



Meeting: Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Date/Time: Monday, 9 September 2024 at 2.00 pm

Location: Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield

Contact: Anna Poole (tel: 0116 305 2583)

Email: anna.poole@leics.gov.uk

Membership

Mr. M. Frisby CC (Chairman)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC Mr. M. Hunt CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC Mrs. R. Page CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC Mrs B. Seaton CC

Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWFpwBLs6MnUzG0WjejrQtQ>

AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Report by</u>
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024.	(Pages 5 - 8)
2. Question Time.	
3. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).	
4. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.	
5. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.	

6. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
7. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.
8. Biodiversity Net Gain - Six Months on. Chief Executive (Pages 9 - 12)
9. Environment and Climate Change Performance Report to June 2024. Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Transport (Pages 13 - 22)
10. Annual Review of Leicestershire Country Parks. Director of Corporate Resources (Pages 23 - 28)
11. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on Monday 11 November 2024 at 2.00pm.

12. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website www.cfgs.org.uk. The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).

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Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 13 June 2024.

PRESENT

	Mr. D. Harrison CC (in the Chair)
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Mr J. Poland CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC	Mrs B. Seaton CC
Mrs. R. Page CC	

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr. N. Chapman CC and Mr. M. Frisby CC.

1. Appointment of Chairman.

It was moved by Mr. G. A. Boulter CC and seconded by Mr. J. Poland CC that Mr. M. Frisby CC be appointed as Chairman of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2025.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. M. Frisby CC be appointed Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2025.

2. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

It was moved by Mr. G. A. Boulter CC and seconded by Mrs. R. Page CC that Mr. D. Harrison CC be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2025.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. D. Harrison CC be appointed Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2025.

Mr. D. Harrison – in the Chair for this meeting.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

5. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

9. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

10. Persistent Organic Pollutants in Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the first year of operation of separately collected and treated Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The performance data showing the tonnage of WUDS collected per month for the County Council had not currently been benchmarked against other local authorities. The Director agreed to conduct a comparison and let members know how well the County Council was performing.
- ii. No direct reports of fly tipping of sofas had been received by the Director, as this was a district council responsibility. However, the County Council worked closely with district councils to reduce instances of fly tipping in the county.
- iii. The Regulations on WUDS/POPs detailed which items were specifically within scope of the legislation, and this did not include mattresses possibly as the level of POPs was much lower in these items. However, it was possible that future updates to the Regulations may include mattresses.
- iv. The RHWS which disposed of WUDS in Leicestershire were not promoted out of county to neighbouring residents in other counties. However, it was acknowledged that cross-boundary usage of RHWS did occur, but all authorities involved acknowledged that the movement was probably in equal measure, and they did not limit such movement.

In response to members' requests, the Director agreed to produce a short summary of the report, explaining WUDS and POPs, for members to use in their local areas as a press release.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the first year of operation of separately collected and treated Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating containing Persistent Organic Pollutants be noted.

11. Collection and Packaging Reforms.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the Government's recent policy announcements on the Collection and Packaging Reforms (CPR). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. In response to concerns from a member about district councils' plans to collect food and garden waste mixed together and the possible impact of this on the County Council as the waste disposal authority, the Director explained that the Government had confirmed capital finding for district councils to purchase the infrastructure needed to start food waste collections. It was also predicted that revenue finding would be available in the future, although no details were available at this stage. The County Council currently had contracts in place to dispose of separately collected food and garden waste, but not mixed waste. However, the Director explained that it was for the district councils to decide how such waste was collected and the County Council would seek to put in place suitable contracts for the disposal of mixed waste should the need arise.
- ii. Members noted that food and garden waste could not currently be mixed for recycling collections, although the Government was considering plans to introduce this in the future.
- iii. In response to a question from a member, the Director clarified that reference in Paragraph 17 of the report to 'All UK nations' referred to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. Different deposit return schemes would be put in place in the UK nations with slight differences in the materials collected, for example, glass. The Government was considering how these different schemes would operate across borders.
- iv. Members noted that the new Regulations were expected to bring about a change in packaging habits especially with that used around white goods, for example, polystyrene around washing machines. Currently, some providers took away the packaging and the old machine for recycling. The Extended Producer Responsibility under the new Regulations, would encourage those producing the packaging to use a more recyclable material or to manage the recycling of the packaging themselves.
- v. In response to a question from a member about why glass was not included in waste collection in England but was in Wales, the Director informed members that it was possibly due to complexities and weight/health and safety considerations with the collection of glass. This was particularly the case with reverse vending machines which could lead to breakages presenting health and safety issues which needed further consideration in England. Wales were very keen to include glass in their recycling schemes

as their recycling rates were higher than in England and they were keen to recycle everything that could be included. The Director assured members that the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging detailed in the report would include glass.

- vi. Members noted that more details about the Deposit Return Scheme were needed to clarify what materials and items would be covered by the Regulations.

In response to members' requests, the Director agreed to produce a short summary of the report, explaining the Government's plans for Collection and Packaging Reforms, to place in Leicestershire Matters and for Members to use in their local areas as a press release. However, the Director added that the release of information needed to be managed in a timely manner, as some plans were still being considered by the Government and were not currently in place.

RESOLVED:

That the summary provided of the Government's recent policy announcements on the Collection and Packaging Reforms be noted.

12. Dates of future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 9 September 2024 at 2.00pm and that meetings of the Committee in 2025 would be held at 2:00pm on the following dates:

- 22 January 2025
- 12 March 2025
- 11 June 2025
- 10 September 2025
- 12 November 2025

2.00 - 2.45 pm
13 June 2024

CHAIRMAN



**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 9 SEPTEMBER 2024**

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN - SIX MONTHS ON

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of report

1. This report is a summary of the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, which is a new requirement that has been introduced and is delivered through the planning system. The law has been in place since February 2024 for larger development sites.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Environment Act 2021 introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (from this point referred to as “BNG”) as a new requirement to be delivered through the planning system. BNG has been inserted into the planning legislation under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
3. As a result, developments are now required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity above the pre-development status of a site and this will be secured through the determination of planning applications. The mandatory requirement for BNG commenced on 12 February 2024 for major sites and 2 April 2024 for smaller sites.

Background

4. To prepare for mandated BNG, a partnership of Local Planning Authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland collectively commissioned a report on how to introduce this requirement into planning processes. This was funded by all partners, using the government burden funding provided for this purpose.
5. The study and subsequent report, undertaken by consultants RSK Biocensus, was completed in September 2023 and its recommendations were taken forward by this partnership of district councils. Charnwood Borough Council and Leicester City Council have their own advice services and therefore did not take this advice model forward. It was agreed that the working model for ecology advice and support would be to host the service within Leicestershire County Council, with expansion of the existing Ecology Advice Team to include additional capacity to deliver the requirements of BNG. As a result of this, there has been a considerable amount of work undertaken to devise appropriate processes, to recruit and upskill staff and to provision the team with appropriate IT supporting database, storage and processing capabilities.

6. **Delivery mechanism and processes-** The Ecology and Biodiversity Team Manager has been developing the mechanism for delivery of BNG through the Ecology Advice service, including through discussion and information-giving at monthly meetings of the Planning Officer Forum (POF), attended by the Heads of Planning Services across Leicestershire and Rutland and also updating the Development Management Forum, a similar group attended by the Heads of Development Management across the region.
7. **BNG Sub-group-** Upon the request of the members of POF, a BNG sub-group has been formed, managed by the Ecology and Biodiversity Team Manager. This sub-group is made up of representation from all councils across Leicestershire and Rutland. Its aim is to collaborate and jointly agree the locally-set BNG processes within the planning mechanism, such as local validation and Section 106 obligations. This is a partnership approach to resolving remaining issues in relation to the rollout of the new legislation, where there are gaps in national legislation and planning practice guidance; or where the national legislation has allowed for some local interpretation of planning application validation requirements.
8. **Monitoring requirements-** There are new statutory monitoring requirements that come with BNG. The Obligations and Systems Manager and the Ecology and Biodiversity Team Manager are developing a Section 106 BNG Policy and Charging Schedule, in order that this long-term monitoring can be funded and carried out. This is a new responsibility as a result of BNG and the applicant will be charged for this service. The district councils will also be using this approach, which the Ecology Team will also monitor for cases in their area on their behalf.
9. **Reporting requirements-** the additional new statutory requirement through the Biodiversity Duty (also from the Environment Act 2021) requires Local Planning Authorities to report on BNG, the quantity and type of habitat being created through BNG. Officers are currently using the database system Mastergov for processing BNG information from planning casework. However, software options, which are specifically designed to extract and process these monitoring aspects of BNG, are also being investigated.

Consultation/ Training

10. **Member Briefing Sessions-** Mr Pain, Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and Green Agenda hosted an All Member Meeting to introduce members to statutory BNG on Tuesday 6 February 2024. Mr Pain also hosted an additional briefing to members on BNG as part of his Lead Member Meeting on 16 April 2024.
11. **Officer Training-** BNG training for planning officers was jointly organised by the authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland and this was delivered by RSK Biocensus on Tuesday 30 January 2024.
12. **Member Training-** To prepare for the introduction of this new legislation, training was jointly organised for elected Members of authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland. The training was delivered by RSK Biocensus and took place on Thursday 29 February 2024. Its aim was to introduce BNG as part of the planning determination process and it was aimed in particular at members who sit on planning committees and take part in the decision-making process.

13. **Training for Parish and Town Councils-** Additional training was rolled out to Parish and Town Councils through the Parish Clerks Operational Meeting on Thursday 23 May 2024. The Ecology and Biodiversity Team Manager presented a training and information session at the Town and Parish Council Annual Conference on 1 July 2024.

Resource Implications

14. **Ecology and Biodiversity Team recruitment** - an important part of BNG delivery is the advice and support service, which is offered both internally for county planning applications but also to Leicestershire district councils (excluding Charnwood Borough Council) and Rutland Council through a contracted, costed service via a Service Level Agreement (SLA).
15. This new statutory requirement means that there is a considerable increase in staff resource required to delivery BNG, including the new requirement of monitoring offsite and significant on-site BNG through Section 106 obligations. The Team Manager has been undertaking significant recruitment in very challenging circumstances, with professional ecologist shortages across the country and the sector, including the commercial side of the sector.
16. **Ecology and Biodiversity Team upskilling** - In addition to recruitment, there is considerable “upskilling” of staff required, so that they are able to review and interpret new technical information being submitted as part of the BNG process. This includes the ability to assess the statutory metric tool, the use of the new habitat assessment methodology “UK Hab” and the associated Condition Assessments that describe the condition of a habitat. The team has been undertaking both internal and external training since February 2024 on this, making use of the national government burden funding to support this. Specialist training is available through the professional institute, CIEEM, through UK Hab Ltd and the Planning Advisory Service.
17. **Outputs and outcomes** - It is too early to provide measures of the beneficial impact of BNG on the local environment. This will become evident over time and data will be available through the Biodiversity Duty requirements to report on the quantity and quality of habitat creation, restoration and enhancement.
18. To date, the following figures provide a “basic” picture of what has been processed by the Ecology Team across the County Council and district councils within the service contract. These numbers relate to applications submitted after the first BNG “go live” date of 12 February 2024:

Number of planning applications processed: 866 (consults/reconsults/additional enquiries)

Of these 866 planning applications:

- BNG required: 75
- BNG-exempt under legislation: 162
- BNG not applicable: 606 (such as householder applications; also including smaller sites prior to 2 April 2024)
- BNG queries ongoing: 23 (advisory information provided)

Timetable for Decisions

19. There are no further decisions required at present.

Conclusions

20. The requirement for statutory BNG has a considerable impact upon the resources of Local Planning Authorities. Whilst this is in part met by additional burden funding from central government, this does not completely cover the additional resource requirements.
21. The partnership approach taken across Leicestershire and Rutland has helped to ensure consistency of approach to planning application decision-making. It has also helped to provide a collective understanding of the challenges that BNG brings.
22. There are several additional requirements, such as the requirements for monitoring off-site and significant on-site habitat creation/restoration, which have not been fully met by new government guidance as yet.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

23. None.

Equality Implications

24. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Human Rights Implications

25. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Officer(s) to Contact

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**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE
REPORT TO JUNE 2024**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the latest performance update on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that the Council is responsible for delivering against the Council's Strategic Plan (2024-26). The Committee is asked to note this update.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The updates in this report reflect progress against the Council's Strategic Outcomes Framework within the Strategic Plan up to 2026, as well as the Environment and Waste performance framework and related high-level plans and strategies across the Council which inform the current performance framework and indicators in this report.

Background

3. This report highlights how a variety of Environment and Climate Change performance indicators are performing against the Council's Strategic Plan's Clean and Green outcome.
4. The performance dashboards, appended to this report, include several indicators where the Council does not have direct control of delivery, such as Electric Vehicle (EV) ownership and air quality. The latter examples are within the scope of the Environment Strategy but are not directly delivered by the Council. They have been included to provide a greater oversight of the environment, to inform policy making and to help to understand what life is like in Leicestershire. They include a mix of national and locally developed performance indicators. Measuring these may highlight areas for scrutiny of delivery by other Council departments, other agencies or the need for lobbying to influence policy and funding from the Government. It is expected that action by a range of agencies will improve a number of these metrics over time.

Internal indicators, where the Council has the most control, are identified with an 'L' within the performance dashboards.

5. The Council monitors and assesses its performance by mainly considering its Direction of Travel (DOT), the Red / Amber / Green (RAG) rating, and quartile position when compared to other English county councils (where applicable).
6. Coloured DOT arrows (red, amber, green) show whether there has been an improvement or deterioration in performance compared to the previous result, for recently updated data, within the performance dashboards. Up arrows show an improvement in performance, whereas down arrows show a decline in performance, and horizontal arrows show no change. Grey DOTs mean that there is no recent update available. This may be due to the time taken to obtain data from third parties and calculate the results, or because many indicators are updated less frequently, such as annually.
7. The performance dashboards include information on the latest data against the target (where relevant) which generates a RAG rating if applicable. Red indicates that close monitoring or significant action is required as the target is not or may not be achieved. Amber indicates that light touch monitoring is required as performance is currently not meeting the target or is set to miss the target by a narrow margin. Green indicates that no additional action is required as the indicator is currently meeting the target or is on track to meet the target.
8. The Council's performance is benchmarked against 32 English county authorities which cover large, principally non-urban geographical areas. Where it is available, the performance dashboards within the Appendix indicate which quartile Leicestershire's performance falls into. The first quartile is defined as performance that falls within the top 25% of county councils. The fourth quartile is defined as performance that falls within the bottom 25% of county councils. The comparison quartiles are updated annually.
9. The frequency in which the indicators are reported varies as some are quarterly, others are annual, and some are less frequent. Quarterly updates tend to have a data lag of one quarter or more. For clarity, the time-periods that the latest data covers are contained in the performance dashboards in the Appendix.

Performance Update – latest data to June 2024

10. The quarterly performance dashboard shows Environment and Climate Change performance up to June 2024. Overall, there are 28 performance indicators included in this report which are aligned with the Council's Strategic Plan outcomes. They are presented in the Environment and Climate Change performance dashboards within the Appendix. This report focuses on the 15 indicators that have recently been updated. Where a DOT is available for the updated indicators: eight show performance improvement, two had declined in performance and five remained the same as the previous update.

11. The latest position shows that of the indicators updated which have targets, three KPIs are green (they have met the target or are on track), six are amber (performance is currently not meeting the target or is set to miss the target by a narrow margin) and one is rated red (where performance is currently not meeting the target or is set to miss the target).
12. When compared to other English county councils, out of all the Council's Clean and Green KPIs there are two indicators which are in the top quartile, which include the 'Percentage of domestic properties with Energy Performance rating C+ (new homes)' and the 'Total fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population' (listed in the Appendix with a green first quartile position). There are 10 Clean and Green KPIs that perform below average, within the third and fourth quartiles, listed in the Appendix.
13. The following updates focus on the 15 indicators that have been updated by the end of June 2024 (Quarter One).

Clean & Green Outcome

14. The 'Electric vehicle charging locations per 100,000 population' improved in performance by 13%, from 52 in Quarter Three 2023/24 to 59 in Quarter Four 2023/24. This represents a 44% increase since the same period last year, when the figure was 41.1 per 100,000 population, demonstrating significant improvement over the year. In terms of comparison with other counties, Leicestershire is in the third quartile for 2023 (an improvement on 2022). More than £3m in funding from the Government has been provisionally allocated to install EV charge points across Leicestershire. Working with a number of other councils and Midlands Connect on the bid, the Council has been provisionally allocated funding through the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure scheme (LEVI). The earmarked funding will be used from 2024/25 to expand the number of chargepoints across Leicestershire by the end of 2030 to meet the needs of the growing EV market. It also enables the Council to continue its green agenda and significant contribution to securing EV infrastructure across Leicestershire. This builds on the previous funding when the Council secured almost £1m of the first portion of LEVI funding from the Government along with four other local authorities and Midlands Connect in 2022, to install chargepoints in the most populated settlements across the County. There is an ongoing work programme designed to increase EV charging locations in the County and a new Leicestershire Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy is going to be presented to the Cabinet in autumn 2024. The Strategy will set out the Authority's approach to public EV chargepoint delivery and its ongoing operation and management.
15. The 'Electric vehicle ownership – Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) rate/10,000 population' improved in performance by 7% as ownership increased from 191/10,000 in Quarter Two 2023/24 to 203/10,000 in Quarter Three 2023/24. This has increased by 46% since the same period last year, which was 140/10,000. It continues to demonstrate a notable shift of people moving from fossil-fuelled vehicles to more sustainable electric alternatives. However, Leicestershire remains in the third quartile (below average) when

compared to other counties for 2023. EV ownership is heavily influenced by the EV market in terms of vehicle costs and vehicle range which have been cited as barriers to adoption. The Council has no influence on the market, however, the Council has some influence over EV charging locations that are installed on the public highway, which can encourage uptake of EV ownership to some degree.

16. The Council monitors the energy efficiency of new and existing homes within the County in the 'Percentage of domestic properties with Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating C+' indicators. There are separate indicators for new build properties and existing properties. The latest data shows that 99% of new homes are relatively energy efficient with a C+ EPC rating, however, only 51% of existing homes met this standard in Quarter Four 2023/24 (most recent). New homes had fairly static performance whilst existing homes declined very slightly in performance (2.2 percentage points) since the previous quarter. The EPC register does not hold data for every domestic and non-domestic building, or every building occupied by public authorities. Buildings only require an EPC when they are sold, let or constructed. These statistics should, therefore, not be interpreted as a true representation of the whole of the building stock but viewed as part of a wider package of the Government's provision of information on the energy efficiency of buildings. Data is updated quarterly and sourced from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
17. Comparisons with other English county councils for 2022/23 show that the 'Percentage of domestic properties with Energy Performance certificate rating C+' for 'new homes' falls within the first (top) quartile in 2023/24. Energy efficiency of 'existing homes' had a change in its quartile position from first quartile in 2022/23 to second quartile in 2023/24, though this is still above average. The Authority does not have direct control over these indicators but it does have some influence in terms of local initiatives: for example, the Home Energy Retrofit Offer supports residents with advice on what can be done to homes to keep them warm and cut energy bills, which is provided by the Warm Home team in Public Health and the Green Living Leicestershire group, which helps fund home improvements to improve energy ratings for eligible applicants.
18. The 'Amount of renewable energy generated as a percentage of consumption' remained static at 14% in Quarter Three 2023/24. This internal KPI has not yet met its target of 30.9% which has resulted in a red RAG rating. This is expected to improve over the coming year following improvements to the biomass boiler and the solar panels and their management.
19. The 'Carbon emissions per capita (in LA influence, tonnes)' improved in performance slightly as emissions decreased by 7% from 4.6 in 2021 to 4.3 in 2022. Despite meeting its 4.5 target, this indicator is in the third quartile for 2022 (same as previous year), although the recent result is lower than its long-term average of 5.9 carbon emissions since 2007, which shows a better long-term performance. This data is updated annually and sourced from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and it is two years in arrears.

20. The 'Carbon emissions (estimates) from transport within LA influence (Kt)' indicator declined in performance slightly by 4% as emissions increased from 1,131 Kt in 2021 to 1,179 Kt in 2022. The latest results remain below the average pre-Covid-19 pandemic level of 1,226 Kt (based on annual data between 2015-2019) which is better performance. Recent data shows a return to the long-term average of 1,172 Kt (since 2013). This indicator is updated annually and sourced from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and it is 18 months in arrears. This indicator performs above average (second quartile) for 2022 compared to other English county councils.
21. The 'Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources in Leicestershire (kt CO₂e)' improved in performance from the previous year, as results showed a 4% decline in emissions to 4,645 kt in 2022 from 4,811 kt in 2021. The latest result missed its target of 4,453 (kt CO₂e), resulting in an amber rating. In terms of comparison with other English county councils, Leicestershire is in the second quartile for 2022 (above average). Over the longer-term, the latest data is only slightly lower than the longer-term average of 4,696 kt since 2017, showing better performance. This data is published annually by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, and it is two years in arrears. It includes estimated territorial greenhouse gas emissions arising within the area of Leicestershire, excluding Leicester City, 2005-2022 (kt CO₂e). These cover emissions from the industrial, commercial, public sector, domestic transport, land use and forestry, agriculture, and waste management sectors. As territorial estimates, they include emissions linked to energy consumed within the County but exclude the impact of imported goods. These estimates cover the Kyoto "basket" of seven gases: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons (PFC), sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆) and nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃).
22. The 'Greenhouse gas emissions from Leicestershire (all sources) per capita (tonnes CO₂e)' improved in performance from the previous year as emissions decreased by 6%. The latest result of 6.4 in 2022 slightly missed its 6.32 target. Compared to other English county councils, Leicestershire is in the third quartile for 2022 (below average). Over the longer-term, the latest data is slightly lower than the longer-term average of 7.1 (per capita) tonnes since 2017. This data is published annually by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, and it is two years in arrears. It includes greenhouse gas emissions estimates in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (t CO₂e) per head of population for all sectors in Leicestershire, excluding Leicester City. These cover emissions from the industrial, commercial, public sector, domestic transport, land use and forestry, agriculture, and waste management sectors. As territorial estimates, they include emissions linked to energy consumed within the County but exclude the impact of imported goods. They also cover the Kyoto "basket" of greenhouse gases (explained in the paragraph above).
23. Leicestershire is one of the least wooded areas of the country, currently with only around 6% woodland, which is well below the national average of 10% for England. As a major landowner in Leicestershire, the Council has identified areas of its own landholdings where trees, woodlands and hedgerows can be planted to increase overall tree coverage. The Council made a pledge for an

'ambitious project to plant 700,000 trees' by 2032, which is the equivalent of one for every resident of Leicestershire. This equates to 70,000 trees planted each year. To help achieve this pledge, the Tree Management Strategy and Planting Action Plan were updated in 2021 to ensure the delivery of the pledge over a 10-year period. The latest tree planting provisional update shows that 437,220 trees have been planted by the Council and its partners up to June 2024, since July 2021, and this has greatly exceeded its cumulative target of 210,000 for 2024/25. The latest result is over half of its 2032 target, showing excellent performance. A detailed Tree Management Strategy Annual update was provided to this Committee on 2 November 2023.

24. The 'Percentage of household waste sent by local authorities across Leicestershire for reuse, recycling or composting (former NI 192)' remained similar to the previous quarter at 43% over a 12-month rolling period up to and including Quarter Three 2023/24 (data is two quarters in arrears) and missed its 45% target. It lies within the third quartile position (2022/23) compared to other English county councils (below average). This indicator has had relatively static performance over the past year ranging between 42.0% and 43.7%. It performs worse than the long-term average of 48% since 2011. The Council adopted the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy in April 2023, which includes a pledge to put in place collection systems to contribute towards the future national target of 65% recycling by 2035.
25. The 'Annual percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill (former NI 193)' met its target of 30%. There was a slight decrease (3 percentage points) in waste landfilled from 18% over the 12-month rolling period up to and including Quarter Two 2023/24 to 15% in Quarter Three 2023/24 showing an improvement in performance and has met its target. It compares better than the long-term average of 29% since 2011. When compared to other English county councils, this indicator remained in the fourth (bottom) quartile in 2022/23. In order to achieve an average position when compared to other English county councils, performance would have to meet a more challenging 5% landfill rate. Through the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy, the Council is committed to reducing waste to landfill to less than 5% by 2025, well in advance of the national target of 10% by 2035. The energy from waste contract started in April 2023 and it is expected that this will further reduce the amount of municipal waste being sent to landfill this year.
26. The 'Total household waste per household (kg)' remained relatively static in performance at 966 kg over the 12-month rolling period up to and including Quarter Three 2023/24 (data is two quarters in arrears). The recent update performs better than the long-term average of 1,051 kg since 2012. In comparison to other English county councils, Leicestershire's performance was slightly below average as it is in the third quartile for 2022/23 (same as last year's quartile).
27. The 'Percentage of waste recycled from LCC sites (non-operational)' improved in performance slightly (2 percentage points) from 62% in Quarter Two 2023/24 to 64% in Quarter Three 2023/24 and just missed its target of 65%. However,

this is the highest rate (best) over the past year and is above its long-term average of 57% since 2012.

28. The results on the 'Percentage of staff who say LCC is doing enough to reduce its environmental impact (post training survey)' remained relatively static at 89% for Quarter Four 2023/24. This is from internal data taken from the post training survey and reported quarterly.

Background Papers

Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Outcomes Framework and Strategic Plan 2024-26

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2022/7/13/LCC-Strategic-Plan-2022-26.pdf>

Environment Strategy 2018-30

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2020/7/13/Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-delivering-a-better-future.pdf>

Annual Environmental Performance Progress Report 2022-23

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s180751/Annual%20Environmental%20Performance%20Progress%20Update%20Report%202022-23.pdf>

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2022-23

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s180731/Appendix%20B%20-%20LCC%20Greenhouse%20Gas%20Report.pdf>

Tree Management Strategy 2020-25

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/2/16/Tree-Management-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf>

Tree Management Strategy Annual Update 2023

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s179317/Tree%20Management%20Strategy%20Annual%20Update.pdf>

Improving Air Quality and Health across Leicestershire 2020-24: a multiagency partnership for joint action

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s157169/Appendix%20A%20Air%20Quality%20and%20Health%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Equality Implications

29. There are no specific equality implications to note as part of this performance report.

Human Rights Implications

30. There are no human rights implications arising from this performance report.

Appendix

Strategic Plan Performance Dashboards by Outcomes covering Environment and Climate Change Performance to June 2024

Officers to Contact

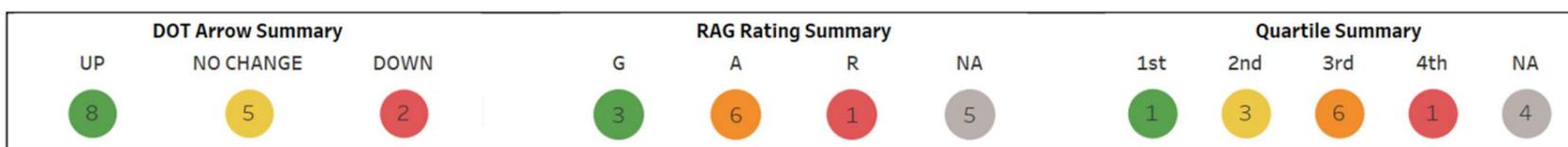
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Environment & Climate Change (E&CC) Performance June 2024

Clean & Green Outcome

1. E&CC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) updated to June 2024

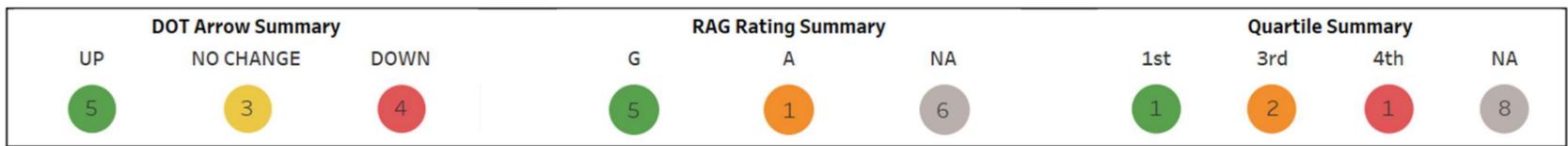


Outcome Clean & Green **Branch** All **Updated** Y
Sub Outcome All **Countywide/LCC** All **Search Indicator** All

Indicator (* = Statutory Returns)	Latest Data	Period	Prev. Data	Perform. DOT	Target (Yearly)	RAG	Quartiles	Previous Updates	C/L
Electric vehicle charging location per 100,000 population	59.1	Q4 2023/24	52.1	↑		NA	3rd 2023		C
Electric vehicle ownership - Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) rate/10,000 population	203.2	Q3 2023/24	190.5	↑		NA	3rd 2023		C
% domestic properties with Energy Performance Certificate rating C+ (new)	98.8	Q4 2023/24	99	→		NA	1st 2023/24		C
% domestic properties with Energy Performance Certificate rating C+ (existing)	51.2	Q4 2023/24	53.4	↓		NA	2nd 2023/24		C
Amount of renewable energy generated as a % of consumption	13.8	Q3 2023/24	14.1	→	30.9	R	NA		L
Carbon emissions per capita (in LA influence)	4.3	2022	4.6	↑	4.5	G	3rd 2022		C
Carbon emissions (estimates) from transport within LA influence (Kt)	1,178.6	2022	1,130.8	↓		NA	2nd 2022		C
Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources in Leicestershire (ktonnes CO2e)	4,645	2022	4,811	↑	4,453	A	2nd 2022		C
Greenhouse gas emissions from Leicestershire (all sources) per capita (tonnes CO2e)	6.4	2022	6.8	↑	6.32	A	3rd 2022		C
Tree planting	437,220	Up to Jun 2024	398,920	↑	210,000	G	NA		L
* % of household waste sent by local authorities across Leicestershire for reuse, recycling, composting etc. (former NI192)	42.8	Q3 2023/24	43	→	45	A	3rd 2022/23		C
* Annual percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill (former NI 193)	15.4	Q3 2023/24	18.4	↑	30	G	4th 2022/23		C
* Total household waste per household (kg)	966	Q3 2023/24	964	→		A	3rd 2022/23		C
% waste recycled from LCC sites (non-operational)	64	Q3 2023/24	61.8	↑	65	A	NA		L
% of LCC staff who say LCC is doing enough to reduce its environmental impact (post-training survey)	89.3	Q4 2023/24	89.9	→	90	A	NA		L

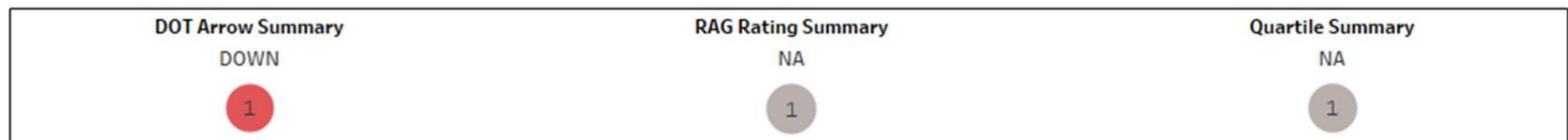
2. E&CC KPIs with older data that has been previously reported (Not recently updated)

The following KPIs were reported in previous E&CC Scrutiny Committees and have not recently been updated.



Outcome Clean & Green **Branch** All **Updated** N
Sub Outcome All **Countywide/LCC** All **Search Indicator** All

Indicator (* = Statutory Returns)	Latest Data	Period	Prev. Data	Perform. DOT	Target (Yearly)	RAG	Quartiles	Previous Updates	C/L
Renewable electricity generated in the area (MWh)	355,263	2022	326,582	↑		NA	3rd 2022		C
Renewable electricity capacity in the area (MW)	340.2	2022	333.4	↑		NA	3rd 2022		C
PM2.5 Air pollution fine particulate matter (µg/m³)	8.9	2022	7.7	↓		NA	4th 2022		C
Total LCC GHG emissions	9,427	2022/23	10,127	↑	11,690	G	NA		L
Total Business miles claimed ('000s of miles)	4,823	Q3 2023/24	4,714	↓	5,518	G	NA		L
Leicestershire rivers (excluding Leicester) are in good ecological status (%)	9.4	2019	0.67	↑		NA	NA		C
Leicestershire rivers (excluding Leicester) are in good chemical status (%)	0	2019	99.6	↓		NA	NA		C
Hectares of LCC land in better management for nature	3,854	2022/23	3,844	→	3,748	G	NA		L
Percentage of suitable LCC land in better management for nature	97	2022/23	97	→	95	G	NA		L
Tonnes of waste produced from LCC sites	247	Q3 2023/24	237.9	↓	375.9	G	NA		L
Total fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population	4.8	2022/23	5.6	→		NA	1st 2022/23		C
LCC Environmental risks managed	2	2022/23	3	↑	0	A	NA		L



Outcome Strong Economy, Transport an... **Branch** Environment & Waste **Updated** All
Sub Outcome All **Countywide/LCC** All **Search Indicator** All

Indicator (* = Statutory Returns)	Latest Data	Period	Prev. Data	Perform. DOT	Target (Yearly)	RAG	Quartiles	Previous Updates	C/L
NO2 exceedances for Leicestershire	3	2022	0	↓		NA	NA		C

Data notes

In order to ensure comparisons are unbiased and insightful the following indicators are used in deriving annual quartile positions as part of the Council's corporate benchmarking approach. These indicators use published statistics from the relevant Government departmental (e.g., the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) and the Office of National Statistics population data.

Renewable electricity generated within Local Authority area (MWh per 1000 households).

Renewable electricity capacity within Local Authority area (MW per 10,000 households).



**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 SEPTEMBER 2024**

ANNUAL REVIEW OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTRY PARKS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the ongoing work within the County Council's Country Parks service.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in May 2020 and runs from 2019 to 2029.
3. The Tree Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2020 and runs from 2020 to 2025.
4. At its meeting in June 2023, the Committee received a report outlining biodiversity enhancements within the Country Parks service.

Background

5. Leicestershire County Council has a wide network of 18 parks and open spaces covering over 530ha. The Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, set out six destination parks: Beacon Hill Country Park, Broombriggs Farm, Watermead Country Park, Snibston Colliery Park, Bosworth Battlefield and Market Bosworth Country Park, alongside the Council's secondary parks elsewhere in the county. The main 'destination' parks are those which are generally the reason for people's visit and not only cater for the local community but attract visitors from further afield.
6. Three of the Council's parks form part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (Beacon Hill Country Park, Sheet Hedges Wood and Jubilee Wood). SSSIs are sites that have been designated due to containing unique species or habitats of high scientific value for conservation. Five parks contain Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) (Reed Bed Nature Reserve at Watermead Country Park, Moira Junction, Grange Nature Reserve at Snibston Colliery Park, New Lount Nature Reserve, Saltersford Valley. LNRs are sites chosen by the local

authority as particularly significant for their wildlife, geology, education, or enjoyment (without disturbing wildlife).

Review of 2023/24

7. Visitor numbers to the major destination parks continued to be substantially above pre-pandemic levels.

Car numbers	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Beacon Hill	93757	131845	133730	154770	153631	106042
Market Bosworth	27678	47402	48093	45915	42916	26277
Watermead	5117	29761	29417	30199	26925	19392

These three sites have been included as they have modern parking systems in place which allow the capture of this data, other sites do not have the same level of data available. These numbers are car numbers, rather than visitor numbers. Many of the sites have multiple pedestrian entrances and so ascertaining exact visitor numbers is impossible. These numbers also do not include the large number of sites that do not have car parks or have free car parks. Numbers for 2024 are 'year to date' figures (July).

8. Flooding was a real challenge this year at Watermead Country Park, with over 11 flood events throughout the year. Unprecedentedly, vehicle access to the entire park was closed on a number of occasions. The aftermath of the floods led to extensive damage and mess, with mud and detritus across paths and some tarmac paths which were lifted and floated away by the force of the flood.
9. A Countryside Stewardship Woodland Improvement agreement is in place with Defra from 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2026 for woodlands within most of the Council's parks. This builds upon the principles set out within the Council's Tree Strategy and promotes excellence in silviculture (the care and cultivation of woodlands), whilst increasing biodiversity and making woodlands more resilient to pests and diseases. Over the past year, coppicing and thinning across a number of sites has been undertaken, as well as the installation of bird, bee and raptor boxes and pest control to protect young trees.
10. Tree planting continued on all sites. Two new trees were planted in country parks to mark the King's Coronation. An acer 'Princeton Gold', a favourite tree of King Charles III, has been planted on the long driveway overlooking Bosworth Battlefield Country Park and a disease resistant elm planted at Market Bosworth Country Park. Further tree planting was carried out at Market Bosworth Park with funding from the local community.
11. Throughout the winter months, the programme of Rhododendron clearance on certain areas of Beacon Hill was continued. This non-native species rapidly colonises areas of the park if not kept in check. It has been very gratifying to

see heather and gorse seedlings and other pioneer species already recolonising the cleared areas.

12. Grassland Habitats – a number of successful wildflower meadows at Beacon Hill, Oakthorpe Colliery, Market Bosworth Country Park and Watermead Country Park continue to be managed. The Trent Rivers Trust Botanica World Wildlife Federation United Kingdom Pollinators Project has now concluded and there are now some stunning areas of grassland restored at Watermead. A grassland restoration scheme has also been developed for Market Bosworth Country Park, which is suitable for selling biodiversity net gain units.
13. Visitor facilities at Beacon Hill Country Park have been improved with refurbishments made to the toilet blocks. At Broombriggs Farm, with funding from the Charnwood Living Landscapes project, the resilience of the car park has been improved, through new grass matting, allowing greater access throughout the year. The Council is also working with Buzzing Roots and the local community in Woodhouse Eaves to explore how access to the windmill building onsite can be improved.
14. Watermead Country Park saw the installation of new play equipment around King Lear's Lake, as well as new signed walking and running trails on the park.
15. At Broombriggs Farm, Shenton Station and Bosworth Battlefield new car parking machines were installed to replace the extremely old models. This has also allowed an hours-based tariff to be adopted on these sites, mirroring that in place at Beacon Hill and Market Bosworth Country Parks.
16. Throughout the year, there has been an extensive programme of events and engagement activities on the sites, ranging from early morning bird walks at Watermead Country Park and Dragonfly walks at Snibston and Lount, through to Half term nature play at Market Bosworth Country Park. Snibston has B-Buddies Cycle Club regularly run sessions plus the Snibston Heritage Trust run regular tours at Snibston Colliery Park. A Wellbeing week was held at Watermead in February with painting, wood sculpture creation, tree planting and guided walks.
17. Parkrun continues to be popular with events held throughout the year at Watermead, Market Bosworth and Beacon Hill.
18. A significant new event for the Country Parks service was the 'Up to the Beacon Sculpture Trail'. This ran from 10 June to 17 September and was coordinated by ArtSpace Loughborough. The project employed 14 local artists to create 37 works and installations which were sited along the 2.2km countryside trail. Some works resulted from direct commissions to artists and some works were co-created in community outreach sub-projects. The trail was centred around the West Beacon Plantation next to the upper car park. The project was based on the theme 'Harmony and Healing for Planet and People'. It included a varied programme of arts activities aimed to promote personal and community well-being and increase awareness of environmental sustainability and draw links between the two. The outreach programme enabled vulnerable people, and

young people from areas of multiple deprivation, to co-create artworks with professional artists that were exhibited as an integrated part of the programme. It is estimated that over 24,000 visitors took part in the trail.

19. A Green Flag Award was received in 2023 for Beacon Hill, Market Bosworth, Snibston and, for the first time, Watermead Country Park.
20. All of this work is only possible because of the dedication of a small team of Country Parks rangers, supported by over 100 volunteers. These volunteers support the Council with a variety of tasks from acting as wardens on sites, to litter picking, to carrying out significant pieces of environmental conservation activities as part of larger teams. A number of the activities listed above would not be possible without the volunteers. A new woodfuel group was set up at Beacon Hill, to help the Council with woodland management work and there is also a very helpful partnership with the probation service at Snibston Colliery Park. This has helped the Council to resurface paths, maintain flower beds and keep the mountain bike trail's vegetation under control, alongside many other tasks.
21. Income into the service was below target in 2023/24 due to a variety of factors including a significant amount of damage caused to the car parking machine at Beacon Hill Country Park and malfunctioning machines in other parks.
22. The financial position for 2024/25 is looking more robust, with higher than budgeted visitor numbers at key sites. Unfortunately, significant vandalism to the car parking machine at Watermead Country Park will see income impacted until this can be replaced.

Looking forward to 2024/25

23. It is the 50th anniversary of the Country Parks service this year, so a large social media campaign with historic images occurred during the Love Parks week which ran from 26 July 2024 to 5 August 2024 and engaged with 33,000 online users.
24. Playground works are planned for Market Bosworth Country Park, resurfacing the play area working with Bosworth Rotary Club. At Broombriggs Farm new surfaced paths are planned. Livestock will also be added to the herd at Beacon Hill.
25. The process of exploring the longer-term future for Broombriggs Farm has begun and the Council has received some seedcorn funding to enable a better understanding of the current habitat and biodiversity onsite, as well as how it can be better managed.
26. Work with the Trent Rivers Trust has begun to mitigate flood damage at Beacon and downstream areas through installing leaky dams, new pond, wet areas and swales.

27. A new Country Parks website was launched on 14 June 2024 and is available at www.leicscountryparks.org.uk.

Resource Implications

28. There are no additional resource implications for the service at this time.
29. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Conclusion

30. Members are asked to note the report and to make any comments on the report or the Country Parks Service.

Background papers

Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s152649/APPENDIX%20Country%20Parks%20and%20Open%20Spaces%20Strategy%202019-2029.pdf>

Tree Management Strategy:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s152064/Tree%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

Report to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7 June 2023 – Biodiversity Enhancements in Leicestershire Country Parks.

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1292&MIId=7149&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Equality Implications

31. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Human Rights Implications

32. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Environmental Implications

33. The Country Park Service continues to deliver against wider Council policies through the management of its land holdings for the benefit of wildlife and people. The service works to create, enhance and maintain biodiversity found within the varying habitats found within the Councils country parks. The Council's parks are an exemplar of how wildlife and people can coexist and are a refuge for delicate habitat types such as heathland, wetlands and woodland.

Health Implications

34. The Council's parks are a resource for residents for physical wellbeing, but also mental wellbeing, allowing visitors to connect with nature within a safe and accessible parks environment. The benefits of positive mental health through accessing greenspaces came to the forefront during the pandemic, and this trend in usage of green spaces continues. There is further scope to explore the social and economic benefit of "green social prescribing" that the Council's parks provide as therapeutic alternatives to traditional treatments.

Officer(s) to Contact

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