

North East Lincolnshire Council

Natural Assets Plan



2021

North East Lincolnshire Council

Natural Assets Plan

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What this plan is about

North East Lincolnshire is a place of rich, unique nature and heritage, which includes places such as the Lincolnshire Wolds, Bradley Woods, Cleethorpes beach and the Humber Estuary. Alongside these treasures there are many smaller places in local communities that are dear to residents for the opportunities they give for a peaceful walk or spotting local wildlife. As a council we recognise the importance of protecting and enhancing the environment, alongside our other responsibilities to ensure economic and social benefits and safeguards. Decisions involve a careful balance, to try and give our residents, businesses, and visitors the best possible life experiences.

As the global climate change crisis becomes more real to us, there is a recognition of the limits that our natural environment can cope with, due to the pressures that humans are putting on it. Our natural environment gives us many practical things – air, water, food, energy, and materials, and things that are harder to identify, such as pleasure, wellbeing, and fun. Sadly, our levels of consumption are exceeding nature’s capacity to sustain us, and in some cases the natural environment cannot recover naturally. This is putting some elements at risk of long-term damage. In the UK it is estimated that over 40% of plant and animal species are in decline. These losses matter. Urgent action to reverse biodiversity loss is now essential.

This plan sets out eight areas that we want to focus on making improvements to in our place. It explains why they are important, what our current situation is and what actions we plan to take in the short, medium, and long-term. These areas have become more urgent to address as climate change increasingly impacts on our lives. Many of the ways to tackle climate change rely on fixes using our natural world, called nature-based solutions. We have a separate set of actions for reducing carbon emissions, in our Carbon Roadmap, and it should be read alongside this plan, as they both go hand in hand.

This plan takes an overview of a very complex subject, and much of the detail about how we will move forward will come in later plans and projects. We welcome any questions about this work and are keen to involve our partners, local and national organisations, and anyone who wants to find out more.

Why the natural environment is important to us all?

The natural environment offers us many things that sustain life, for example rain, soil formation, plants, and animals. These provide things we call ‘natural capital’, and they give us things that help sustain our lives, such as food and water, and materials that can be used for building, and energy sources. Some of

these things also provide services to us and help to regulate our environment. For example, trees in our woodland areas, such as Weelsby Woods, help to reduce air pollution, and our coastal saltmarsh reduces the impact of rough seas and provides a natural method of capturing carbon.

Nature in North East Lincolnshire is special and unique to us. It helps to shape our common culture and heritage and gives us all a sense of where we belong, whilst contributing to tourism, recreation, and good mental health. It fascinates us and gives us inspiration to get out and about. Many of the benefits of a healthy environment and being outdoors are only just being realised. During the Covid pandemic the importance of connecting with nature has become even more apparent in our everyday lives and has been vital in maintaining our health and wellbeing.

While the environment provides so many benefits to us, it has a limited capacity to support us, especially if we damage the delicate balance of natural cycles. Some damage can be repaired, but it can take a long time. Other damage cannot be reversed. If environmental quality falls, then we are at risk of damaging our quality of life. A healthy environment and a vibrant economy can go hand in hand, and must do, otherwise we will have neither.

Our main issues in North East Lincolnshire

When we look at our area, we can see some opportunities and challenges, which we have used as a starting point for our Plan. Our challenge is to find the equilibrium between economic growth, reduction of carbon and protection of our unique natural assets.

North East Lincolnshire has a stable and resilient economy, that has been shaped by its connection to the North Sea. Ports, manufacturing, and food processing still are at the core to the employment of our residents. The local economy is transforming again, strengthened by the strategic position it occupies on the Greater Lincolnshire coast and Humber Estuary. Alongside this we are fortunate to have some exceptional environmental assets, in the estuary, in our resort, in the Wolds and among our housing areas. Economic pressures and opportunities need to be balanced sensitively with our environmental needs.

Our Borough and our council face a wide range of changes at this point in time. The pandemic, the adjustment to Brexit, the Freeport announcement, the rise of climate change issues and the loss of habitats and biodiversity all interplay and demand reassessment and realignment. These issues sit alongside the economic potential of the Humber Bank, that is being nationally recognised and supported through significant funding regimes.

We are committed to making best use of these unique opportunities for the benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors. We recognise that our area's growth ambitions will drive notable land use changes, which must be balanced with due regard to the affected environments. As the momentum in economic development keeps building, the requirement to protect fragile ecology and promote biodiversity heightens. We have demonstrated how we can successfully manage that balance with our award-winning mitigation site in Stallingborough. The creation of a large wetland bird feeding and roosting site

has provided an alternative location for birds displaced when development takes place on the south Humber bank. Our experiences here have given us confidence that economic growth and habitat creation can be balanced and achieve positive results.

| Main opportunities | Main challenges |
|---|---|
| The Humber coast is internationally important; the area has many designations that mean it must be protected to support the bird life and the habitats they use. These designations include Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area for Conservation, a Special Protection Area, and a wetland of international Importance. | Many of our Local Wildlife Sites, Local Geological Sites and biodiversity opportunity areas are not in public ownership, so our influence is limited. |
| The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provides good access to the countryside. | We lack large areas of open, unfarmed natural landscape with potential for major wildlife projects. |
| A relatively flat urban area makes walking and cycling possible. | We have lower than average life expectancy in some areas. |
| The resort of Cleethorpes provides opportunities to enjoy the unique coast landscape through our local events and activities. | Our area has a lot of low-lying land which makes us vulnerable to flooding from land and sea. |
| The Humber Estuary is the focus of green energy production. | We have higher than average deprivation in some areas. |
| There is a growing need for people to work in jobs linked to a better environment. | In some parts of the closely packed urban areas there is a lower than average availability of public open space. |
| We have many enthusiastic and knowledgeable people in our workforce and in our community who are committed to improving our environment. | Our area has a lower tree cover compared to the national average. |
| The principle and practice of large-scale ecological mitigation to support industrial growth is well established locally and recognised nationally as an example of best practice. | We must take care to make sure we act in an inclusive way, as environment may not be a priority for those struggling with other issues. |
| We are finding new ways to engage across our community on environmental issues, for example the Grimsby Festival of the Sea. | Our most sensitive wildlife site – the Humber Estuary at Cleethorpes – has a high concentration of people interacting with it, so we have to manage activities there carefully. |

How this plan fits into the place outcomes for North East Lincolnshire

All the main partner organisations across North East Lincolnshire have for years shared a single place-based vision for the area. This has been very helpful in focusing in on the things we all need to do. To make this simple we have five ‘outcomes,’ which are statements about how we see our local area developing in the future. The outcome of most relevance to this plan is about investing in our future: ‘All people in North East Lincolnshire benefit from a green economy and high-quality environment’. This is backed up by the following statement:

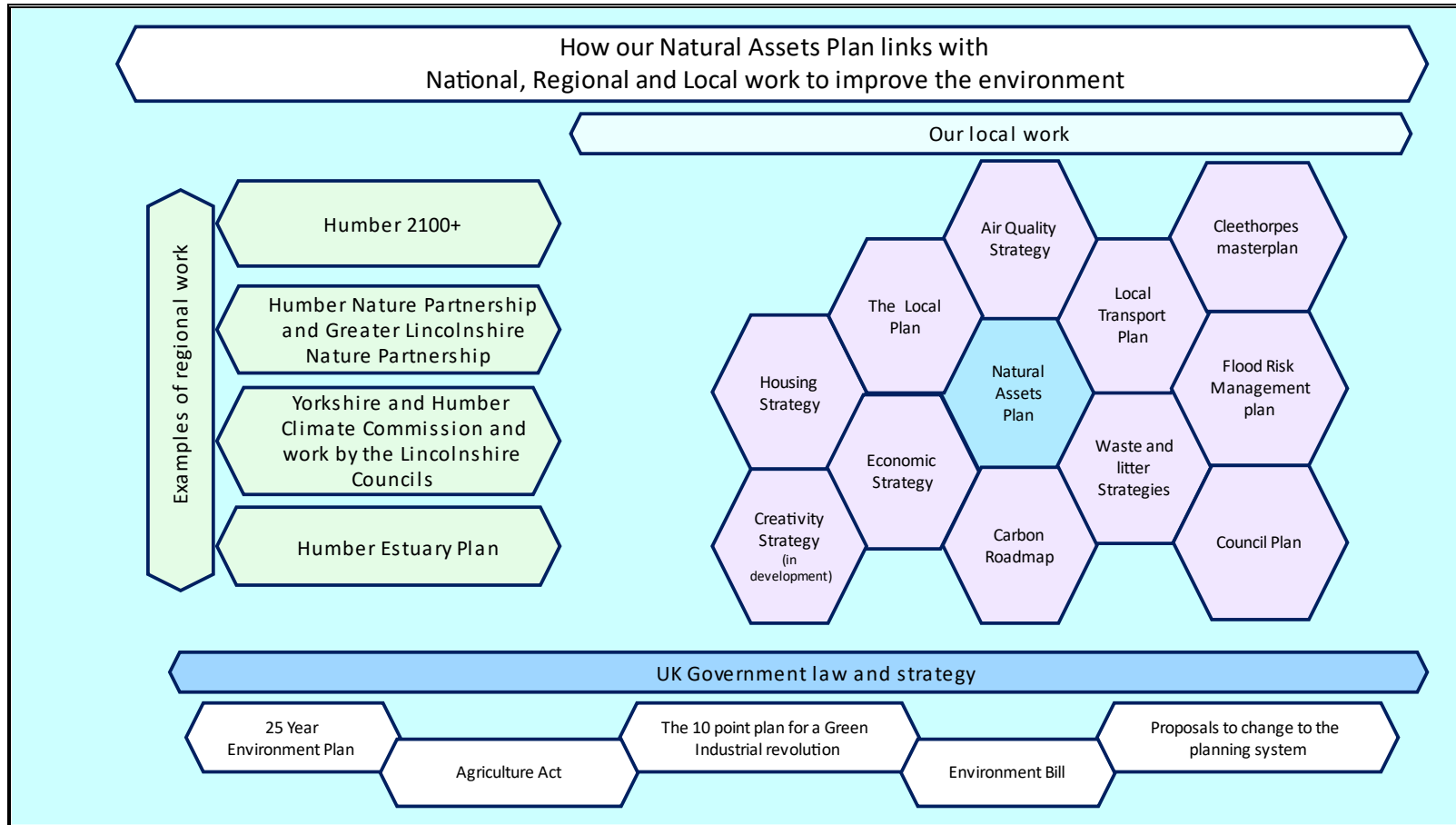
“We want North East Lincolnshire to be the centre of the UK renewables industry, with a thriving low carbon economy powered by sustainable energy. A circular economy, where businesses and residents reject the throw-away society, reducing, re-using, and recycling. A place where residents are enabled to live in energy efficient, healthy homes and where it is enjoyable, accessible, and affordable for everyone to travel sustainably every day. A nature rich place, where wildlife abounds, and everyone has access to clean air and inspiring green and open spaces to protect health and enhance lives, with evidence of sustainable ecology, environment and food systems.”

This plan also helps to contribute to our other four outcomes about economic growth and recovery, vitality, and health, learning and skills and sustainable and safe communities.

How this fits in with other strategies and plans

This plan does not sit alone – our own plans and those of government and other organisations fit together to make improvements to the environment.

The diagram below shows How our Natural Assets Plan links with national, regional, and local work to improve the environment.



The impact of climate change

It is generally accepted now, based on scientific fact, that human damage to the atmosphere is resulting from the heating of our planet's climate system. Without urgent action we will reach a point where major damage will have been done and will not be repairable. The main cause is the use of fossil fuels such as oil and gas, the electricity that they generate and the products that are made from them. Carbon dioxide (simply called carbon in this plan) is produced when using these fuels and it blankets the earth, not allowing the heat from the sun to escape the earth's atmosphere. Reducing our carbon emissions is the subject of our Carbon Roadmap. The impact of climate change is having effects on many aspects of the environment; new pests are

damaging our crops and weather patterns are shifting causing increased fire threats, flooding and drought events. Because of this some plants and animals are disappearing altogether.

Biodiversity loss is made worse by climate change, and vice versa. However, creating and restoring biodiverse habitats can lock up carbon, and nature can provide solutions for helping us to adapt to climate change. Alongside reducing our carbon emissions, we can take action to see how we can work with nature to provide some compensations for the impacts of climate change. We can plant more trees for shade in exposed town streets. There are also ways of establishing new drainage solutions to collect and store water locally rather than it runs off quickly and floods properties downstream. We can manage land in ways that encourages insect life and rarer plants to flourish. We can work with the environment to help us to adapt to the changes that we are already seeing in our weather and climate.

The complicated link between the crises of biodiversity loss and climate change is why we need to tackle them together.

Global efforts

Tackling climate change is part of the United Nations' global effort on 'sustainable development', which means living within the capacity of our planet to support us. United Nations' member states are working towards 17 sustainable development goals, which will help bring about reduced poverty, better education, and improved health, as well as cleaner air, rivers, and seas. So, acting on environmental improvements will carry many benefits across the globe and in our local community too. We will keep these goals in mind in all our environmental work.

There are many studies emerging that explain the impacts that humans are having on the environment, and how this can be halted or repaired. We are committed to keeping up to date with these developments and using them to help our own actions when this is appropriate.

In response to the crisis of biodiversity loss, many Heads of State around the world have made significant commitments for nature; notably through the Pledge for Nature launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2020, and the 30by30 commitment to protect 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030. These commitments are far reaching, requiring transformational change across sectors in the way we protect, value, use, and engage with nature.



United Nations Pledge for Nature commitment

“Integrate a ‘One-Health’ approach in all relevant policies and decision-making processes at all levels that addresses health and environmental sustainability in an integrated fashion”

National efforts

The Government published a 25-year environment plan in 2018. This sets out goals and actions for improving the environment over the next 25 years and leaving it in a better state than what we started with. It details how government will work with communities and businesses to do this. The plan aims to safeguard clean air, water, thriving plants and wildlife. It advocates for using resources from nature more sustainably and reducing the risk of harm from environmental hazards. It sees the need to manage pressures from climate change, waste, and exposure to chemicals, and aims to enhance biosecurity. The result that is being worked towards is enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

The Agriculture Act published in 2020 involves new Environmental Land Management schemes underpinned by natural capital principles. These three schemes that aim to increase biodiversity are the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery, and Landscape Recovery. They seek to reward environmentally sustainable actions, such as improving soil health, enhancing hedgerows, and supporting long-term, land-use change projects like restoring wilder landscapes, large-scale tree planting, and saltmarsh restoration.

The Environment Bill 2020 plans to bring about action to combat the environmental and climate crises. This bill re-focusses on the objective to conserve and enhance biodiversity. One intention is to achieve an overall biodiversity net gain at development sites through an ongoing condition in planning approval, guaranteed for at least 30 years. This will have a positive ecological impact, delivering improvements through habitat creation or enhancement. The Environment Bill will also deliver cleaner air by setting targets on air quality, ensuring illegally polluting vehicles are taken off the road, and requiring councils to tackle local air quality issues. Additionally, the Bill outlines how the government will reduce waste, make better use of resources, and improve the management of water resources in a changing climate.

Our key partners

We do not work alone on environmental matters and have developed good working relationships with many of our partners, who do excellent work. Here are some examples:

- Voluntary, community and social enterprise sector – create opportunities for people to enjoy the natural world and undertake practical projects
- Private landowners – some are keen to encourage wildlife and support us through encouraging public access
- ENGIE- we have worked together in our regeneration partnership since 2010. ENGIE provide several services that impact on our natural assets, including land use planning and development management, highways and transport, flood risk management and tree and woodland services.
- Anglian Water – is a water providing and water recycling company. It supplies water to the borough and operate water treatment works, providing drainage and sewerage. It also provides significant sums of funding for surface water management schemes.
- Environment Agency – a public body responsible for the protection and enhancement of the environment. Protection relates to threats such as flooding, coastal risk, and the pollution of air, land, and water. It is also the main funding body for any flood and coastal risk management schemes.
- Drainage Boards – their primary role is to manage water levels and reduce the risk from flooding. Much of their work involves the maintenance and improvement of watercourses and related infrastructure such as pumping stations, weirs, sluices, culverts, and embankments.
- Town and parish councils – are the first level of local government and provide communities with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund – we are working with this partner on our culture and heritage programme. The Fund expects all projects that receive this funding to limit any potential damage to the environment and make a positive impact on the environment, particularly for nature.
- Natural England – a public body responsible for ensuring that England's natural environment, including its land, flora and fauna, freshwater and marine environments, geology and soils are protected and improved. It also has a responsibility to help people enjoy, understand, and access the natural environment.
- Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service works in partnership with its Joint Advisory Committee and other groups and individuals to protect and enhance the landscape and its distinctive features; encourage community interest and involvement; raise awareness of the Wolds; promote sustainable development and appropriate enjoyment.
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust - is a voluntary charitable organisation which cares for Lincolnshire's wildlife and countryside. They look after nearly 100 nature reserves in the Lincolnshire area.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) – is a charitable organisation that works to promote the conservation and the protection of birds and the wider environment through public awareness campaigns, petitions, and the operation of nature reserves.

- Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership/Humber Nature Partnership – are government-accredited bodies that work to achieve more for nature. They work with their members and others to deliver the sustainable management of the Humber Estuary and natural environment areas; working to protect and enhance the environment for wildlife, the economy, people, and gaining benefits for all.

How this plan can help our community

Here are some examples of some of the benefits for our community from our focus on environmental improvement.

Green Recovery

Because of Covid-19 it is likely that the jobs market will see large challenges. However, green recovery presents a huge opportunity to reset the economy and redirect it towards a better, more sustainable future of high skilled job opportunities. Fostering the right conditions to support the creation of new jobs that support environmental improvement, which will help our area build back better and achieve its carbon reduction aspirations.

Health and Wellbeing

Tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions will add value beyond these goals alone. The actions developed as part of this plan will encourage residents to live sustainable lifestyles through things like active travel, waste reduction, and other actions that will improve the quality of life. We will also seek to work with local community groups and provide increased access and connection to nature and encourage a healthy, sustainable lifestyle.

Education and Skills

Increased education and environmental awareness through work with schools, colleges or visitor awareness can deliver additional benefits to the community. Environmental projects can help children learn a range of topics, supporting the national curriculum at all levels, and develop life skills, such as increased confidence. Wildlife areas are a valuable resource for volunteering, and for health and education projects. We can build up a core of local knowledge about our environment. Adult volunteers could be trained in environmental skills and gain personal development, which can lead to employment. Increased access to projects also raises awareness to environmental issues and could promote behaviour change.

Air Quality and Biodiversity

Climate change and air quality are closely linked, as encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles will reduce emissions from cars. We have already made the switch to electric vehicles for part of our fleet and are continuing with this change, as well as encouraging greener forms of transport in the wider population. We are also taking action to support wider biodiversity and recognise the role that natural environment must play in capturing and storing carbon in trees, hedges, grassland, and saltmarsh. Trees and other green infrastructure can also help to capture air pollution particulates.

Sustainable Communities

Working to improve the environment should be considered in the context of 'placemaking'. Actions should seek to follow the aspiration set out in the area's Local Plan, which is to plan for growth and aim to ensure our area becomes a sustainable location in which people can live, work, and enjoy their recreation, both now and in the future. Where possible, actions can be taken in local communities and in conjunction with local community groups to create a sense of place and have positive impacts on not only carbon emissions, but elements like congestion, pollutants, and improved community cohesion.

What do our community think?

A public consultation comprising of a survey on climate change and the environment took place in August/September 2021. The results of the consultation found that the respondents felt it was important for us to improve biodiversity within the borough, with 81% feeling that this was extremely important and very important to them.

Over 90% thought that green infrastructure should be a key method used by us to tackle climate change, and that it is extremely important that green infrastructure is improved in central areas such as policy and planning, air quality, water management, education and community involvement, trees and woodland, and parks and open spaces. Respondents also felt that health and wellbeing should be a key consideration for improving green infrastructure.

The following actions were all supported by the public in the survey, to help improve our green infrastructure:

- Increase tree coverage in the borough (97%)
- Improve access to open spaces and parks (94%)
- Increase the amount of sustainable drainage used in the borough (96%)
- Increase wildflower areas in the borough (96%)
- Work to help establish more allotments and community gardens (91%)
- Embedding green infrastructure in all new developments (93%)
- Preserving and enhancing current green infrastructure (98%)
- Improving community/volunteer involvement and engaging with community groups (95%)
- Provide information and guidance on green infrastructure (94%)
- Establishing wildlife corridors in the borough (96%)

What we will focus on

We have chosen eight themes to focus on, and have set out in this plan our reasoning, our duties and services, our current work and where we plan to act next.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Planning our future land use | Managing our open spaces | Biodiversity and special sites | Trees and woodlands |
| Water Management | Improving air quality | Protecting health and wellbeing | Education, involvement, and enjoyment |

Planning our future land use

Our duties and services

Every local planning authority in England is required to have in place a clear, up-to-date local plan, which conforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Decisions on planning applications must accord with the Local Plan and other material considerations such as the NPPF. The Local Plan is the spatial planning framework for the Borough, so this means it provides the direction for land use changes.

Our current strategies/policies

Our Local Plan was adopted in 2018 and contains a wide range of environmental policies. The Plan needs to be refreshed every five years and we are now starting our first review. This gives us opportunities to update our policies to meet the emerging priorities for carbon reduction and increased environmental protection and enhancement. The Local Plan will be the 'hook' onto which many of the detailed plans and strategies emerging from this Natural Assets Plan will need to hang to deliver the biodiversity, low carbon, and other environment related requirements for new developments.

What's changing?

Legislative changes on planning, environment and housing provision are proposed. Whilst we are waiting for these changes there are numerous government announcements that we must keep up to date with. There may be some changes to the future plan-making process, to planning fees and to developer contributions. Future planning will be interactive and map-based, so will require investment in software and training.

A significant change is likely to come through the forthcoming Environment Act, which will bring in developer responsibility for increasing biodiversity. It will require us to establish the process for this and monitor its effectiveness. The Act will also require us to work with our partners to create a local nature recovery strategy, which will feed into our land use planning considerations.

Climate change has taught us that our environment is very dynamic and that we will need to adapt our policies over time to meet the challenges that this brings.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Our land use policies provide opportunities to highlight environmental issues and how we intend to balance the need for development with environmental needs.
- ✓ Outcomes for nature are integrated into developments, ensuring access to nature is improved and delivering a wide range of health and other benefits.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Stay informed about all changes and proposals from government, so that we can be adequately prepared for implementation.
2. Ensure that, where possible, these changes are implemented with our local community and environment in mind.
3. Strengthen our policies on low carbon economy, energy efficiency, building safety and biodiversity net gain.
4. Support residential and commercial developers to integrate carbon zero technology to provide energy to newly built property.
5. Encourage the use of Modern Methods of Construction, to reduce waste and carbon emissions during construction.
6. Create a review process for our Local Wildlife Sites so they can be robustly defended.
7. Prepare for whatever direction we need to go in for our Local Plan.
8. Work with landowners to discuss future opportunities.

Managing our open spaces

Our duties and services

Highway's legislation gives us duties in relation to the maintenance of road verges and trees to ensure safety. We must also maintain trees in open spaces; some of our parks were gifted to us for the benefit of residents and have specific conditions set out in relation to their maintenance. We do not have statutory duties for general grass cutting, so we have freedom to manage this as we wish. Frequency of mowing is an emotive subject as some people prefer regular maintenance and others appreciate the flowers and insects that lower maintenance encourages. We need to remember that we share our open spaces and beaches with the rest of the natural world.

We must inspect and maintain our play areas and parks, and we carry out litter picking and removal of fly tipping on our land as another of our duties.

Our current strategies/policies

Our land management strategy is due for a refresh, as management practices nationally evolve to protect and enhance wildlife. We also must consider the changing demand on our open spaces for recreation, with issues such as paths wearing, increases in dog ownership and demand for safe places to walk, run and cycle. Our green space strategy is scheduled for review to take these matters into consideration. Revisions to the management plans for our largest open spaces and areas requiring special protection will follow. This will be supported by operational guidance and schedules to govern our land management operations.

What's changing?

Across the country there is now a lot of interest in the potential that our open spaces and highway verges must contribute to nature recovery, with the emphasis on different maintenance approaches. We have been seeding verges to produce wildflower displays and leaving some areas to regenerate naturally. Some people feel that this looks like neglect and is untidy. We need to think about how we strike a balance between these two very different viewpoints. We expect to see some new standards brought in by the government in 2022, which will relate to how we need to manage green spaces to benefit the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.

We are increasing our ability to manage our tree stock, with more staff, training, and equipment, yet we still have a long way to go to get on top of the work that needs to be done. Any new tree planting needs to come with the resources for long-term maintenance, to enable us to allow trees to grow to maturity and be healthy. When new housing developments are completed, we often adopt the open spaces and maintain these, but this adds to our costs and resources are short. Some community groups have taken on the management of some of our open land and we want to continue to encourage this.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Trees, open spaces, playgrounds, and other open land support the wellbeing of our community.
- ✓ Our land contributes to the recovery of nature at every opportunity.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Update our green space strategy, considering the changes that need to take place to improve areas for biodiversity, access, and a variety of uses.
2. Produce up-to-date management plans for our most important open spaces: Weelsby Woods, People's Park, Freshney Parkway, Cleethorpes Country Park, Bradley and Dixon's Woods, Ainslie Street Park, Kingston Gardens and the Duke of York Gardens.
3. Make the linkages between open space management and tree management.
4. Develop a method for working with community members who come forward with ideas for improvements to land management or want to plant trees and wildflowers.
5. Continue to support those groups who wish to take on management of open spaces.
6. Manage our open spaces utilising low or no carbon vehicles and equipment.
7. Be aware of funding opportunities to support this work and be ready to bid when the time is right.

As part of our Adolescent Lifestyle Survey in 2019, 33% of young people named good parks, outdoor areas, and green space as one of the main reasons why their local area in North East Lincolnshire was a good place to live

We have 806 acres (32.6km²) of parks and open spaces, representing approximately 16% of North East Lincolnshire's total area

There are 2,938,000 sq. meters of verge, amenity grass cutting which includes sports fields, country parks and open spaces in North East Lincolnshire equating to 374 Blundell Parks. Plus 162 miles of 1m width rural verges cutting

Biodiversity and special sites

Our duties and services

As a landowner and a 'competent authority' we have a duty to uphold the ecological and environmental designations of sites with special designations for nature. We also have a duty to promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

On our part of the Humber Estuary there are sites designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Ramsar Site, a European Marine Site, a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation, and a Local Nature Reserve. SSSIs are areas of interest due to their fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features. A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance. A European Marine Site includes Special Areas of Conservation and Special protection Areas that are covered by tidal waters and protect some of our most important marine and coastal habitats and species.

Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally and can offer opportunities to learn about and enjoy nature. In our area our Local Nature Reserves are Cleethorpes Sand dunes, Bradley, and Dixons Woods, Weelsby Woods, and Cleethorpes Country Park.

The Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a designated exceptional landscape, whose distinctive character and natural beauty are precious enough to be safeguarded in the national interest.

We must ensure national legislation is upheld and complied to such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). Our area also has designated Local Wildlife Sites, and Local Geological Sites. Unless these are on land that we own we do not have any duties to maintain and enhance them, however we can work with local landowners to try and secure good management.

Our Local Plan contains policies to maintain and enhance biodiversity. Comments are made by our ecologist on the ecological impact of planning applications, and we support developers to discharge their ecological improvements following the granting of planning permissions. We have sites in our own management which have rare wildlife communities and we manage these to preserve and enhance those. We also have established and manage a mitigations site in Stallingborough, which developers on Humber bank land can contribute to, to discharge their ecological responsibilities when planning permission is granted.

Our current strategies/policies

Our green space strategy is scheduled for review to take into consideration new legislation. This strategy is supported by management plans for our largest open spaces and areas requiring special protection.

A refreshed Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan is expected to be in place by end of 2021, to ensure that all activities we allow on the Site of Special Scientific Interest are clearly identified and controlled. Our Local Plan policies relating to ecology and biodiversity work alongside national legislation and policies relating to habitats and at-risk species.

What's changing?

New legislation is to be introduced in an Environment Act which will require all development to provide a 10% increase in biodiversity, either on site or in other registered places. A 'biodiversity metric' tool will help to identify and put a value on all habitats where development is proposed. Developers will then have to deliver a plan for the 10% increase. There will need to be a lot of work done to prepare for this change, for both the council and developers. A national register of biodiversity sites will be set up, and the gains will need to be monitored over a period of 30 years. There will also be a nature recovery strategy for each area. The new Agriculture Act is providing payments to farmers and landowners who improve their land for the benefit of nature. There is a lot of work for us to do to introduce and manage these changes, and then monitor their success. The complexity of these new proposals could leave us open to legal and reputational risks and challenges.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Biodiversity is improved in our area.
- ✓ There is a positive perception of the value of nature by our local community.
- ✓ Wildlife thrives everywhere, through improving land management and tackling sources of harm.
- ✓ Habitat restoration and creation is invested in to strengthen nature networks that deliver for biodiversity and climate change.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Improve our communications and engagement around nature and biodiversity, so that we gain support for some of the changes we need to make in our land management.
2. Produce a biodiversity opportunity map, to set our direction on trying to join up areas of potential and make the best of the areas we have.
3. Have some sites ready for investment from the Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, to keep resources in our area and benefitting our community.
4. Work with partners to get the best out of the gains to be had from new opportunities.
5. Empower our community to help us look after nature.

6. Fulfil our role in creating and implementing the nature recovery network plan for our area.
7. Complete new management plans for our own important wildlife sites, and work with landowners of Local Wildlife Sites and Local geological Sites to encourage management plans for all these sites.
8. Take time to plan projects by reviewing the resource calls on the ecology team.

The area around Cleethorpes, is known as the 'Bird Airport' of the East Coast due to the number of birds it attracts. It is designated as a SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar site as part of the Humber Estuary

We have the Lincolnshire Wolds which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and four Local Nature Reserves - these are Bradley and Dixon's Woods, Weelsby Woods, Cleethorpes Country Park, and Cleethorpes Sand Dunes

Trees and Woodlands

Our duties and services

We have a duty to ensure that highways are safe and, as part of this duty, we inspect the highway tree stock on a programmed cyclical basis.

We consult on applications where existing trees may be affected and we consult on applications where there may be a provision for/or need for a detailed landscaping scheme. The National Planning Policy Framework was amended in 2021, meaning that planning polices, and decisions should now ensure that new streets are tree-lined and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in development, such as parks and community orchards.

We have the power to make Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) if it appears to be 'expedient in the interests of amenity'. We create new Tree Preservation Orders where we consider trees of importance may be under threat and we review the existing TPO Orders.

Current strategies/policies

We are in the early stages of developing a Tree Strategy. This will provide a strategic framework for the management of the local tree population to achieve agreed aims and objectives. The Trees Action Plan 2021-24 has been published by the government in response to the analysis of the England Tree Strategy which was launched in 2020.

Using the i-Tree Canopy web browser tool we have assessed tree canopy coverage in North East Lincolnshire. The assessment estimated that there is 10.5% tree canopy coverage in North East Lincolnshire; this is below the national average (15.8%) with national recommendations to achieve a minimum of 15% canopy cover in towns and cities (20% in coastal towns).

What's changing?

The upcoming Environment Bill and the push by the Government to achieve carbon goals is slowly increasing public awareness. Urban blue and green infrastructure, like trees, can provide significant heat reduction benefits through shading, make a significant contribution to carbon sequestration and storage, and reduce the impact of sudden rainfall. For these reasons more tree planting, alongside the protection of our existing tree population will make a positive contribution to reaching net zero carbon emissions. This enthusiasm must be backed up by sound advice on getting the right trees for the right locations and making sure that maintenance is considered too.

Public response to trees can be difficult to manage. Some are strongly opposed to tree removal, and others dislike trees. We need to promote the significant benefits that trees have on our society and enable a balanced view to be heard. Engaging with landowners will be the key to increasing canopy coverage and achieving net zero carbon. We need to communicate grant incentive opportunities to landowners.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ The tree canopy cover of the borough is increased to at least the national average.
- ✓ Trees are valued for the positive environmental and social benefits they bring.
- ✓ Trees are managed to increase the length of their lives and to increase biodiversity.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Write and start to implement our tree strategy, setting periodic targets for planting.
2. Look for opportunities for tree planting in all parts of our area, specifically looking to increase tree cover in area of highest deprivation.
3. Focus on how tree planting can be used to link up some of our areas of opportunity for biodiversity.
4. Ensure that trees are considered as a nature-based solution to reducing carbon emissions.
5. Provide information to people who want to plant trees themselves and ensure that they understand the management consequences.
6. Keep up to date with grants available for tree planting and be ready to bid when a suitable opportunity occurs.

There are over 100,000 trees in our area that we maintain. In 2020, the estimated tree canopy cover was 10.5%, Heneage has the highest percentage (18.96%), and Sidney Sussex has the lowest percentage (2%)

A typical mature tree can absorb around 21 kilograms of CO₂ per year. Peoples Park has a tree population of more than 600 trees; this equates to around 12.6 tonnes of carbon absorbed each year

Water management

Our duties and services

Under the Flood Water Management Act, we manage flood risk, mainly in urban areas. The Coastal Protection Act designates us as a coastal authority and we are statutory consultees on planning matters, with regards to flooding. We also have a duty to respond to oil pollution incidents and would lead any clean-up response on our coast. We undertake programmes of work to reduce surface water flooding, which align with those of our partners Anglian Water and the Environment Agency.

Our current strategies/policies

Our current Flood Risk Strategy is about to be reviewed. This will be informed by the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy which has recently been adopted. Our revised strategy will include a local action plan, listing the areas of focus for flood management. Our area is also covered by the Humber 2100+ strategy, which covers the flood management for the estuary, and by the Shoreline Management Plan covers the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire coasts from Flamborough Head to Gibraltar Point.

What's changing?

The national approach focuses on the resilience and management of flooding, rather than prevention. New funding is available, the Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Fund; along with our partners we have been successful in a bid to this fund, and over the next six years we will be delivering sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) projects in Immingham and Grimsby. SUDs use green infrastructure to control flooding but have wider benefits to the environment and even physical and mental health We can also bid for funding from the Environment Agency if we remove homes from the risk of surface water flooding. We are seeing improvements in the plans for new developments, where SUDs are now a common feature. These include many innovative drainage solutions; rain gardens, attenuation ponds, swales, permeable paving, tree pits and grasses to reduce run-off and slow the flow of rainwater. Many of these things will be new to our residents and we need to take care with our engagement and explanations.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Flood risk to property is reduced.
- ✓ Communities support and benefit from sustainable urban drainage solutions.
- ✓ Developers incorporate innovative drainage schemes in new designs.
- ✓ We think long-term about working with the natural environment and using nature-based solutions

Our direction for the next five years

1. Complete the review of our Flood Risk Strategy.
2. Deliver the retro-fit SUDs projects and share learning from our experiences.
3. Work on communications about drainage works, to explain how these will reduce risks and provide a good quality street scene.
4. Engage our voluntary organisations and communities in SUDs, with a view to involvement in future monitoring and management.
5. Work to further develop the Greater Lincolnshire Groundwater project, which will bring benefits to our area in terms of reducing flood risk.
6. Develop a scheme for Humberston Fitties, to try and halt the erosion of the beach, which would include beach nourishment and improvements to critical habitats.
7. Make strong linkages with other services, including ecology and tree management, to ensure that drainage works provide new planting and habitats.
8. Think long-term about sea-level rise and changing weather patterns, and how we might create wetland habitats and managed realignment.

We maintain two at risk watercourses – Buck Beck through Waltham and Ferriby Lane, however, these are not on our land. Other watercourses are regularly inspected, and contact made with those who have duties to keep them properly maintained

As a coastal authority we inspect and maintain the stretch from the Cleethorpes Leisure Centre through to the end of the North Promenade, and the coastal embankment at the Humberston Fitties

We have 33,290 road drainage gullies across our area that we maintain

Improving air quality

Our duties and services

Our main duties come under the Environmental Protection Act 1995. We regularly monitor Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels, and we deal with smaller scale pollution incidents. We must declare breaches in air quality standards and make annual reports to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to show improvements in air quality. We have one Air Quality Management Area – Riby Square. We also investigate statutory nuisances relating to the air, that impact on people.

Our current strategies/policies

We have a new draft air quality strategy that has been the subject of public consultation. We follow all air quality standards and must demonstrate how we manage air quality. All our policies are based on DEFRA Guidance

What's changing?

The new Environment Act will set new pollution reduction targets and will mean the need to monitor much smaller particulates. This will require funding for new equipment. The Act will also amend the local air quality framework to designate air quality partners, who will need to co-operate together in tackling air pollution. At the present time we are unsure who will lead or who partners will be. Nature-based solutions, such as planting trees, can be an effective way of improving air quality by removing harmful particulate matter.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Air quality issues are prominent in decision-making and considered in local policy development.
- ✓ Air quality monitoring identifies risks and delivers information which is available to the public.
- ✓ Solutions for air quality reduction include those that use natural assets.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Finalising our air quality strategy.
2. Acquire new monitoring equipment so that we can meet our new duties on monitoring smaller particulates.
3. Producing a supplementary Planning Document for Air Quality.
4. Link air quality into public education/public health on environmental matters.

5. Provide accessible air quality information, to assist those with breathing difficulties.
6. Make links between air quality and other environmental services (e.g., arboriculture advice on nature-based solutions).
7. Investigate how nature-based solutions might help to improve air quality.

There is one air quality management area (AQMA) in North East Lincolnshire. This is the Grimsby AQMA; the Immingham AQMA was revoked in 2016 as pollution had significantly reduced.

Protecting health and wellbeing

Our duties and services

We have duties to protect and enhance the wellbeing of our area and its residents, employees, and visitors. We have responsibilities through our Public Health functions, children's and adults' social care, and health and safety legislation. Increased access to the natural environment is associated with increased physical activity, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, increased motivation to engage in physical activity, reduced obesity among adolescents, and improved mental health outcomes. Proximity to open green spaces in urban areas has also been associated with lower levels of stress.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Child Friendly Cities Initiative reiterates the importance of a safe, secure, and clean environment for children to learn, grow and play, noting that children should have access to green spaces, be able to meet friends, and have places to play and enjoy themselves. Evidence shows that green spaces can bring people together, creating community cohesion and improving the health and wellbeing of a community through opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, community food growing, and gardening. Evidence also suggests reduced health inequalities in greener areas.

Current strategies/policies

The North East Lincolnshire 2019 report of the Director of Public Health focused on what healthy place means in our location and included several recommendations that relate to our natural assets. An Adolescent Lifestyle survey takes place every 3 to 4 years for young people of secondary school age (11 to 16 years) in North East Lincolnshire and includes questions relating to parks, play areas, open spaces, and young people's perception of nature.

Responses highlight the link between answers and indicators of deprivation (free school meals). Investigations into health inequalities frequently identify local environmental issues as contributing to the difficulties faced by some in our communities.

What's changing?

The coronavirus pandemic has created a greater need for public access to open space and has raised awareness of the benefits of having access to open space and how nature influences public health. Environment is incredibly important for health and is inextricably linked to it. Many studies have evidenced the positive impacts that nature can have on wellbeing. We have also learned that there are so many activities that we can enjoy outdoors; alongside the more traditional organised sports and walking/cycling we are now seeing more cultural activities, community gardening, green gyms, guided exercise routes, and nature-based volunteering.

Social prescribing is now available in our area, for anyone with a diagnosis of certain long term health conditions. This involves being supported to find activities and services that those can benefit from and includes outdoor activities such as exercise and gardening. Health professionals are increasingly becoming aware of the role that nature can play in health.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ The health and wellbeing benefits of engaging in and enjoying our natural environment are promoted and recognised.
- ✓ Inequalities in access to a good quality environment are addressed.

Our direction for the next five years

1. Improve awareness of the role of nature in health and the opportunities which nature-based solutions provide, during the training and development of all professionals.
2. Consider health benefits for our community when planning access to open spaces and consider how we provide equality of access for all abilities and demographics.
3. Support community efforts to become engaged in looking after their areas, to contribute towards the overall feel of place and civic pride.
4. Promote 'outdoors' as a positive option for a range of activities.
5. Provide opportunities for active travel, for example access to work using the Super Cycle highways.
6. Introduce smoke free zones in and around play areas as recommended in our Northern Lincolnshire Tobacco Control Strategy.
7. Improve our nature walk network across the borough, including improved sign posting.

8. Use our knowledge of current tree canopy cover to identify priority areas where there is an opportunity to improve and protect our existing tree population as well as opportunities for new tree planting.

Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey (2015/16) suggests that 22.6% of the local population of our area used outdoor space for exercise/ health reasons, greater than both the regional percentage (17.5%) and the England percentage (17.9%)

As of 2019, there are 65 parks and play areas in North East Lincolnshire which are managed either by us or by parish councils. These contain a mixture of facilities for recreation and sport including facilities for bowling, tennis, football, and cricket

Approximately 83% of residents in our area live within a 10-minute walk of a park or outdoor space and most urban areas in our area are within a 10-minute walking distance of a park or open space

Education, involvement, and enjoyment

Our duties and services

This is an area without a clearly defined set of duties that we must deliver. We have developed services that meet our area's needs. We have no requirement to educate our community about environmental matters, but by providing education and engagement can help to bring about behaviour change, and this means that fewer people make mistakes and become the subject of enforcement action.

Our beach safety work is covered by the Occupiers Liability Act. In addition, any tourism activities must abide by the statutory obligations for the designated wildlife sites on the Humber Estuary.

Our current strategies/policies

Our economic strategy includes tourism, and we also have a tourism action plan. The Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan (CHMP) is being developed with eco-tourism included as part of the updated plan. A resort management plan is in the pipeline following on from the CHMP.

Our environmental education work does not have a formal strategy/policy but there is an education plan developed by the education officers that supports the aims of the services they work with. This includes seasonal messages and plans for contact methods for different types of engagement. We react to any relevant incoming environmental issue with social media posts and attempts to engage the community.

The Cleethorpes Masterplan is currently being undertaken and this will look at the development of the resort in the next ten years. Any proposed projects will need to be considered in the context of any environmental and natural asset implications.

What's changing?

Our environmental education team tend to work with our regulatory services, but there may be other areas that the work will need to branch out into in the future. There is likely to be some changes to work caused by the introduction of food waste collection in 2023.

Our resort was hit badly by the Covid pandemic, but with the increasing interest in holidays in England we need to ensure that what we have to offer receives good media coverage. There are huge opportunities for eco-tourism in Cleethorpes, due to the unique position of the resort in an SSSI, which is part of the Eastern Atlantic Flyway bird migration route. We must be careful that the pressure brought by increasing visitor numbers does not cause disturbance to the birds, as this threatens their survival and the whole population.

The outcomes we want to see

- ✓ Residents and visitors understand our environmental issues and enjoy nature without causing damage.
- ✓ Our local community act as champions our environment.
- ✓ Cleethorpes to be recognised as an eco-tourism destination with sustainable tourism forming part of the visitor experience.

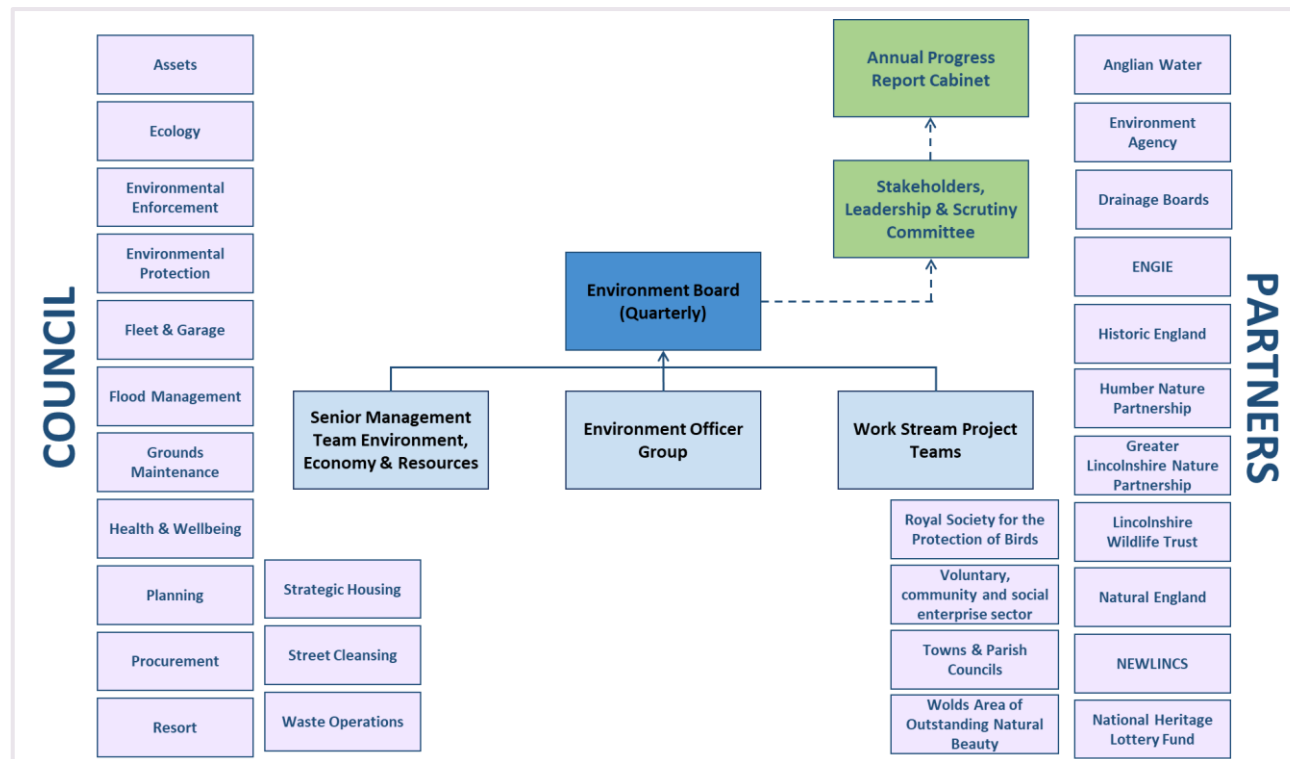
Our direction for the next five years

1. Through education and engagement start a dialogue across our community on a range of environmental issues, including waste, recycling, biodiversity, litter and reducing our carbon footprint.
2. Make additions to our website so that information on environmental issues is easy to obtain.
3. Promote the special nature designations of the Humber Estuary and emphasise the need to reduce disturbance to birds.
4. Improve signage in the resort, to help people understand and enjoy the location and wildlife.

Governance and monitoring

An Environment Board will be set up, to ensure that progress towards achieving environmental improvement and carbon reduction through our actions is monitored, reported on, and scrutinised. This board will be responsible for providing strategic direction, ensuring adequate financial support and resource is in place, and managing programme risks. It will also be responsible for monitoring progress and providing updates to key stakeholders, leadership, and scrutiny. The tasks listed as our direction for the next five years will be developed into a more detailed programme plan. Workstream leads will be accountable for ensuring projects are developing in line with agreed objectives and timescales. The leads will also be responsible for reporting progress and communicating any risks or issues. A programme highlight report will be collated on a quarterly basis, with annual progress reports to Cabinet.

High level governance structure



This diagram identifies some of the council teams and partners that will need to work together to make this plan work. It also shows that we will set up an Environment Board, which will report on progress through to our Scrutiny panels and our Cabinet.