

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP
THURSDAY, 3 APRIL 2025**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West
Bridgford
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council's YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors G Williams (Chair), L Plant (Vice-Chair), J Billin, R Butler, S Ellis,
G Fletcher, R Mallender, H Parekh and A Phillips

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Burch	Head of Neighbourhoods
D Hayden	Community Development Manager
E Leddy-Owen	Team Manager for Environment
P Phillips	Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors M Barney

15 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 January 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

17 Nottinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer presented the Nottinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) report and provided a presentation and overview of key aspects of the report to the Group.

The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer explained that the Environment Act 2021 required the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. He said that the County Council had been designated as the Responsible Body for Nottinghamshire by DEFRA, with Rushcliffe Borough Council designated as a Supporting Authority and as such, was a consultee for the draft strategy and would need to consider the Strategy in relation to its own policies and strategies.

The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer shared a video with the Group which highlighted the various habitats and wildlife in the local area and which

encouraged participation in the survey to help shape nature recovery in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire: <https://notts naturerecovery.co.uk> and [Local nature recovery strategy for Nottinghamshire | Nottinghamshire County Council](#).

The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer explained that an LNRS was a new statutory system for spatial strategies for nature's recovery, was locally led, transparent and collaborative and set out the agreed priorities. He said that it was map based, mapping the most valuable existing areas for nature and setting specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and the wider environmental benefits. He said that whilst the map was not yet publicly available online, it would be in the future, with both the map and documentation comprising the LNRS.

In relation to governance, the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that in addition to the District Councils, the East Midlands Combined County Authority and Natural England were Supporting Bodies and that Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee provided political oversight. He added that a working group, mapping group, planning group, farmers and landowners' group, species specialist group and a public consultation had also fed into the LNRS.

In relation to consultation, the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that engagement had been undertaken with statutory Bodies, conservation organisations, parish councils and that public events and an online survey had been conducted.

In relation to mapping and priority measures, the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that measures would look to enhance existing habitats and protect new habitats in ways that were practical, realistic and deliverable. He said that measures would also bring wider environmental benefits such as natural flood management, carbon sequestration and improving public access to green spaces. He took the Group through the various types of habitat that had been mapped, including woodland, wetland and watercourses, heathland, grassland, farmland, urban and post-industrial and species.

The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that a public consultation would take place from 6 May 2025 to 16 June 2025, followed by notification to the Secretary of State in summer 2025 and potential adoption and publication of the LNRS in summer / autumn 2025. A review of the Strategy would be completed by DEFRA at some point between 3 –10 years after publication.

Councillor Ellis thought that the Strategy seemed ambitious and asked how much was achievable. The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that it was unclear as yet what funding and grant aid would be available to support measures and implementation.

Councillor Plant asked about landowner involvement and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that it was possible that some landowners would not wish for their land to be included in the mapping and may ask for it to be removed as part of the consultation, but equally they may qualify for funding to

bring in measures so may wish for it to be included.

Councillor R Mallender said that there was much land across the County which could be linked up, including on pieces of land on housing developments. The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer referred to biodiversity net gain commitments for developers and said that if they could not deliver their biodiversity commitments on their sites they could buy biodiversity units from someone else or equally could sell units from their sites (land banking).

Councillor R Mallender asked about tree cover and whether there was opportunity to increase this in the Borough, with species other than conifers. The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer confirmed that whilst there was benefit from conifers, there were plans to revert some local conifer plantations on areas that had previously been ancient woodland.

Councillor R Mallender referred to the inclusion of water courses in the Strategy and hoped that some of them could be reclaimed. The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer confirmed that both he and the Environment Agency had pushed for this to be included in the Strategy due to the importance of reconnecting floodplain with rivers to reclaim a more natural approach to water management.

The Chair asked whether the Crown Estate had been consulted and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that they had been approached but had not responded as yet. He thought that they may be waiting for the draft map and documentation to be published before commenting as part of the consultation.

The Chair asked whether the public could put forward new areas that they thought may be of interest in their local areas and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer confirmed that they would be able to.

The Chair asked about review framework for the Strategy and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer explained that both the document and sites would be reviewed as part of the progress review of what had been achieved.

Councillor Billin asked if landowners did not want their land to be included could alternative sites be put forward. The Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that the public consultation would be wide ranging and would offer opportunity to put forward proposals and new areas, but caveated that any sites would need to be deliverable and meet requirements, such as for habitat and species.

Members of the Group asked about promotion of the consultation and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer said that whilst the County would lead on communications as Responsible Body, Rushcliffe Borough Council would promote it through its own media channels and to parish councils. In response to questions about taking information into schools, he said that there wasn't resource for Officers to do this and noted that the County Council Officer's role would end in August with future funding for it not as yet confirmed.

Members of the Group asked that Officers feedback concerns about levels of

resourcing and how the LNRS consultation would be communicated and promoted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) supported the draft LNRS, and support Nottinghamshire County Council going out to public consultation on the draft LNRS
- b) made recommendations for any additions or alterations that they consider should be made to the draft LNRS (if required)
- c) supported the Council responding to the Supporting Authorities consultation by Nottinghamshire County Council with the decisions given at 2a and 2b.

18 **Carbon Management Action Plan Review**

The Communities Manager introduced the Carbon Management Action Plan Review report and provided an overview of how the Council measured emissions, including direct and indirect emissions and carbon offsetting, and how it recorded information to capture its progress towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. He said that it was this information that was used to create the dashboard graphs and performance outputs presented to the Group.

The Team Manager for Environment presented information to the Group. He explained the difference between the measurements for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, the different generators of emissions that the Council produced, and the projects it was undertaking to bring those down, including at Cotgrave Leisure Centre, Sir Julian Cahn Pavilion and Gamston Community Hall. He thought that the Council's recent transfer to using Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil to power its HGV vehicles would lead to a significant reduction in emissions, which would be captured in next year's outputs.

The Team Manager for Environment said that the Council was continuing to work closely with Midlands Net Zero Hub to pull in and spend funding where it was needed most and was supporting parish councils with completing energy audits on any assets they had. He said that that Council also had close links with Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire and local businesses and that the Council was actively looking at regional collaborative bulk buying schemes, such as for solar schemes.

In relation to property and assets, the Team Manager for Environment provided an update about the status of ongoing Council projects, including potential land acquisition to meet the Council's offset need to reach Net Zero by 2030, exploration of alternative models of delivery to install large net zero projects on Council Buildings, tree planting on existing Council land and an insulation project at Hound Lodge.

In relation to fleet and transport, the Team Manager for Environment confirmed that Electric Vehicle (EV) points were being installed at the Streetwise Depot, two EV Vans were in operation, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil was operational, electric buggies were in use at Rushcliffe Country Park and an EV point had been installed at West Park for EV Vans.

In relation to contracts and procurement, the Team Manager for Environment confirmed that the Council considered the environmental and carbon impact for everything it purchased and that biodiversity net gain (BNG) software had been implemented to start mapping and surveying BNG over the next thirty years.

The Team Manager for Environment explained that the Council had overhauled its Climate Change Strategy and that its Ecology Team was proactively working with the Planning Team. He said that the Air Quality Strategy had been reviewed and that a number of areas had been downgraded due to a reduction in pollution recorded at those sites. He said that due to the success of work at Rushcliffe Country Park and it gaining Green Flag accreditation the Council was looking at how to expand that model to other sites.

In relation to waste and recycling, the Team Manager for Environment said that glass kerbside collection was due to be implemented by the end of 2025 and that some communal glass recycling bring sites would remain open to help with the transition period. He confirmed that as of April 2026 recycling legislation would allow more items to be put into recycling bins and that the Council was looking at facilitating food waste collection in 2027.

In relation to business and the community, the Team Manager for Environment provided information about a number of successful schemes that the Council had undertaken, including a retrofit housing scheme, a Rural Action Nottinghamshire event, a Heating Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme providing information about measures such as heat pumps, supporting local community energy groups and involvement in a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) which would provide a 3D digital map of where energy was being used and wasted in the local area.

The Team Manager for Environment explained that a Carbon Sequestration Strategy had been agreed by Cabinet and that the Council was looking to purchase land for tree planting. He added that an appraisal of Council land had resulted in 500 trees being planted and that the Council was working with the Woodland Trust to ensure that it was making best use of its land.

Councillor Billin asked about HVO fuel and asked whether factors from its production were included in calculations and the Team Manager for Environment confirmed that they were and as such HVO was considered to be 90% carbon neutral.

Councillor Billin referred to a Council Motion about investigating solar canopies on carparks and the Team Manager for Environment replied that whilst these were an option and would continue to be considered, they required infrastructure to be built which had cost and that installation on roofs of existing buildings provided better value for money at the current time.

Councillor Billin asked about tree planting and carbon sequestration and the Senior Ecology and Sustainability Officer clarified that carbon measurement for trees was usually calculated over a 100 year period, that trees usually started sequestering from around year five, increasing up to around year thirty and then reduced after around fifty years. The Communities Manager confirmed

that this had been factored into the Carbon Sequestration Strategy and said that the Council was exploring opportunities for circa 46 hectares of land within the Borough boundary, for tree planting and biodiversity and conservation measures.

Councillor Billin asked about data farms and cloud based storage and the Team Manager for Environment said that it was possible to procure green servers.

Councillor Fletcher asked about parish council energy audits and funding grants available and the Team Manager for Environment said that there were grants that could be applied for and where they required match funding this could be fulfilled by volunteer time. In relation to older buildings, he confirmed that there were internal interventions that could be done and that a building being listed did not necessarily mean that they couldn't be implemented.

Councillor Fletcher asked about hydrogen fuel and the Head of Neighbourhoods thought that this was still some years away.

Members of the Group asked about air quality and the Communities Manager confirmed that whilst monitors had been removed due to improved air quality at those sites, the Council would continue to monitor air quality across the Borough and install monitoring in the future if required.

Councillor Plant referred to grants available for home insulation and noted that they were small and for low income households and asked how messaging could be shared with larger and higher income households who did not qualify. The Team Manager for Environment said that the D2N2 partnership was looking at turnkey ethical loan schemes and also suggested that having a retrofit report done could provide residents with confidence to proceed with measures and use of trusted traders.

Councillor Mallender referred to HVO and asked about future fuel sources and the Communities Manager confirmed that HVO was transitional and that the Council would continue to review future options as they became available.

The Chair asked about having an Officer pool car and the Communities Manager confirmed that the Council had an electric van which was used by Facilities staff to travel to Council sites across the Borough and that it continued to review options for having more electric vehicles for Officer use.

The Chair asked about communications and messaging to residents and the possibility of inviting Nottingham Energy Partnership (NEP) to have a stall at Rushcliffe events and the Team Manager for Environment replied that the Council was organising an event with the British Geological Survey in the near future which would be open to the public and he would contact NEP about what would be possible.

The Chair asked about capture of information from the various schemes taking place and the Team Manager for Environment said for example that work with schools and households was captured in the annual greenhouse gas information from DEFRA which would be captured within the 2050 targets.

Members of the Group asked about glass collection and the Head of Neighbourhoods clarified that the bins were the same height as the grey bins but were thinner and narrower. He said that it would be possible to opt out from having a bin but that the Council would actively encourage participation if a household had somewhere to store the bin as it did not need to be put out every 6 weeks and could be used to collect glass over a longer period of time.

Councillor Philips asked about the efficiency of the Arena building and upgrading of EV charging points on the site. The Team Manager for Environment said that there would be some impact from users of the building, but that the building had smart energy monitoring, so for example lights would turn off when a room was not in use, and that the Council was actively exploring grants and opportunities for further measures. In relation to EV points, he confirmed that they were well used and that the ones at the Arena were trickle charge but that the Council had rapid charge points at other sites, such as the Country Park. He said that when they were nearer their end of life the Council would review options for replacement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) considered the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan; and
- b) contributed towards the emerging carbon management actions for 2025/26.

19 **Work Programme**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group approved the Work Programme as set out below:

xx July 2025 (date TBC)

- Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
- Work Programme

xx October 2025 (date TBC)

- Work Programme

xx January 2026 (date TBC)

- Work Programme

xx April 2026 (date TBC)

- Work Programme

Actions:

Minute No.	Action	Officer Responsible/Update
17.	Officers to feedback concerns about levels of resourcing and how the LNRS consultation would be communicated and promoted	Nottinghamshire County Council confirmed that they did not have resource to carry out consultation with schools but confirmed that they were recruiting to the senior Ecologist post
18.	Contact Nottingham Energy Partnership about the possibility of them providing a stall or information at RBC events	Team Manager for Environment

The meeting closed at 9.06 pm.

CHAIR