially decrease litter. This reduced waste by changing regulations and with the incentive held at the top of the supply chain on producers, through associated fees.
- A full update on processes were provided to Local Authorities by the Government in 2023, in attempt to create clearer, simpler waste management programmes, with additional information on 'Simpler Recycling' outlined in May 2024.
- The update noted Local Authorities should focus on reducing overall waste and the number of bins provided to residents, as well as directing legislation to reduce the number of black bin collections.
- The new legislation was clear on emphasis on co-mingling where possible and expectations for the implementation of kerb side collection of glass, metal, garden, and food waste, with specific splitting of different recyclable materials, by 2026 and DRS by 2027.
- Leeds was in a good position in light of the forthcoming changes and future models, as there was already a low bin count, with just black, green and brown. Leeds had the largest garden waste collection within the UK, with 60% of houses having a brown bin, free of charge.
- Glass was now collected at kerb side within green bins as on the 1st of August 2024, with initial success as a proof of concept. 700 tonnes of glass had been collected in August, with 80% suitable for remelting, this was above the current national target of 72%.
- A contract had been procured with HW Martin to implement their glass collection technology infrastructure, which had been successful. Current data forecast that 8,500 tonnes of glass was to be collected per year, but it was hoped to increase further, as well as the remelt percentage.
- The next steps, prior to Government funding agreements, for the strategy was exploring options for food waste processes, with agreement from the Executive Board. An interim method for food waste in brown bins was under consideration, with expanded brown bin provision and collection frequency for residents, which would also reduce overall black bin wastage.
- Influencing people's approach to waste and recycling was a good approach prior to Government funding agreements when viable reviews could take place.

During the discussions the following matters were considered:

- The logistical processes for the interim proposals for the food waste brown bin trial were queried. In response it was outlined that examples from other Council's currently collecting food waste had been explored

and options were to provide separate biodegradable bags and kitchen caddies for food waste as well as composting. It was also noted that dealing with household food waste was a personal decision for residents.

- With glass collected from green bins, data displaying the effect on black bins and bottle banks needed around 3 months to outline reliable trends. In November 2024 an update was anticipated for accurate statistics for the new glass collection model, glass remelt and recycling, glass put in bottle banks, as well as black bin composition analysis.
- Work to address issues of glass still being placed in black bins, and not green bins or bottle banks, was to be targeted, with Members engagement encouraged.
- Whether additional allowances were going to be made for brown bins, given the impact on capacity food waste proposals would have, was queried. In response this was to be reviewed as part of the proposal, however, it was noted there were other options for additional garden waste, including composting and household waste tip sites. There was an option of charging for a second brown bin.
- The brown bin proposals were an interim approach to food waste collection prior to mandated legislation for weekly food waste collection and all options were still under consideration and review, with clarity of funding needed prior to any decision.
- Information for the purpose of brown bin provision needed to be clearer. Free garden waste collection was a good offer and was a service to assist with garden waste as opposed to collection of all garden waste.
- It was confirmed that, given the additional impact on capacity glass had on green bins, there was the ability for residents to request additional green bins but certain criteria for recycling needed to be met. Contact details to access this offer were to be provided to Members.
- Without access to a car, residents were limited in their ability to travel to household waste sites to drop off excess garden waste. Options for residents to pay for second brown bin provision were to be explored.
- Despite green bin glass collection, bottle banks were to be retained as long as they were needed. Emerging data noted bottle bank usage was to drop off, but bottle banks were cost neutral due to not requiring a sorting process but may be reviewed on a site by site basis. If a low amount of glass collection was recorded at a carpark bottle bank site, removing some bottle banks would free up carparking space.
- With 80% of glass suitable for remelt, the reasons for some glass being unsuitable for remelt were outlined as contamination and size and quality of the glass pieces. A video showing the process was available online and an offer of a site visit to the processing facility was extended to Members.
- The proposed food waste models had been developed in liaison with industry experts which allowed for carbon impacts and carbon savings to be forecast. There were difficulties in providing accurate carbon saving figures prior to the procurement of contracts and market response.

- There were various options to consider for food waste proposals, including processing models, and brown bin collections would be changed to once per week only if they were selected to include food waste.
- It was requested that an update regarding glass being incorrectly placed in the black bin was available to inform public communications, when it became available. This was agreed to be provided by Officers.
- There was support offered by Members for the brown bin option for forthcoming food waste proposals.

RECOMMENDED – That the update, along with Members comments, be noted.

9 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

RECOMMENDED - To note the date and time of the next meeting as Monday the 4th of November 2024 at 2.00 pm