

Climate Local Commitment: Natural Environment

Delivering a setting for investment and maximising biodiversity and reducing costs.

Key Achievements 2012/13

- Dewsbury Country Park. Secured up to £516k funding from the Forestry Commission to undertake an extensive programme of tree planting and infrastructure creation in order to develop the country park. The site is also one of the first sites to be registered on the Woodland Carbon Code scheme.
- Set up the Yorkshire West Local Nature Partnership as a regional vehicle for attracting investment and setting priorities
- Dewsbury Green Infrastructure Exemplar Project. Used limited Natural England pilot funding to integrate biodiversity and green infrastructure in regeneration projects across the Dewsbury area.
- Identified, quantified and registered Council-owned woodland estate as preparation for accessing Forestry Commission management grants funding.
- Work undertaking Habitat Regulations Assessment (to inform the LDF and assess the impacts of development on the upland periphery) has grown to initiate a Manchester Metropolitan University PhD research project in the South Pennines with CMBC, BMDC, and the 'Moorlife' Project (Peak District NPA).

Future Challenges/Opportunities

Human activities already have a dramatic impact upon biodiversity and the natural environment, and the changing climate is likely to exacerbate this.

The complex network of natural habitats, accessible green spaces, public rights of way and the wider rural setting all form what is referred to as the 'green infrastructure' of Kirklees.

The Integrated Investment Strategy makes reference to "making Kirklees an attractive place to live and work." A draft Green Infrastructure Strategy is currently being finalised to address how the council will protect and enhance our natural assets and also how they will help deliver economic benefits for Kirklees.

When planned and well managed these areas will form a high quality multifunctional habitat that:

- Provides an attractive setting for investment and creates employment prospects
- Supports wildlife and biodiversity
- Supports health and wellbeing, with food growing, and leisure opportunities
- Adds to the economy by enhancing reasons for tourism
- Helps mitigate the impacts of climate change. Acts to reduce floods and manage water better and helps with urban cooling and relief from pollution
- Expands horizons connecting us to new places and adventures, helping us travel safely and benefits learning and discovery

This work will feed into a collaborative approach with Leeds City Region partners to contribute to the Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy. The work will be undertaken via the White Rose Forest, for which Kirklees is the Accountable Body.

The council has a statutory duty (through undertaking its own functions and planning development management) in relation to upholding protected species legislation. In addition to this, we also seek to deliver biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancements through influencing planning applications (in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012) and also through helping shape how the council undertakes its land management duties (in line with the NERC duty, 2006). Working 'with the grain' of nature can help reduce management costs, deliver biodiversity improvements and create a more appealing setting for investment.

Action Plan 2013/14: Natural Environment

Aims:

- 1) Utilise the natural environment to support local economic development eg reduced flood risk and pollution
- 2) Maximise biodiversity value through planning and land management

Priority	Action	Measure	Timescale	Funding
1	Continue to contribute to the Development Management (DM) process to ensure that this contributes to the national 2020 biodiversity goal of 'no net loss' and that the authority is compliant with relevant statutory species and wildlife legislation.	Develop a measure to assess DM against 2020 Biodiversity target. Compliance achieved.	2013/14	Staff resources
2	Produce interim report of the Habitat Regulations Assessment of the South Pennine uplands (including parts of Kirklees) to inform the Local Development Framework (LDF) process [statutory requirement].	Report produced. Compliance achieved.	Late Spring 2013	Government Funding – approx. £24k
3	Complete the establishment of the Dewsbury Country Park (Diamond Wood) and develop sustainable apprentices/job opportunities within the park.	i. No. of apprentices/training opportunities created ii. Country Park is formally recognised	2013/14	£516k - external (Forestry Commission) Up to £200k Council capital
4	Identify and designate Local Wildlife and Local Geological Sites to inform the LDF	No. sites designated by the WY Local Sites panel	2013/14	Staff resources
5	Work with partners to complete the establishment of the Yorkshire West Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and work together to increase green infrastructure investment and utilise existing resources more efficiently.	Establishment of LNP, finalisation of partnership structure and governance.	2013/14	£25k from Natural England (external). Staff resources
6	Publish the Kirklees Green Infrastructure (GI) Delivery Plan to prioritise GI investment	Publication	Spring 2013	Staff resources
7	Identify and utilise opportunities within existing and planned programmes for Green Infrastructure in order to deliver an improved sense of Place.	No. of schemes that include GI measures/implementation	Ongoing	Staff resources
8	Promote Environment Grants and allocate funding to community projects which protect and enhance the environment and reduce carbon emissions for the benefit of people of Kirklees.	100% grants allocated	Mar 2014	Staff resources