

UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENT PDG WORK PROGRAMME

Responsible Officer: Clare Robathan, Policy and Research Officer

Reason for Report: to update the Environment PDG on the requests made at the May meeting on items to add to the future Work Programme.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is asked to note the information below and discuss and agree actions/next steps.

Financial Implications: No financial risk.

Budget and Policy Framework: No implications.

Legal Implications: No legal implications.

Risk Assessment: N/A.

Equality Impact Assessment: N/A

Relationship to Corporate Plan: This work will progress a number of priorities in the corporate plan, including:

- Increase recycling rates and reduce the amounts of residual waste generated;
- Identify opportunities to work with landowners to secure additional hedgerow planting, biodiversity and reforestation;
- Explore large-scale tree-planting projects and re-wilding to enhance biodiversity and address carbon pressures; and
- Work with developers and Devon County Council to deliver strategic cycle routes between settlements and key destinations.

Impact on Climate Change: A number of the work streams relate to, and will help make progress towards, the MDDC Climate Strategy. The Climate and Sustainability Specialist has helped develop the information and actions below.

1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 At the meeting of the Environment PDG in May, Members identified the specific areas of work below which they felt the PDG could add value and focus on over the coming year.

2.0 The Council to recycle more waste such as pots and pans and plan for increased recycling in the future

2.1 The current situation within MDDC is that there is not enough room on the trucks for pots and pans because of the high volume of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEE). Small WEE has been more successful than anticipated, and tonnage is high - capacity is therefore an issue. Officers have suggested that tonnage needs to go below a certain threshold before they can consider recycling pots and pans. If required, officers can explore what that

threshold is so members can fully understand whether/when recycling pots and pans can become an option.

2.2 Next steps: PDG to consider a formal request for officers to look at tonnage that WEE would need to fall below in order to recycle pots and pans.

3.0 **Encouraging residents to go plastic free and recycle more**

3.1 The Council has taken a number of actions to encourage residents to recycle more, including the introduction of the new *Bin-it 1-2-3* collection cycle which will improve recycling success rates and reduce the climate impact of local waste (demonstrated by our trial project data). Officers suggest holding an all member briefing that gives a full overview of the current waste and recycling processes and statistics, and benchmarking against other authorities with a view to best practice.

3.2 Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) are looking at how to harmonise waste across the region. DASWC meet twice a year, Cllr Slade and the Operations Manager for Street Scene attend. Feedback on that process could be included in the member briefing.

3.3 Next steps: organise an all member briefing on waste and recycling. The briefing will look at the impact of the *Bin-it 1-2-3* collection, how officers are encouraging residents to recycle more and any further actions that members would like to explore.

4.0 **Consideration of improvements to water catchments across the district**

4.1 Members were interested to look at the ways to improve water catchments across the District. Connecting the Culm is a good example of water catchment management and stakeholder engagement, but the project comes to an end this year. Members could hold a site visit to consider the 25-Year Blueprint for the Culm Catchment and look at Nature-Based solutions for Climate Adaptation, e.g. targeted tree planting, installing 'leaky dams' to slow flood water and soil management work by local farmers. Members may then want to consider how such initiatives could be used in other areas, and how to optimise the benefits for the whole district.

4.2 Next steps: arrange a site visit for the PDG to Connecting the Culm.

5.0 **Encouraging wilding projects throughout the District**

5.1 Exploring the potential of re-wilding or landscape scale projects to enhance biodiversity and address carbon pressures is noted in the Corporate Plan and climate strategy.

5.2 Devon Local Nature Partnership (a partnership coordinated by DCC Environment Team) is working on a Devon nature recovery strategy, which connects to MDDC's statutory role under the Environment Act 2021.

- 5.3 There is a role for the Council in encouraging / developing partnership working with farmers, landowners and others e.g. Blackdown Hills AONB, West Country Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England and others.
- 5.4 There is a connection to the item raised on water catchments and the PDG could consider a site visit to cover both topic areas. Alternatively, the PDG could convene a meeting with partners to discuss how to promote wilding in the District, perhaps with Devon Wildlife Trust, DCC and the Devon Local Nature Partnership.
- 5.5 Next steps: to consider linking this to the water catchment issue and exploring further as part of a visit to Connecting the Culm.
- 6.0 **Increase the number of cycling and walking routes in the area**
- 6.1 The Net Zero Advisory Group (NZAG) has been considering green travel and how to encourage cycling and walking within the District.
- 6.2 The Environment PDG or NZAG could put together a small task group to look at the District, with the aim to come up with a wish list of areas and how to link up towns and villages. This could also consider available funding or options available. The group could utilise the wish list alongside live mapping / GIS in discussions with DCC.
- 6.3 Next steps: the PDG to consider if/how it would like to take this work forward.
- 7.0 **Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points to be more target driven**
- 7.1 The Council is currently increasing the number of EV charge points on its land and generating some income from them. There is consideration to be given about whether the Council should go further in terms of investment, and the question of how to facilitate EV chargers in other areas, particularly rural communities.
- 7.2 The Climate and Sustainability Specialist was asked to outline a few options for PDG discussion after which further detail could be developed, this will come to the PDG on 13 September. This issue also ties into the green travel item.
- 7.3 Next steps: none for now - the PDG to note and consider the options due to feature in the Environment PDG Climate and Sustainability Programme update report in the September meeting.

Contact for more Information: Clare Robathan, Policy and Research Officer

Circulation of the Report: Chairman of Environment PDG, Cllr Josh Wright; Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change; Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change; Climate and Sustainability Specialist.