



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Quarterly Environment Board 21st January 2025

Attendees		
Carolyn McKenzie Steve Palfrey David Dale Shaun Askins Georgie Barber Hannah Bartram Kathryn Bell Sarah Bentley Claire Brailsford Wendy Brooks Simon Cramp Tim De-Keyzer Melanie Fontinelle Hannah Girvan Doug Hill Ola Ladapo	Michael Leah Owen McGiven Mark Minkley Stephen Mooring Steven O’Keeffe Claire Porter James Potter Kylie Russell Jemma Sharman Adam Stewart Louise Tennekon Lyne Trigwell Sarah Valdus Chris Wheeler	
Guests: Tom Lafford (Defra), Andrew Gill (OEP)		
		Action Owner
1	Welcome and Introductions to the Board New Members were introduced themselves to the meeting. Jemma Sharman (Natural England), Simon Cramp (Hampshire CC)	
2	National policy issues: Devolution and environmental leadership – English Devolution White Paper Expression of interest by 10 th January for first tranche. 16 authorities applied including Surrey. From an Environment perspective this is a good opportunity, finance and budget have not yet been confirmed. DD added page 77 of the white paper is around environment and climate leadership, this is high level with no detail. Engagement policy engagement will continue there will be a lot of structural change for some. DD asked how this should be approached as and Environment Board.	

	<p>CMc confirmed that the 3 Level 2 county deal LAs (Surrey, Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire) had met with DESNEZ, and they would like to engage with ADEPT for a wider view on Devolution and net zero hubs. Surrey’s preferred option for a mayoral authority is a single county unitary although other options with 2 or 3 unitary LAs below have been suggested.</p> <p>AS reported that DEFRA are setting up a team to look at English devolution with the main focus is on local nature recovery strategies – strategic authorities and Responsible Authorities will become the same thing over time. SP said that there will need to be detailed work done on how responsibilities and budgets for environment services split between strategic and unitary authorities.</p> <p>Action: ADEPT to consider how to support LAs going through devolution and/or LGR. DD to discuss with DEFRA ow to engage in detailed work around division of responsibilities and budgets.</p> <p>Planning reform working paper – Development and nature recovery DD said this paper was published in December 2024, this is not a formal consultation, ADEPT will be feeding back comments (deadline tbc). The role of local authorities does not have much coverage in this paper. Consultation questions were added by DD to the team’s chat of the meeting.</p> <p>TDK reported that the working paper had been discussed in detail at the Natural Capital & Heritage Working Group meeting yesterday. The DEFRA and MHCLG proposal for a development levy to build up a Nature Recovery Fund (moving away from site-by-site regulations) Is good in principle but could cause risk to species protection and could be undeliverable. Neutrality is a concern as this affects house building. The Planning and Infrastructure bill is likely to be introduced in March 2025, so the proposals will be developed quickly. The NC&HWG had raised questions about How does this join up with the devolution around environmental leadership. What is the role of local authorities, particularly strategic authorities? A delivery body was also discussed as the paper refers to Natural England as illustration of a delivery body and concerns were around if this was the right course of action. This reference did not mean Natural England would be the body just the keeper of the plan and coordinator.</p> <p>WB thought neutrality was needed but how does this link into the LNRS and local authorities. Nutrient neutrality holds a lot of risks. TDK confirmed the complexity had been acknowledged in the paper.</p> <p>Further discussions around this are to take place offline.</p> <p>Action: LA reps to send any comments to DD for inclusion in ADEPT’s response to the working paper.</p>	<p>DD</p> <p>LA reps</p>
3	<p>Office for Environmental Protection – annual assessment of Progress in improving</p>	

	<p>the natural environment in England</p> <p>Andrew Gill presented to the Board. He said that this is the OEP’s fourth progress report and has a focus on nature-friendly farming this year. Although there are some encouraging trends on clean air and the water environment, overall the position is as it was last year – progress is largely off track, there are many amber and red assessments.</p> <p>CMc enquired if Departments are working together across government and layers and sectors and not in silos to address problems as this is important. AG confirmed they had been invited to cross government forums to discuss how this manage interactions as this has been problematic in the past. DD asked about the role of local authorities as assessment is made over the 10 local goals, where there any lessons that were learnt and recommendations.</p> <p>AG – advise was given to the Secretary of State on the EIP revision, published on the website. An issue with EIP it is not clear how stakeholders should contribute, and this has been flagged and local authorizes will have an important role to play.</p> <p>MM raised the local aspect of local authorities and Devolution and strategic authorities as this is very strategic and hard for larger audiences to engage with. This possibly needs to be more localised. AG confirmed there is ongoing conversations with DEFRA around EIP revision. AG added that one of the key messages was to get nature friendly farming right. 70% of the land is farmed or is agricultural and a really important area so local voices do have an important role to play.</p> <p>CMc agreed a larger conversation would be beneficial around this and local EIPs and how the framework of LNRS and what a local EIP can look like and link. The OEP Board had been supportive of this idea when she met them.</p> <p>SP asked if there has been any indication from the new Government around the report. Is there a timetable for response. AG confirmed ongoing discussions are taking place.</p>	
4	<p>Land Use Framework consultation.</p> <p>TL from DEFRA updated the Board on how the government achieves their objectives and the Land use framework. He is part of a temporary project team looking at the spatial delivery of government objectives. The LUF consultation document will be published very soon and will take account of key ambitions including housebuilding and new towns, the EIP review, food security, and climate adaptation (e.g. floods impact on farming).</p> <p>CMc confirmed Land management framework workshops had previously been run and offered to assist five regions the TL had mentioned.</p> <p>Action: DD to investigate workshops with DEFRA. A number of LA reps said they would</p>	DD

	<p><i>like to be involved including LT, WB, HG, SP, TDK, CMcK, LT</i></p> <p>CMc requested that going forward any requests for consultations time frames are looked at. If requested on a Mondays for completion by Friday does not give enough time to respond to this important document that links into a lot of areas including Devolution and having a workshop would be beneficial and useful.</p> <p>CP enquired if there were any details on plans to promote this and the encouragement of its use longer term. Practical implications of ensuring that such a useful tool is used and applied in all the correct circumstances.</p> <p>TL They were not looking at jumping from policy to tools. They will spend six months of the year looking at how they get relevant government data released and not looking at a once and done strategy document</p> <p>LT asked in which order this is going to be implemented and how does this work when the land use framework comes out ahead of areas that are not in the first tranche of being a strategic authority? How will we be able to use the land use framework at a local level if we are not in that first phase of being a strategic authority?</p> <p>TL – timelines do not matter to much as this will not be until after July for implementation and delivery. There will possibly not be a formal process until the end of 2025.</p> <p>SP asked around resource. LNRS and EIP delivery workforce are on temporary contracts and funding is temporary this needs to be considered as this resource will no longer be available.</p> <p>TL confirmed central government have been made aware that resourcing needs to be built into this for delivery. BG asked how much engagement there will be with other land use decision makers?</p> <p>TL a major landowner’s group is being set up comprising of Crown Estates and Duchies as this cannot be a once and done delivery plan.</p> <p>Action: <i>DD to send TL a list of those who offered to assist and collaborate and attend a workshop going forward.</i></p>	DD
5	<p>Updates from partners – Defra, Environment Agency, Natural England</p> <p>CP- Planning and Place Environment Agency Currently ongoing work within MHCLG on national planning policy following the update to the NPPF. Preparing for our engagement and looking to pick that work up in the next few weeks. Taking the opportunity to engage with various bits of government on planning and infrastructure bill, including proposals in the Devo White Paper. Ongoing work on growth delivery programs and MHCLG including the new Towns Task Force.</p>	

Published in December was a new national assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England report, which summarised findings from the new NAFRA 2 and other. Research. The report covers national and regional trends in terms of the source and characteristics of flood and coast, coastal erosion risk and the potential for those to change in the future in case that has not made its way to anyone.

CP added links into the chat along with details of training sessions.

OL – DEFRA

In the coming days we should get a written ministerial statement on the rapid review of the EIP.

Protected landscapes, there is some work around legislative changes and the team in developing engagement strategies and are keen to work with partners and stakeholders to help codesign. Plans are being developed working particularly with ADEPT.

The spending review is ongoing and will not conclude for quite some time. The LNRS planning guidance, within the planning system we are expecting by before the end of the month, and it is going through the final stages of clearance.

DD enquired if there was going to be a standalone protected landscapes bill. Or added into another existing bill.

OL confirmed this was not yet know and will feed back to the team. There is a plan to cocreate with a lot of interaction and engagement.

TL enquired – if there was a DEFRA update on the consultation to appoint local authorities as suds approval bodies. Is that ongoing or has that kind of fallen by the wayside?

OL will make enquires around this question and get back to the board.

SP added that this needs to link up to the planning reform work if the government is determined to build more house more rapidly and adding in SUDs changes may slow this down.

JS - Natural England

The sustainable development portfolio sits over all the planning and infrastructure work in NE. Species licensing on our wildlife regulation and currently dealing with a lot of new legislation announcements coming out from the government as well as some of our business as usual. Our portfolio role is much more around the oversight, governance and strategic steer on these issues. Business planning spend review is currently taking place.

Regulatory reform, we are feeding into the rapid review. The response to the PM in terms of how we are going to support economic growth and deliver as well as making

	<p>sure those environmental protections are in place as well that will underpin that.</p> <p>The revised version of the NPPF, the golden rules and the Grey Belt release and how we can build the Natural England standards around green infrastructure into that has been incorporated.</p> <p>Work continuing around devolution, land use framework, the detail around LNRS, working particularly with our colleagues in the organisation and how that is going to come forward and play into the NPPF reforms.</p> <p>KR - Energy and Clean Growth</p> <p>Daire Casey is now the chair of the Energy and Clean Growth Working Group and Katie Sargent is the deputy chair. Currently we are pulling together some evidence around the home upgrade grant and some of the challenges, a letter was written to the Minister about some of the issues and we have a meeting coming up with the MP Miatta Fahnbulleh to discuss and address some of the comments and have a further conversation.</p> <p>KR – Flood and Water Management</p> <p>They submitted a response to the call for evidence on flood resilience from the Environmental Audit Committee and that is on our website .</p> <p>The call for evidence covered a lot of ground in terms of flood resilience and our response focusing on the need for a more integrated catchment-based approach to flood risk management and drawing on lessons being learnt through the innovation program. That is the Environment Agency's flood and coastal innovation program. An update on the NAFRA2 data, which has been running, some webinars with the Environment Agency.</p> <p>SP – Waste</p> <p>Much improved level of engagement from Defra post general election. Met with Minister Creagh and the LGA on Thursday. Payment estimates for extended producer responsibility at local authority level came out back in the November along with policy clarity on simpler recycling.</p> <p>Local authorities still do not know what funding they will get for food waste services going forward. That is tied up with spending review, holding up local authorities making investment and decisions about services.</p> <p>We have been told we will not get a response from DEZNES on the emissions trading scheme consultation until at least the summer this year. There is no local government representation on the circular economy task force that was recently announced, this has been brought to their attention.</p> <p>Next quarterly meeting of the waste and Resource Group on the 26th February, if you wish to add an attendee contact SP.</p>	
6	<p>Environment Board Forward Plan</p> <p>CMc suggested more conversations around Devolution to be held in these meetings.</p> <p>DD – we will continue with the 1 hour monthly catch ups in between the quarterly</p>	

	<p>Board meetings as long as the demand is there. The main national issues that will shape the Board’s agenda for the coming year are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution - how functions may split between strategic and unitary authorities. • the revised EIP • land use framework – depending on DEFERS’s plans for engagement during the consultation period we may need an extra meeting of the Board • water issues - Ideas are a series of events, Webinars, workshops on specific water related issues that could be planned and delivered across the year. Alternatively, a Water Management working group or a short-term task and finish group. <p>KR confirmed a planning meeting for the flood Water Management group has been talked about setting up different tasks and finish groups and leads for different work areas. Where does water fit there is so much already within the flood and water management group, we did not feel that that could be fully within that group. Therefore supportive of having some topic-based webinars.</p> <p>CMc would be supportive of a mix of these ideas and the board keeping an eye on water issues a whole.</p> <p>WB was in agreement that the board needs to take an overarching view, Water management is key to what we are trying to do as local authorities across so many areas. Missing connections and that oversights could happen without this.</p> <p>Action: CMcK, KR, DD, DH and TDK to meet to discuss this and sketch out brief map of water landscapes and how the board can engage.</p>	
7	<p>ADEPT</p> <p>KR - Recent response on the consultation on the NHS 10-year plan that was a joint response between ADEPT and ADASS, which is the directors of adults social services and ADPH, Directors of Public Health.</p> <p>ADEPT Spring Conference and annual Awards dinner is being held on the 22nd of May 2025 which will be circulated in an email.</p>	
8	AOB	