

AVDC ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES
Councillor Irwin
Cabinet Member for Environment

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report highlights the work that AVDC has undertaken to improve the environment of the Vale and proposes the continuation of the environmental initiative with the allocation of the resources needed to achieve that.

2 Recommendations/for decision

- 2.1 That the work the Council is already undertaking on environmental issues be noted.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree that future environmental actions should continue until vesting day focus on:
- Providing Environmental Leadership.
 - Supporting Local Initiatives.
 - Working in Partnership.
- 2.3 That Council be recommended to release a budget of up to £60,000 to facilitate the continuation of AVDC's environmental initiatives programme.

3 Executive summary

- 3.1 At the Council meeting of 17 July 2019, the Leader announced that Officers had been asked to facilitate a debate at the next full meeting of the Council on the actions that AVDC was taking, and might be able to take in the future, to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- 3.2 This report therefore asks Members to note the significant success that the Council – working with residents and other stakeholders – has achieved in reducing CO2 emissions over recent years and highlights some of the nationally recognised environmental work the Council has undertaken. The report recognises, however, it that further work is needed locally if we are to maintain the momentum required meet the challenging target set by the Government for the UK to be carbon neutral by 2050.
- 3.3 The report therefore proposes that funding be made available to employ a technical consultant to draft and implement the next phase of the Council's environmental initiative programme whilst permanent officers continue to work upon the delivery of the new unitary council.
- 3.4 To facilitate the debate on actions to be taken by the Council before vesting day, the report highlights some examples of what could be achieved locally that would continue to drive cultural change and improve focus on environmental issues in the vale.
- 3.5 The report highlights some areas of best practice from other council and identifies some ideas of the type of potential actions that members may wish to debate.

4 Supporting information

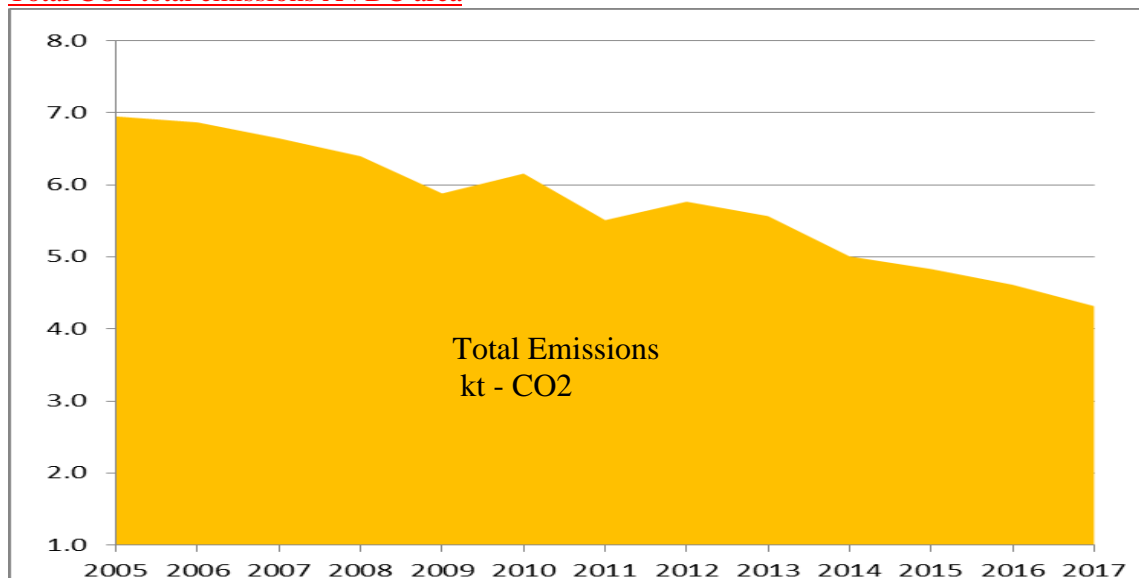
- 4.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) October 2018 report on climate change highlighted the chilling fact that the world has just 12 years to make considerable positive change in the way we deal with our

environment before irreparable damage is done to our planet. This report received significant public attention and has resulted in a significant increase in environmental awareness of the population as a whole.

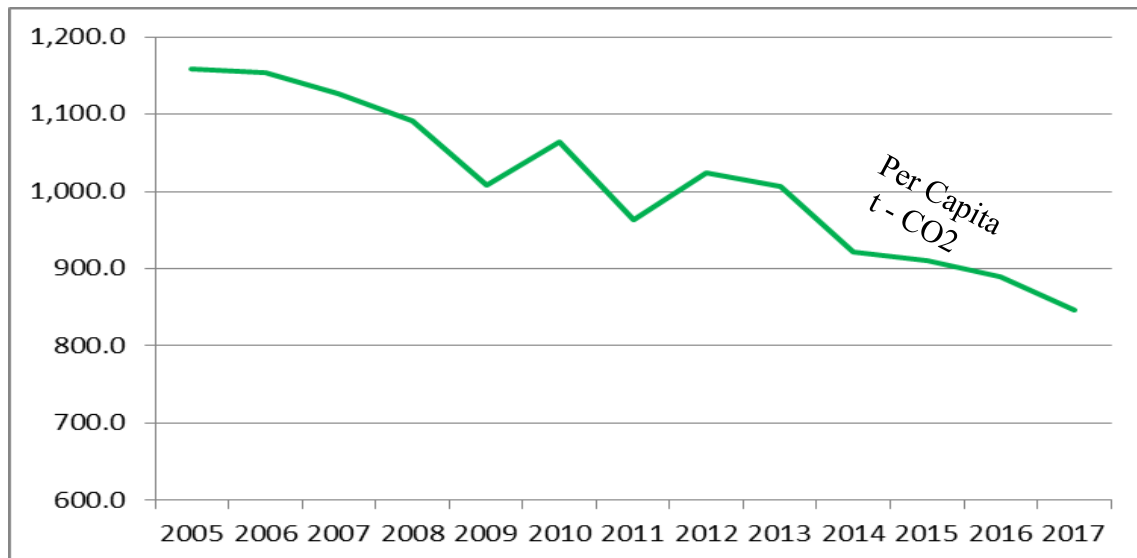
- 4.2 In June 2019 the Government responded to the report by announcing that the UK will cut emissions to net zero by 2050.
- 4.3 On a local level, many Councils (now 80+) across the UK have declared a “climate emergency” and pledged to significantly reduce their carbon emissions - or become carbon neutral - by 2050 or earlier.
- 4.4 Although these declarations have generally been well received, a number of Councils who made the declaration have had it criticised as an empty gesture as they did not put in place an action plan to achieve these aims nor did they put in place any monitoring or reporting arrangements.
- 4.5 With the new Buckinghamshire Council replacing the existing councils in April 2020 the practical focus of AVDCs actions needs to be on practical initiatives that deliver results in months not years. This report outlines some proposals for giving fresh impetus to our work in addressing the current environmental challenges and continues to build on a culture of supporting the environment that the work of this council has already achieved.
- 4.6 AVDC already have a strong track record in addressing environmental concerns and CO2 emissions. Supporting the work being undertaken nationally by Government and NGOs, AVDC have worked locally with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions across the vale.
- 4.7 This work has strongly contributed to a significant success with both overall emissions and per capita emissions across the vale reducing significantly since 2005.

- Source – data.gov.uk last data available is for 2017.

Total CO2 total emissions AVDC area



Co2 emissions per capita AVDC area



4.8 This represents a **27%** reduction in CO2 across the vale overall and a very positive **38%** reduction in the per capita figure. In particular, the per capita reduction compares favourably with the Buckinghamshire average of **33%**

4.9 In essence, AVDC have built environmental considerations into every aspect of the work that we undertake as a council. This is illustrated by the list of existing undertakings in Appendix 1 of this report, with the case studies below being just some of the highlights that have been recognised on the national stage.

Kingsbrook Development (Planning)

AVDCs commitment to working with partners to deliver on the environmental agenda is typified by the Kingsbrook development, the outcome of a unique collaboration between AVDC, the RSPB, and Barret and David Wilson Homes. Kingsbrook stretches over 1000 acres with 2,450 new homes.

A commitment to putting nature at the heart of development is its defining feature and a central tenant of AVDC's promotion of the garden town principles. 60% of Kingsbrook is green infrastructure, including ponds, parks, meadows, orchards, wildlife corridors, wildflower grassland and a nature reserve to encourage invertebrates.

Rills and swales have been employed to promote wetlands and all show gardens are wildflower planted. The RSPB were instrumental in devising a special brick to allow swallows and house martins to roost in homes without damaging brickwork. It is hoped that this unique approach can help form a template for future sustainable development at a national level.

4.10 Kingsbrook shows the impact that AVDCs policies can have on improving the environment and also how we can work in partnership to deliver good quality ecologically friendly developments.

4.11 Another positive example is the UK Black Poplar Conservation Group where the council has worked with volunteers, a local charity and the Royal Botanic Gardens. This work not only helps protect these vitally important trees but also recognises the fantastic work of a local organisation that supports people with mental health challenges. This initiative highlights the importance of

living in a healthy, clean and vibrant environment and the benefits this affords to all residents mental health.

UK Black Poplar Conservation Group (Heritage)

The UK Black Poplar Conservation Group was set up by AVDC's Environment team with the objective of co-ordinating conservation efforts nationally. Aylesbury Vale is home to over half the national population of the rare native Black Poplar tree and the Environment Team coordinates the Group which has promoted conservation for 20 years, by raising public awareness, delivering planting programmes, genetic research and establishing clone banks in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Examples of significant work include the new Arla development, with a landscape scheme that saw 3,000 black poplars planted at the Environment Team's request, representing a 25 per cent increase in the UK population of the species, whilst the Kingsbrook development will create the UK's largest black poplar woodland.

The team has also worked with Lindengate (a mental health charity utilising therapeutic horticulture) to nurture a new disease-resistant strain developed at Kew Gardens. Lindengate have established a 'Tree Nursery', which will produce locally grown stock with a known provenance.

- 4.12 AVDC also have a great record in protecting endangered species and are national leaders with the Great Crested Newt Licensing Scheme.

Great Crested Newt Licensing Scheme (Ecology)

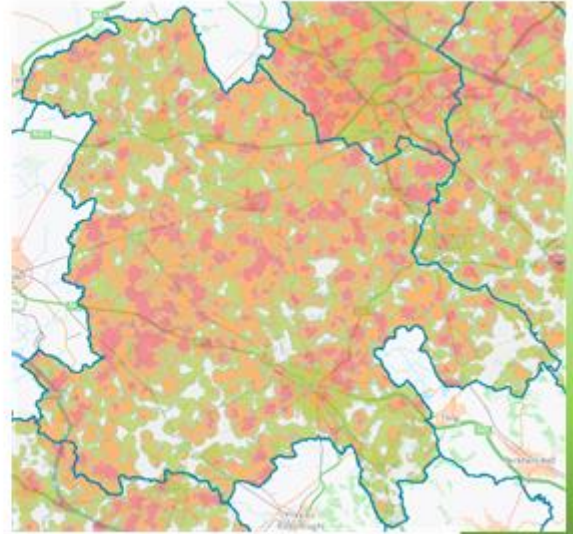
AVDC were one of the first council's within the UK to adopt this new and novel method of conservation for this nationally protected species and were the first authority to grant a license. Due to their protected status GCN often come into conflict with planned developments and frequently cost developers a significant amount of time and money through the planning process. However despite high levels of protection the species continues to be in decline nationally.

The district license scheme is designed to balance the needs of ecology and the increased development demand, improving GCN conservation on a landscape scale and preventing costly delays in planning applications. The scheme provides for a conservation strategy that creates a minimum of four new ponds for every newt pond lost, bringing huge benefits for great crested newts and lots of other wildlife.

- 4.13 As can be seen from the map below the work we are undertaking in this area is vital as the vale provides a fantastic natural habitat for these rare creatures.

Aylesbury Vale

- ▶ Red Zone (area deemed as being most likely to support GCN – covers 14% of land within Aylesbury Vale)
- ▶ 42% (90/212) of ponds within Aylesbury Vale found in land allocated for development that falls within areas marked as red zones.
- ▶ AVDC first LPA within the UK to adopt the NatureSpace District Licence scheme.
- ▶ First development to use district licensing in the UK – Waddesdon Parkway Cycle route.
- ▶ Total number of developments using scheme: 6
- ▶ Total number of enquiries: 28
- ▶ Compensation sites (where new terrestrial and aquatic habitat for great crested newts is created) include: Shabington Woods SSSI, Rushbeds Wood, Finemere Wood and Long Spinney.



5 Options

- 5.1 Currently, considerable officer and member time is taken up with delivering a new unitary council for Buckinghamshire and consideration was given to having a hiatus in the environmental programme until the new council is in place.
- 5.2 It was decided, however, that despite this Council's success so far the level of environmental challenge that the country faces is daunting and it is vital that we continue to both drive forward change across the Vale and also support our residents in maintaining or creating the best environment for them to live and grow. The option of a hiatus is therefore not recommended.
- 5.3 Instead, it is proposed that the Council establishes a budget of £60,000 to fund the administrative, capital and resource costs of producing the options report and then delivering the next phase of the initiative.
- 5.4 The above budget, which would need to be agreed by Council on 18 September 2019, would fund the production of a full options and appraisal paper for further consideration. However, the focus of future actions should be on projects that deliver in the relatively short term but also support the growing awareness of the importance of environmental issues to residents. Some potential examples are given below.
- 5.5 **Providing Environmental Leadership** - The Council's track record in this area has so far been good (see AVDC context earlier), but this needs to continue and the profile of the work undertaken increased locally to encourage actions by residents. Some examples of actions that could be proposed could be a "litter pick" by council members or members acting as environmental champions at parish council meetings both of which would show the commitment of members to delivering a cleaner environment.

- 5.6 **Supporting Local Initiatives** - One of the proposal is to look at ways to support some of the excellent work being undertaken by the young people of the vale.
- 5.7 At the last Council meeting, Councillor Steve Bowles highlighted the excellent work being undertaken by one of his young residents. A nine year old pupil of Wendover Junior School has launched a "Kids Clean Britain" initiative. She wants to encourage people to go out in their local community to collect litter bring it to a central point for collection by the local refuse service. It will help people to think before they litter this scheme has been successful in Australia and brings communities together.
- 5.8 The Council should have a role in identifying, recognising and supporting initiatives such as these empowering our residents in ensuring the Vale remains a green and pleasant place to live.
- 5.9 One potential idea is to sponsor the creation of schemes or awards aimed at young people that encourage good environmental behaviour. A couple of examples of schemes we could launch are detailed below.

Young Environmental Champions

This focuses less on prizes/awards initially but more around encouragement, communications and building momentum for the young champions. Children should start with bronze and complete each activity until they reach the Gold badge.

They should complete the following to receive a bronze badge;

- *Be a champion for litter picking at school*
- *Walk, cycle or take public transport/car share to school regularly*

Silver badge

- *Take part in a community litter pick*
- *Be a recycling champion at school and home -know the difference between the bins and how to use spot what is recyclable or not*

Gold badge

- *Grow your own vegetables or herbs and use at home and in your packed lunch.*
- *Organise a litter pick at school or in a park near where you live*

- 5.10 We know there will be young people that are already surpassing the young environmental champions Gold badge level, so there is the option to create a special category for them and they have a bigger badge/lanyards and then offer them the opportunity for a special presentation at council, an interview, social media coverage etc.
- 5.11 These is also the option of making a small contribution towards the administrative costs of these local schemes with a bi-monthly presentation of a certificate and cheque for £25 - £50.
- 5.12 Working in Partnership - The Council recognises the important role that local businesses and charities play in delivering local environmental initiatives on the ground. An interesting example is shown in appendix 2 of this report with "Refill Woking" where the Council has persuaded local businesses to

advertise that they provide free tap water to encourage the reduction of single use plastic bottles.

6 Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 As global climate challenges continue to increase, it is considered imperative that locally we maintain the momentum of the environmental improvements that AVDC already play an important role in delivering.

7 Resource implications

- 7.1 This new phase of our environmental initiative will require the creation of a budget of up to £60,000 to provide administrative and technical resource required to develop the action plan and deliver the initiative. As no monies have currently been specified for this use, the budget will need to be funded through the use of general funds, unallocated balances

Contact Officer
Background Documents

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Appendix 1 - Environmental measures/actions by AVDC
Appendix 2 - BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Appendix 1 - Environmental measures/actions by AVDC

Community Centres

- Hawkslade community centre - Solar panels
- Alfred Rose, Hawkslade, Southcourt, Bedgrove and Prebendal all have LED lighting throughout the buildings and presence detector in toilets and public areas.
- Southcourt – Loft installation
- Prebendal and Alfred Rose – Cavity Wall installation

Aqua Vale

- Pool cover

Gateway

- Presence detector on every floor
- LED lighting in the street
- Lease car pool including 2 fully electric & 2 petrol hybrid vehicles.
- We have recently converted over 4 of our company car users (building control team) to petrol hybrid vehicles to be delivered in Aug/Sept.
- EV charging points in the car park
- Energy saving device on boilers

The Exchange

- Green Roof
- Rainwater harvesting
- Cycle stand

Car parks

- Replacement lighting in all car parks

Parks & Green Infrastructure

- Securing (and maintaining) Green Flag awards for three parks
- Published AVDC's Green Infrastructure Strategy (only DC in Bucks to have done so)
- Creation and improvement of sustainable meadows, now home to native orchids
- Tree planting incl 'Trees Please' initiative launch several years ago by Leisure
- Promoting National Tree Week with tree planting ceremony
- Participation in the national play builder scheme delivering play area better connected to nature
- Encouraging the relaxing grass cutting under tree canopies and along river margins
- Replacing summer annual bedding schemes with perennial planting; less water demands, zero peat, no energy demands

Ecology

- Expert input on Kingsbrook development – including the development of wildlife friendly housing in partnership with the RSPB. This featured as a case study in the Governments 25 year Environment Plan.
- First authority to issue a license under the Great Crested Newt district licensing scheme

- Securing funds from Berryfields development to mitigate impact on farmland birds species; funds hedgerow Havens project delivered in partnership with Berks, Bucks, Oxon Wildlife Trust
- Establishing a supporting volunteer Groups; Vale Countryside Volunteers, North Bucks Bat Group, Owl and Raptor Group, Bucks Amphibian and Reptile Group, Dormouse Group, Swift project
- Develop VALP policy and SPD to deliver biodiversity net gains
- Produce Water Advice Note (covering natural water courses) for VALP SPD
- Provide service to check for protected species ahead of development
- Raised initial concerns of pollution in the River Thames from Aylesbury Sewage works, resulting in a record £20M fine for Thames Water. Ongoing representation at meetings to ensure there is not a repeat incident
- S106 funded project to reduce flood risk in Buckingham through natural flood management measures
- National Black Poplar conference held at the Gateway, work with Lindengate to develop nursery stock for use on developments, project with RBG Kew to bank seed and develop genetic diversity
- Establishing peregrine nesting box and platform on top of Bucks CC offices, and setup un webcam; attracting international audience with comments from viewers in Japan
- Provide expert advice on national infrastructure projects – HS2, EWR, Expressway. Achieved (in partnership) commitment to biodiversity gains as part of the EWR public enquiry process

Air Quality

- Participating in national clean air day
- Working with Bucks Air Quality Management Group to produce new strategy and Supplementary Planning Guidance for VALP
- Review of Air Quality Management Areas

Environmental Health

- Food Hygiene inspections include a check of waste disposal
- Promotion of noise action day
- Clean up of waste on nil ownership land to the rear of Cambridge Street and campaign to residents and businesses about responsible waste disposal

AVDC Planning Policy Environmental Initiatives

8 VALP Policies

- S1 Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale
- S4 Green belt
- S7 Previously developed land
- D1 Delivering Aylesbury Garden Town
- Site specific environmental criteria in VALP site allocation policies
- T1 Delivering the sustainable transport vision
- T6 Footpaths and cycle routes
- T7 Electric vehicle infrastructure
- NE1 Protected sites
- NE2 Biodiversity and geodiversity
- NE3 River and stream corridors
- NE4 The Chilterns AONB and setting
- NE5 Landscape character and locally important landscape
- NE6 Pollution, air quality and contaminated land
- NE7 Local green space
- NE8 Best and most versatile agricultural land
- NE9 Trees, hedgerows and woodlands
- C1 Conversion of rural buildings
- C2 Equestrian development
- C3 Renewable Energy
- C4 Protection of public rights of way
- I1 Green infrastructure
- I4 Flooding
- I5 Water resources

9 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- District wide design guide SPD
- Biodiversity accounting SPD
- Aylesbury Garden Town Framework and Infrastructure SPD

10 Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan
 - DHE1 Protect existing trees and provision of trees in developments
 - DHE2 Standard of ecological information required to minimise the impact on natural habitats
 - DHE3 Protection of designated sites and local and national priority habitats and species
 - DHE4 Protection of movement corridors
 - DHE5 Biodiversity in development landscaping

- CLH3 Allocate land for allotments
- CLH5 Local green spaces
- CLH8 Continuation and expansion of the Riverside Walk
- I2 Renewable energy generation
- I3 Rainwater collection
- I5 Sewage Management
- Winslow Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy 8 Cycle Routes
 - Policy 9 Bus Services
 - Policy 10 Traffic Management
 - Policy 19 Local Green Spaces
- Aston Clinton Neighbourhood Plan
 - L2 Leisure - Public open spaces, footpaths, cycle & bridleways
 - T1 Transport - Traffic mitigation
 - T2 Transport - Encourage walking & cycling
 - EN1 Environment - Development impact on biodiversity
 - EN2 Environment - Protecting biodiversity loss
 - EN3 Environment - Local Green Spaces
 - EN4 Environment - Abating flood risk
- Buckland Neighbourhood Plan
 - BP2 AONB/Green Belt
 - BP15 Natural Environment
- Wing Neighbourhood Plan
 - CGS1 – Respecting the Environment
 - CGS2 – Open Space in new development
 - CGS3 – Local Green Space Designation
- Winslow Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy 19 – Local Green Spaces
- Quainton Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy NE1 Designated Local Green Spaces
 - Policy NE2 Natural Environment
- Waddesdon Neighbourhood Plan
 - WAD13 Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - WAD14 Local Green Spaces
- Pitstone Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy 5: Area of Special Landscape Value - provides additional policy protection to an area of locally valued landscape
 - Policy 7: Local Green Space - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
 - Non-policy project to monitor and seek an increase to number of street trees and maintain and enhance small informal green spaces.
- Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy T2: Strategy for improving pedestrian and cycle connections within the parish and to surrounding area - seeks to enhance accessibility on foot or by bike around the Parish

- Policy E1: Protection of Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
- Policy E2: Protection of key views and vistas - identifies and seeks to preserve key views and vistas into the countryside
- Policy E3: Biodiversity - seeks a net gain in biodiversity from development and protection of habitats
- Cheddington Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy 5: Southend Hill and Westend Hill Heritage Asset & Special Landscape - defines the area as a non-designated heritage asset and landscape of special value in which appropriate mitigation would be necessary to enable development to be permitted
 - Policy 6: Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity - seeks to secure enhancements to the natural environment, habitats and green infrastructure including footpaths and cycleways.
 - Policy 7: Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
- Edlesborough Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy EP9: Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
- Slapton Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy SLP5: Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
- Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy CFR2: Recreation - seeks provision and enhancement of recreational facilities
- Long Crendon Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy LC12: Key Views - identifies and seeks to preserve key views and vistas into the countryside
 - Policy LC13: Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
 - Policy LC14: Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity - seeks to secure enhancements to the natural environment, habitats and green infrastructure including footpaths and cycleways and a net gain in biodiversity where possible
 - Non-NP projects include ambitions for a cycle route to Thame, linking to Haddenham and Thame Parkway and enhancements to the recreation ground
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- Marsh Gibbon Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policies MG3 & 4, Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
 - Policy MG19: Enhancing, Protecting and Provision of new Natural Environment Habitats, Trees and Hedgerows - seeks natural

environment enhancements, biodiversity net gain and protection of existing environmental assets

- Steeple Claydon Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy SC6: Local Green Spaces - protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
 - Non-NP projects include ambitions for enhancements to the recreation ground
- Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan
 - Policy TGA3: Cycle and Pedestrian Networks - seeks contributions from development to fund the design and delivery of a cycle route between Thame and the Haddenham and Thame Parkways station.
 - Policy HWS1: Local Green Space Designations: protects areas of special importance locally from inappropriate development
 - Policy SRL3: Enhancing, Protecting and Provision of new Natural Environment Habitats, Trees and Hedgerows - seeks natural environment enhancements, biodiversity net gain and protection of existing environmental assets

APPENDIX 2 – BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Broxtowe Borough Council – Clean and Green

Clean and Green

Information about the Council’s Clean and Green Campaign to make Broxtowe a cleaner place and how the local community can get involved.



Our Clean and Green Campaign recently launched as part of an initiative to make Broxtowe a cleaner place.

There will be lots taking place as part of the campaign to complement what we already do to keep Broxtowe clean and tidy and we'll keep you updated about events in your area.

Join our Community Clean Team

We are asking individuals, community groups, schools and businesses to take collective responsibility for keeping the Borough clean and tidy and encourage everyone to recycle more.

If you'd like to organise an event, we can help by loaning equipment.

[You can also download our useful resource pack \(.pdf\) \(0.97MB\) \(Opens in a New Window\)](#) which provides everything you need to organise your event including:

- Checklists for running a litter pick
- Risk assessments to help ensure you keep safe whilst doing your bit
- Posters and social media graphics to use to promote the fantastic work you're doing
- Template press releases for you to use to promote your event



Don't forget to let us know what you're doing so we can promote it for you too. You can do this by emailing our Communications Team on press@broxtowe.gov.uk

If you'd like to organise an event, contact our Waste and Recycling Team.

Woking Borough Council - Refill Woking

Refill Woking

We have teamed up with national charity, [City to Sea](#), to set up a local water refill initiative called, Refill Woking, to encourage the reduction of single use plastic bottles.

We work with Town Centre partners to recruit a network of local cafes, restaurants, shops and retail outlets, which offer a water bottle refill service free of charge.

Look out for the refill logo or try using the refill app to find your nearest location.



Appendix 3 – ‘TO FOLLOW’

Schedule detailing how the funding will be used.