

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

24 APRIL 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Beaumont
Arts, Leisure & Culture – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Womphrey**

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES FOR TEES VALLEY AND STOCKTON

1. Summary

Green infrastructure is the network of open spaces, countryside, rivers, lakes and street trees within and between our towns and villages. It includes both public and private assets.

A number of key regional strategies highlight the multiple benefits provided by green infrastructure and the important role it can play in the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the North East and its city-regions.

The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a vision for a strategic green infrastructure network across the sub-region. This report summarises some of the key elements of the Strategy and outlines how it will be implemented.

In addition it is proposed that a Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy is produced, in partnership with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The report sets out the scope and purpose of such a strategy and outlines the anticipated timescales and processes involved in its preparation. It is expected that the final Strategy would be published in April 2009, with an initial Action Plan covering the period 2009-12.

2. Recommendations

1. That members endorse the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and support the development of an Implementation Plan to commence in 2008/09.
2. That members support the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stockton, to be developed through a partnership approach and with a target date for completion of April 2009.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

There is a growing awareness nationally and regionally of the multiple benefits provided by green infrastructure. Furthermore key regional documents, such as the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy, advocate the strategic planning of green infrastructure networks, especially in and around the region's towns and cities.

The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy provides a framework for the development of a sub-regional green infrastructure network, a significant proportion of which is within the Borough of Stockton on Tees. The associated Implementation Plan will identify the key projects to be delivered over the next few years, with Stockton Council likely to be a major

delivery partner. In addition there is an opportunity to support the development of strategic green infrastructure through the Local Development Framework and other strategies and plans within the Borough.

The proposed Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy will identify a local green infrastructure network, expanding upon the sub-regional network identified in the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy. It is proposed that the Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy is developed and delivered through a partnership approach. This will ensure that the Borough's green infrastructure is planned and managed in a way which genuinely meets local needs and maximises the benefits for local communities and businesses.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

Green infrastructure is the network of open spaces, countryside, rivers, lakes and street trees within and between our towns and villages. It includes both public and private assets.

A number of key regional strategies highlight the multiple benefits provided by green infrastructure and the important role it can play in the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the North East and its city-regions.

The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a vision for a strategic green infrastructure network across the sub-region. This report summarises some of the key elements of the Strategy and outlines how it will be implemented.

In addition it is proposed that a Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy is produced, in partnership with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The report sets out the scope and purpose of such a strategy and outlines the anticipated timescales and processes involved in its preparation. It is expected that the final Strategy would be published in April 2009, with an initial Action Plan covering the period 2009-12.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That members endorse the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy and support the development of an Implementation Plan to commence in 2008/09.
2. That members support the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stockton, to be developed through a partnership approach and with a target date for completion of April 2009.

DETAIL

Background

What is Green Infrastructure?

1. It comprises all open spaces and water bodies within and between our towns and villages, including parks, green corridors, wildlife sites, rivers, streams, gardens, allotments and countryside. Green infrastructure also includes individual features such as street trees, and consists of both public and private assets,
2. A well-developed green infrastructure network provides multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. A strategic approach to green infrastructure planning seeks to

maximise these benefits through careful planning, achieving a high-quality network of connected spaces which meets local and sub-regional needs.

What are the functions and benefits of Green Infrastructure?

3. Green infrastructure should be planned to perform multiple functions and these, in turn, will deliver a wide range of benefits. For example, green infrastructure can:
- Provide a high quality environment which encourages businesses to remain in the area and helps to generate inward investment.
 - Enhance landscape and townscape, and provide an attractive setting for new development.
 - Improve environmental sustainability, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example, greenspaces can provide water storage capacity and 'natural' flood defences; tree cover contributes to cooler urban microclimates and improved air quality.
 - Promote health and well-being, for example, by providing opportunities for passive and active recreation, sport and children's play.
 - Provide safe spaces for people to socialise and a focus for community-based projects and events, helping to create a sense of local pride and promoting community cohesion.
 - Contribute to the area's tourism 'offer', providing new and improved visitor destinations and enhanced connectivity.
 - Promote sustainable transport through the provision of cycle and footpath networks and linkages to public transport.
 - Enhance biodiversity and conserve local heritage.
 - Provide opportunities for education and training.
 - Contribute to local food production and provide opportunities for the production of renewable energy.

Policy and strategic context for Green Infrastructure planning

4. **Appendix 1** sets out the strategic framework for green infrastructure planning. A number of national and regional strategy and policy documents support this approach; for example:
- a. The Northern Way Growth Strategy supports the role of green infrastructure planning in enhancing the quality of our city region environments, improving economic performance and creating sustainable communities:

"Our research shows that a more strategic approach would add real value, by providing a properly planned network of green infrastructure. City region partnerships and local authorities are ideally placed to strategically plan green infrastructure, integrating this with their plans to raise quality of place. (Shaping the North's Cities for Growth: An Agenda for the Next Decade - Northern Way / One NorthEast, 2007)
 - b. The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016 further emphasises the importance of green infrastructure as *"a key component of sustainable communities"* and driver for economic regeneration.
 - c. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy includes a number of policies to support green infrastructure planning and states that *"the development of green infrastructure...will play a key role in the Region's competitiveness and economic strength"*.

The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy

5. The final version of the Strategy is attached as **Appendix 2**.
6. The Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit has led on the development of the Strategy on behalf of a wider partnership comprising all five Tees Valley Local Authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency, North East Community Forests and Cabe Space.

What is the Vision for the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy?

7. “To develop by 2021 a network of green corridors and green spaces that:
 - Enhances the quality of place for existing and future communities and potential investors.
 - Provides an enhanced environmental context for new development, regeneration projects and housing market renewal, and produces high quality design and developments.
 - Creates and extends opportunities for access, regeneration, and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - Provides a buffer against the effects of climate change.”

Tees Valley Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

8. The Strategy outlines a network of 17 Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors across the Tees Valley, linking existing environmental resources with strategic priorities such as major redevelopment schemes, housing market renewal areas, and areas of new housing and business development. A map showing this network is included on page 55 of the Strategy, with the strategic priorities and actions for each corridor set out on pages 56-57. The strategic green infrastructure network for Stockton includes:

Corridors 1a & 1b	River Tees
Corridor 5	Darlington / Middleton St George / A66 & A67 to Stockton
Corridor 6	Preston-on-Tees / Hartburn / Fairfield / Bishopsgarth / Wynyard
Corridor 7	Hartburn / Lustrum Beck to the River Tees
Corridor 8	Stainsby Beck Valley
Corridor 9	Billingham Beck Valley
Corridor 10	Saltholme / Cowpen Bewley / Wynyard to Hartlepool
Corridor 11	Saltholme to Hartlepool Coast
Corridor 17	River Leven

Implementation of the Strategy

9. Key priorities for each corridor should be reflected in Local Development Frameworks and other local strategic plans and regeneration schemes. An Implementation Plan for the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy is also being developed with input from all major partners. The Plan will:
 - Summarise existing and planned strategic green infrastructure projects and initiatives.
 - Identify gaps and new opportunities.
 - Provide an indicative timetable for implementation.
 - Identify potential funding sources (One NorthEast have initially allocated £500,000 in 2008/09 through the Tees Valley City Region Investment Plan, but a variety of other funding and delivery mechanisms will need to be employed).
 - Set out arrangements for monitoring progress and reviewing priorities.

Proposed Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy

Strategic framework

10. As referred to above, **Appendix 1** shows the regional, sub-regional and local strategic context for the proposed Strategy. This diagram highlights linkages to a number of other Borough-wide strategies, including most importantly the Local Development Framework and Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-21). In addition to the Green Infrastructure Strategy a number of other strategy/policy documents and action plans will be developed to set out the Council's approach to the management and development of different types of green infrastructure. For example, an associated Tree and Woodland Strategy would provide a framework for increasing tree cover and for the sustainable management of the Borough's trees and woodlands.

Scope and purpose of the Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy

11. The Strategy will focus on the development and sustainable management of green infrastructure. It will include a spatial planning element identifying key assets and opportunities. The long-term aim would be to develop networks of 'multifunctional' and connected green and 'blue' space across the Borough.
12. More specifically the purpose of the Strategy would be as follows:
 - a) To establish a shared vision for a high-quality green infrastructure network covering all parts of the Borough
 - b) To highlight the environmental, social and economic benefits that can be delivered through well-planned and managed green infrastructure.
 - c) To create a comprehensive policy framework for the protection, enhancement, development, accessibility and use of the Borough's green infrastructure network.
 - d) To integrate green infrastructure planning into other strategic plans, especially the Local Development Framework (e.g. green infrastructure priorities should be in line with policies in the Environment and Regeneration Development Plan Documents and these documents should in turn support delivery of green infrastructure objectives).
 - e) To ensure that the Borough's green infrastructure network is developed in a way which meets the needs of local people and addresses local social, economic and environmental priorities.
 - f) To provide a framework for all partners and stakeholders to participate in the development and management of the Borough's green infrastructure.
 - g) To map existing green infrastructure assets and functions, and identify opportunities/priorities for the development of the green infrastructure network (e.g. key areas/corridors and types of green infrastructure required to ensure connectivity, address local needs and maximise benefits);
 - h) To identify funding and delivery mechanisms, ensuring green infrastructure planning is fully integrated with wider regeneration programmes.

Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy Objectives

13. Broad objectives are likely to include:
 - Developing networks of accessible countryside and greenspace.

- Creating attractive places to live and work, contributing to the regeneration of the Borough and its tourism 'offer'.
- Encouraging active sport, recreation and healthy lifestyles.
- Promoting learning and understanding.
- Contributing towards sustainable resource management.
- Enhancing the Borough's landscapes and townscapes, creating a strong 'sense of place'.
- Encouraging community participation in the management and development of greenspaces, promoting community cohesion.
- Enhancing biodiversity and conserving local heritage.

Towards a Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy

14. The anticipated timescales are as follows:

Spring / Summer 2008	Engagement with partners and stakeholders - seeking input to the development of the Strategy and the 'assets & opportunities' plan.
Nov 2008	Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy published.
Nov 2008 to Jan 2009	Consultation period
April 2009	Publish final version of Strategy and Action Plan (2009-12)

15. It is proposed that a Strategy Working Group is established. A number of external partners could be invited to play an active role in the development of the Strategy, including:

- North East Community Forests
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Forestry Commission
- Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

In addition a number of sections of the Council should be represented on the Working Group.

16. It is important that the Strategy is underpinned by a robust evidence base. Existing information and planned new research includes:

- A Borough-wide Recreation and Leisure Survey, completed in March 2008.
- Viewpoint Surveys and the Stockton-on-Tees Residents Survey.
- A review of the existing Open Space Audit data and other existing spatial data held by the Council and its partners. This will be supplemented by additional green infrastructure mapping as required.
- A review of the Borough's Local Wildlife Sites, to be completed by August 2008.
- A proposed Landscape/Townscape Character Assessment

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. Projects for delivery under the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy have yet to be finalised. The proposed Implementation Plan will set out a wide range of projects, identifying lead delivery partners and potential sources of funding. Stockton Council is likely to be able to support delivery of the Strategy through some of its planned projects and programmes. External funding and/or Stockton Council funding may be sought for other projects in the future.

18. Any planned research and consultation work associated with the preparation of the Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy can be funded through existing revenue budgets. Again additional funds may be requested in the future to support delivery of the Strategy and associated Action Plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no legal implications at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The development and delivery of these Strategies is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

21. Both Strategies will contribute towards delivery of all the key themes within the current Community Strategy (2005-2008) and the draft Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2021). For example:
- Economic Regeneration and Transport – e.g. encouraging better use of the River Tees and creating sustainable transport networks.
 - Environment and Housing – e.g. helping to tackle climate change and creating better open spaces.
 - Community Safety – e.g. reducing crime and the fear of crime through well-designed and well-used greenspaces.
 - Children and Young People – e.g. providing opportunities for outdoor play and learning.
 - Healthier Communities and Adults – e.g. promoting healthy lifestyles, including walking, cycling and active recreation.
 - Stronger Communities – e.g. greater community involvement in the management and development of greenspaces, increasing pride in the local area.
 - Older Adults – e.g. providing appropriate leisure and recreational opportunities.
 - Arts, Leisure and Culture – e.g. providing a setting for cultural events and sport, and conserving/celebrating local heritage.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

22. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the proposed Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

23. The draft Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy was published late in 2006, with a consultation period during January and February 2007. The final document reflects feedback received at that time, as well as subsequent comments made by partner organisations.
24. The draft version of the proposed Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy will be subject to a detailed public consultation process in which all ward councillors will be given opportunities to comment.

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Background Papers

- 'Shaping the North's Cities for Growth: An Agenda for the Next Decade' - *Northern Way / One NorthEast, 2007.*
- 'Leading the Way: Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016' - *One NorthEast, 2006.*
- 'North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy' – consultation draft – *Government Office for the North East, February 2008.*

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not applicable

Property

Not applicable