



Association of Directors of  
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

## Environment Board

27 January 2021, 10.00 – 12.30

### NOTES

1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>SR welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Joe Wahla, Defra, who has joined the Board in place of Rachel Jackson who has moved to a different role and also to Ariane Crampton, Head of Carbon Reduction at Wiltshire County Council.</p>	Steve Read, Chair
2.	<p>National Audit Office studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Achieving Government’s long-term environmental goals <a href="#">link</a></li><li>• Achieving net zero <a href="#">link</a></li><li>• Managing flood risk <a href="#">link</a></li><li>• Local government and net zero (attached)</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Presentation</a></p> <p>Katy and Keith thanked the Board for the invitation to present and opportunity to engage with people on this piece of work.</p> <p>They spoke about the role of NAO and focussed on key things that came out end of last year on net zero and environmental goals. NAO are a particular watchdog and on value for money side. Interested in economy efficiency and effectiveness. They are best known for value for money work going into Parliament (Public Accounts Committee). In terms of Local Government they might look at local services and particular themes across the sector or particular national programmes... Towns Fund for example.</p> <p>The NAO 5-year strategy was launched earlier last year,</p>	Katy Losse (Audit Manager, Defra VFM)/ Keith Davis (Director, Defra VFM)

with more focus on environment and climate change work, particularly around managing flooding. Recommended a better understanding in distribution and varying nature of flood risk across the country, and ensuring that deprived areas are getting proportionate investment.

Strategy stresses need for clarity on how NAO could add value. Drawing out how and the importance on focussing on costs and spend. Ensuring that long term costs are looked at and the government has a good understanding on impact of shorter terms costs.

The Net Zero report was published in Dec 2020. Like the one on environment goals it was an unusual report as they wanted to draw out broad risks for government to manage. NAO wanted to set the scene in terms of the scale of the challenge. Part of that is about highlighting increase in ambition to get to net zero as opposed to the previous 80% target. Having a clear target makes it more challenging but a clearer thing to aim for. Most of the emissions reductions to date have happened in the power production sector. The nature of the challenge brings unique features for government to manage. The extent of uncertainty in some sectors can be difficult. Net zero is interdependent with other government priorities e.g. Electric Vehicles. Wanted to show the links between priorities and local authorities.

Key findings are noted in the [Presentation](#): 1. Scale of the challenge (a): no more hiding in the 20%. (b) features for government to manage. 2. Cross-government coordination: arrangements are described in this report. There are now 2 climate cabinet committees NSIG and then Net Zero Steering Board (a cross-government group of directors).

Some stakeholders argued that it might be better to have a clear central organising body. The NAO were neutral on this but felt that changes would have potential to set things back instead of sticking with something and making it work. Risks to consider: 1) Making sure that allocation of budgets follows prioritisation 2) alignment with wider planning and accountability structures... 3) capacity and capability – technical and behavioural 4) sharing information 5) resourcing allocation of budgets.

Ensure everyone has a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and that they have the skills and capacity required to fulfil potential.

David Dale asked about cross-government coordination. Where does the COP 26 Unit fit into it? It was confirmed that it reports into same group. It sits within the Cabinet office and BEIS together.

Hannah informed that there is a Public Accounts Committee hearing and if they make recommendations then there has to be a Treasury report back on those recommendations. There is a Public Accounts Committee hearing tomorrow (28<sup>th</sup> January).

Katy confirmed that they have a clearance process prior to publishing the report. They don't have to take into account their comments but they try to reach an agreement with departments that they have a true and fair report.

### **Wider Environmental Goals report**

Keith drew out 3 headline issues to present to us.

1) To what extent there was a clear set of objectives and goals to work towards. They found that there weren't. There's a lot of ambition and they didn't find that the different ambitions/aspirations were clear. Part of the requirement is the new Environment Bill. Delivery plans show the approach on how the goal is reached. A push is needed to get these delivery plans in place.

2) Managing links between policy issues. Tree planting programme. It's very much a combination of having the right links across government.

3) Coordination across government – it was thought there were big gaps in government for coordinating this. There is a Parliamentary evidence session. The Public Accounts Committee is to report on this topic soon. A new government Board is now in place. Also, there is a session on net zero tomorrow (28<sup>th</sup> January).

Adam Wallace asked whether the Office of Environment Protection and Bill for that work was in scope or not? NAO pick up on a bit but not a deep review. Key points to make being set up on a solid footing and adding strong leadership and right budget. It was picked up by the Committee of Public Accounts. They were keen that OEP had the ability to report to parliament.

Katy explained that the Local Government and Net Zero report is a response to a request from the Environmental Audit Committee. They asked to look at local

	<p>government and net zero which builds on issues in the Dec 2020 net zero report. The output of this work is expected to be published in July with enquiry to be held in Autumn by Environment Audit Committee. Scope has been decided with an interface between central and local government. To set the scene the first question is what is the Local Authority doing? Then NAO want to home in on interface on how governments are collaborating and making use of how Local Authorities are contributing. They also want to look at how central and local government are co-ordinating, what arrangements are in place to allow this to happen. Then issued with studies and how integrated with wider initiatives. Then need to home in on resources and skills question. How is funding being provided? In particular how does this translate into spending review?</p> <p>NAO wonder whether it will be useful to map the funding flows in local authorities across the country.</p> <p><b>Wider planned and potential work on climate and environment.</b></p> <p>NAO are coming to the end of work on environment tax measures and how environment objectives are factored into the tax system.</p> <p>Hannah offered to seek Local Authority interest and coordinate it through ADEPT. 5 or 6 names have been noted and will be sent to Katy as volunteers to help.</p> <p>Peter Moore commented regarding holding government to account suggesting there might be a slight difference in the way parliament and public do it and so perhaps separate them out.</p> <p>Models for funding – Peter wonders about outcomes and process where Local Authorities have a fixed allocation but invited to bid and were able to be rewarded in terms of the level of ambition they were able to demonstrate. Could this model be used here?</p> <p>Sam Kennedy commented that Environment funding is an add-on and so you often end up with competing objectives.</p> <p>It was noted that there is no one simple agreed reporting structure to allow Local Authorities to report and compare reports.</p>	<p>HB</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Local Nature Recovery Strategies <a href="#">link</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on pilot projects</li> <li>• Working together</li> </ul>	<p>Andrew Holden, Defra</p>

## [Presentation](#)

Andy Holden works in land use policy for Defra and is responsible for the Local Nature Recovery Strategies. He provided an overview of their work.

LNRS are a new requirement in the Environment Bill: Each strategy will be led by responsible authorities and would be a useful new tool for channelling investment.

Andy spoke through the [Presentation](#).

LNRSs will be a locally produced strategy where all key players come together and see where environment issues are and agree priorities – it will be a requirement for all public bodies to have regard to LNRSs.

There are new duties that the Secretary of State must provide.

The Bill allows statutory guidance to be provided.

Non-statutory guidance and Natural England in particular to help put the natural strategy in place.

LNRSs are being piloted in five areas of England: Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Northumberland.

### **Questions:**

Q. How will National Parks and Local Nature Partnerships link in with LNRSs?

A. Within the role of Local Nature Partnerships, a system has been created to set boundaries and put the onus on the Secretary of State to decide a single nationwide process to ensure no gaps and overlaps in LNRS areas.

Q. Hannah Bartram asked whether there will be a formal or otherwise consultation for local authorities to run and who signs it off?

A. Within the timeframe for pilots it is not feasible to ask pilots to do a consultation on what they are producing. There's a non-binding list of regulations that might cover. Public consultation would be a good mechanism. Sign off will be by the Responsible Authority who prepares and publishes the LNRS report.

Responsible authorities are upper tier unities.

Q. Liz Small asked when Responsible Authorities would happen? Would they write a business case? What are the timescales for responsible bodies to come forward? What is the mechanism for monitoring that?

	<p>A. There is not an agreed process for appointing Responsible Authorities and there is a need to discuss with central government to ensure no gaps and overlaps. The strategies will tie into policies. The intention is to move quickly, and it is hoped to agree Responsible Authorities and boundaries within the next financial year and then be able to align with resources. LNRs to be updated from time to time but there's no fixed cycle. There is sense in aligning update cycle within reporting duty in the Bill.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Tracey to collate further questions for Andrew Holden to provide written answers and these to be circulated to the Board.</p>	TB
4.	<p>Service updates from local authorities on current issues from Covid, EU Exit and winter pressures.</p> <p>SR gave his reflections with being involved in corporate response at WSCC - focus has moved to testing and vaccination and supporting the NHS around that. Most of the pressure is around tired staff with high level of infection rate. The Adult and Children Services have been affected more directly with what's going on and Place Services have been back-filling with support where they can.</p> <p>With EU exit the real concerns are around economy and business not being able to import/export as they could before. Lorries being held up at the ports have not come to pass as first thought.</p> <p>David Dale asked a question to colleagues from local authorities as it's not quite clear how the vaccine roll out effects Local Authorities. How are they getting involved? Social care staff are in next priority group and so it's a huge logistical task to ensure they get vaccinated and then those in care get vaccinated. The system and record keeping is imperfect and challenging to keep a note of who has been vaccinated etc. Also, weather conditions will impact. For example, if it snows then the pathways to vaccinations centres need to be kept accessible.</p> <p>Sam Kennedy and Helen Vittery confirmed they are re-deploying staff to support vaccine roll-out (booking appointments, staffing centres, etc.). Helen also</p>	All

	<p>commented that this is taking a massive toll on BAU as this is a priority.</p> <p>Steve Read also noted another new challenge around facilitating lateral flow testing for businesses.</p>	
5.	<p>Board business and Working Group updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy &amp; Clean Growth</li> </ul> <p>The group had a good meeting last time they met. Focussing on integrating environment and climate change into decision making and policy. There are three key areas of focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Corporate Decision Making (e.g. Hants work) – policy, strategy, key decisions – guidance/toolkits</li> <li>2. Commissioning and Procurement – Green Procurement e.g. Surrey CC LGA Design Council work</li> <li>3. Place based strategic guidance – design guides, principles etc integrating environment, natural capital, climate change into strategic planning and place making</li> </ol> <p>Underlying this is green economy/recovery – but this is such a wide area it is difficult to grasp.</p> <p>Kent have had to draw back their secretariat resource, so Nicole Clucas, Climate Change Programme Manager, will be taking a lead and will support Carolyn in pushing forward the work of the group along with Katie Sargent.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Any volunteers to assist on this agenda would be greatly received. Please contact Carolyn.</p> <p>Kerrell Walley is Climate Change Manager, Wigan, and working with Nicole at Surrey. They are thinking of ways that we can learn from each other and discuss best working practices, obstacles etc, depending on economic and social factors. They are looking to formalise this over the next month and look to set up first meeting towards the end of Feb and will share this invitation with the group if you have climate, sustainability officers etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood and Water Management</li> </ul> <p>Hannah ran through this update received from Alys Bishop.</p> <p>They are incredibly busy in response to the flooding and</p>	<p>Carolyn McKenzie</p> <p>CM</p>

submitting a bid for innovation funding which closes this Friday – which are the highlights of the update really:

- Wide spread impacts of flooding across the country since Dec 2020 – Mid Jan 2021.
- LLFAs are under pressure to investigate, report and publish S19s, as well as maintain time-critical responses to planning applications/funding bids/project management etc. Turn out at the last meeting was understandably low because of this.
- Saturated catchments are maintaining river levels high, creating a constant peak. Little rainfall is seeing a big response in the rivers given this immediately running off the land and lag time is very short.
- Upwards of 1000s of properties have been impacted, with a high majority having been flooded internally.
- Remediation is not easy as there is a mix of fluvial, surface water and ground water influences. It is not clear which risk authority takes a lead on this, with residents feeling frustrated at a perceived lack of support.
- There does not appear to be any cumulative analysis of the scale of impact across regions/catchments done at a strategic notational level – or an analysis that takes account of all sources of flooding (i.e. data is split between Local Authorities, EA, IDBs and Water Companies).
- We have not seen any support (or discussion of the possible need) for residents or communities considered/provided for at the strategic or national scale – despite MHCLG triggering a property level grant to similar storm events in the past. This decision is undertaken by Ministers however it has not been made clear that Ministers are informed of the scale/impact of the recent flooding and no details have been provided that reflect how this process is managed as impacts become known across the regions, if at all.
- There is a lack of recognition of the longevity of the issue/timescale, in the region, with the EA focussing mainly on the Dec Flooding and not the more recent impacts into Jan.
- There is a lack of local resilience on the ground in many areas that has come to light, despite regional and national campaigns to improve risk

awareness and the merits of PFR? – cost appears to be a barrier to preparedness in most cases, as well as blurred responsibilities.

- Many flood authorities are with EAs innovation programme where they are developing tests and rollout innovative flood solutions. Hannah is an expert assessor for these bids and expecting 75 bids. They have money for 20-25 authorities.

- Natural Capital & Heritage

Agenda for next meeting on Fri 29<sup>th</sup> January includes:

- Nature Recovery Network Partnership and ADEPT engagement - Nicola Davies Natural England
- Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Site Strategies – DEFRA
- Stephen Rogers (species strategies), Joshua Howey (protected sites) and Lyndon Baker (licensing amendments).
- Discussion with ALERC (*Association of Local Environmental Records Centres*) concerning data concerns re Environment Bill implementation – Steve Whitbread and Deborah Muscat, ALERC
- Society of Antiquaries: Future of Archaeology in England Manifesto –
- Quinton Carroll, Cambridgeshire County Council
- Flood Risk and Coastal Risk Management Strategy Action Plan – Sylvie Allan, Environment Agency
- Environment Bill update – Adam Stewart, Defra

- Waste

Next meeting is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> March.

**ACTION:** If you would like to add to agenda then please send directly to SP.

Should have next wave of Defra's consultations on waste strategy.

They are about to relaunch the survey of Local Authorities in terms of Covid impact on operational services on waste due to staff shortages. Hopefully, the survey will restart next week and it will be publicised this week. ADEPT will be leading on sending the survey out and LGA, LARAC and NAWDO will be promoting survey to members.

All guidance suggests that government wants the waste from lateral flow or mass asymptomatic testing to be handled separately as offensive/chemical waste. There is mixed messaging and concerns as to whether there will be capacity in that treatment route.

Liz Small

Steve Palfrey

ALL

	<p>David Dale asked whether there are any particular issues keeping HWRCs open? Steve P: no -the situation is different compared with first lockdown as we were concerned with keeping staff and visitors separate. A lot of risk assessments etc have been done and all in place this time around. Government have revised essential journeys and allow trips to HWRCs. If there is a staffing issue then the Local Authorities will close the odd site only.</p> <p>Steve Read reported that WSCC have concerns about the seasonal upsurge of usage in Spring and, with social distancing measures in place there, will not be full capacity for throughput. There was queuing before Christmas which could be a taste of what might occur in Spring. WSCC are following others by looking at a booking system which will assist manage a potentially serious risk.</p>	
6.	<p>ADEPT business Waste Survey is resuming. Rights of Way survey sent out to relevant Local Authorities, which will help conversations with Defra and also DfT. Deadline is 12<sup>th</sup> February. ADEPT ALGAE Survey due out in next week or two. Sustainable Growth Board, rejuvenated last Summer and meetings monthly. Planning – consultation on permitted development rights. Climate change – if you/your council hasn't yet signed up to show support for the Blueprint, please do so now <a href="https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/">https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/</a></p> <p>Delivering Live Labs for DfT which finishes this year. Focussing on decarbonising the highways network. Re-focussed back into highways space. Not just roads but Active Travel routes. Linked to this there is a workshop next week on Active Travel.</p> <p>Leadership Development Programme (SOLACE) – <b>ACTION: looking for expression of interest in cohorts to start April 2021. On Website.</b></p> <p>David Dale asked about the Defra study of particulate emissions - Air Quality. Steve Read had volunteered and clarified that they are initially looking for evidence</p>	<p>Hannah Bartram</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>

	<p>through research. It wasn't possible to attend a workshop a week or so ago. He is keeping a watching brief and has registered interest for WSCC to be involved if they can be of assistance.</p> <p><u>Events coming up:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regional Climate Change Workshop –NW on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. MHRC Aaron Gould speaking. Then Yorks &amp; Humberside in March</li> <li>➤ LGA's green economic recovery webinar 22 February (Paula Hewitt speaking)</li> <li>➤ Committee on Climate Change webinar on role of local action on 24<sup>th</sup> February (Louise Marix Evans and Marvin Rees speaking) <a href="https://www.theccc.org.uk/news-insights/coming-up/">https://www.theccc.org.uk/news-insights/coming-up/</a></li> <li>➤ Second in series of webinars with CIPFA on Green Procurement in mid-March.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Joe Wahla will be representing Defra going forward, replacing Rachel Jackson.</p> <p>Katharine <u>Hunt</u>, Head of the Environment Partnerships Team within Defra updated on progress of the Environment Bill .</p> <p>The Bill is now on pause and will carry over to second session of Parliament in the autumn and then pick up where left off. There's a huge pressure on parliament at the moment and Bill need to be passed at the right time. Ministers are hugely supportive of this Bill and want to continue to make progress. Lots we can do in meantime to progress measures. Cracking on with consultations on how we will use measures. Also setting up Office of Environment Protection.</p> <p>Steve Palfrey asked whether parliamentary delay is likely to impact implementation timescales. Katharine Hunt clarified that they are trying to map that out now. Secondary legislation must wait until the Bill becomes law.. Delays will be minimised as much as possible.</p> <p>Katharine has offered to revisit the Env Board meetings to give updates in future.</p>	All

Kerrell Walley asked if any had started on the journey of Carbon Neutral for 2030 yet and is there anything to be learned as a group? Ralph Kemp of Cheshire East indicated interest in working on this. He has done work helping to set town and parish councils on right track. Would be useful to have a resource that can be used more widely.

Sam Kennedy also recognised the challenge and has set up own discussion groups via Facebook. Sam is happy to share experiences.

**ACTION:** Kerrell to pull together and share work with volunteers of the Board to build upon.

KW

**Somerset query re impact of nitrogen & phosphates on planning decisions in wetland areas.**

**ACTION:** Helen Vittery to send request re. work with Dutch? Nitrogen to Hannah to forward to Sylvie Allan who will look into it. Helen is getting phosphate and not nitrogen as in Solent.

HV

Adam Wallace has a strategic solution and are well sighted on the Somerset issue. He is pulling together issues across countryside. Adam offered to check with Local Authorities for phosphates as the issue specifically and has replied to Helen with the info below:

“Spoken with Simon Thompson who is in his Strategic Solutions Team and close to the Solent work and has also been working on mapping out where there are water quality protected site issues in England. Those that he came back with that have phosphate issues and are in solution mode are:

- Hereford County Council and the River Lugg (part of the Wye SAC), they currently have two proposed wetlands in the planning system. They are looking to locate wetlands on Wastewater Treatment Works outfalls in order to reduce phosphate levels to mitigate for housing development.

Contact: to follow

- East Devon are also working on a nutrient management plan for the River Axe SAC, which includes mitigation measures for the Axminster urban extension, which is again dealing with P.

Contact: Matthew Dickins

[MDickins@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:MDickins@eastdevon.gov.uk)”

8.	Notes of last meeting (28 October 2020) All agreed.	Steve Read
9.	Dates of future meetings, and close. 24 <sup>th</sup> Feb at 14:00-15:00 24 <sup>th</sup> Mar at 11:00-12:00 28 <sup>th</sup> Apr at 10:00-12:30	Steve Read