



Environment & Energy Board

Date: Wednesday 1 December 2021

Time: 9.30 am **Public meeting** Yes

Venue: Tyseley Energy Park, Hay Mills, Birmingham, B25 8DW

Membership

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Oliver Butler	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Maria Crompton	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Steve Evans	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jim O'Boyle	Coventry City Council
Councillor Simon Phipps	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Matthew Rhodes	Energy Capital
Suzanne Ward	Environment Agency
Councillor Waseem Zaffar	Birmingham City Council

Quorum for this meeting shall be the Portfolio Lead for the Environment, Energy & HS2 *and* at least three other members.

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

Contact Dan Essex, Governance Services Manager
Telephone (0121) 214 7505
Email dan.essex@wmca.org.uk

AGENDA

No.	Item	Presenting	Pages
Items of Public Business			
1.	Declarations of Interest Members are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable prejudicial interests they have in any item being discussed during the course of the meeting. In addition, the receipt of any gift or hospitality should be declared where the value of it was thought to have exceeded £25 (gifts) or £40 (hospitality).	Chair	None
2.	Chair's Remarks (if any)	Chair	None
3.	Minutes - 9 September 2021	Chair	1 - 4
4.	WMCA COP26 Briefing Note	Ed Cox / Steve Bowyer	5 - 12
5.	Natural Environment Update	Jackie Homan / Mike Webb	13 - 20
6.	Energy Capital Governance	Matthew Rhodes	21 - 26
7.	Energy Collaboration Days	Ed Cox	Verbal Report
Date of Next Meeting			
8.	Thursday 6 January 2022 at 10.00am	Chair	None



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Environment & Energy Board

Thursday 9 September 2021 at 10.00am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Oliver Butler	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Steve Evans	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Simon Phipps	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Suzanne Ward	Environment Agency
Councillor Waseem Zaffar	Birmingham City Council

In attendance

Councillor Peter Fowler	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
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7. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maria Crompton (Sandwell), Councillor Andy Mackiewicz (Solihull), Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry) and Matthew Rhodes (Energy Capital).

8. Chair's Remarks

The Chair drew attention to the challenges in delivering the #WM2041 carbon neutrality plan and stressed the importance of projects that would deliver this to be capable of doing so at scale. It was necessary for projects to be clear what they were aiming to achieve, should be framed around what was possible to achieve in the timescales available, and should seek to demonstrate the value that was being added to what local authorities and other partners were already doing or seeking to do.

To support this improved clarity of purpose, he requested that all future board reports should be able to convey their purpose and objectives in a succinct way, and that meetings would only be held where there was demonstrable business to conduct.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

10. West Midlands Local Transport Plan Green Paper Update

The board considered a report of the Transport Strategy & Place Manager and the Principal Policy & Strategy Officer that provided an update on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan, including the publication of the transport Green Paper, proposed West Midlands Leaders summit and COP26 prospectus, and the wider programme for developing and adopting a new Local Transport Plan.

The Chair stressed the importance of providing a viable alternative to car travel across the whole region, particularly in respect of ensuring that communities were able to connect to each other. Councillor Waseem Zaffar indicated that viable communities required good public transport links to employment, leisure and community venues.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress on development of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan and the publication of the West Midlands Transport Green Paper be noted.
- (2) The planned approach for engaging with Leaders on key transport challenges through a transport 'summit' proposed to be held in September be noted.
- (3) The high-level programme timescales for developing the core Local Transport Plan strategy through to Summer 2022 be noted.
- (4) The plan to publish a West Midlands Transport Plan Prospectus to tie into wider West Midlands representation at COP26 in Glasgow in November be noted.

11. Air Quality Options

The board received a presentation from Bill Bloss, Professor of Atmospheric Science at the University of Birmingham, on the scope for the WMCA to undertake air quality activities that supported local authorities to tackle air pollution. WM Air was the West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme that sought to develop policy in this area. It was intended to submit an Air Quality Options report to the WMCA Board setting out the implications of the Environment Bill currently in Parliament in respect of new powers for the WMCA and local authorities.

Councillor Waseem Zaffar noted that the Birmingham Clean Air Zone had already made a significant impact on air quality in Birmingham city centre, including a far higher rate of compliance than had been forecast. He suggested that the board might be interested in a presentation on the Clean Air Zone at its next meeting, and the Chair welcomed this suggestion.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

12. Infrastructure for Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy Consultation

The board considered a report from the Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment on the progress in the development of the Infrastructure for Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy, some initial insights from the consultation process and a timescale by when the final strategy document would be available for publication.

The Chair noted that greater clarity was required on the key actions that would arise as a result of this strategy. The Energy Infrastructure Lead - Energy Capital indicated that the strategy would pursue a number of different solutions and options that would help inform investment decisions. In respect of hydrogen, this included supporting a study into the feasibility of establishing hydrogen hubs. The strategy would also help inform the work that was being undertaken to develop the forthcoming West Midlands Local Transport Plan.

Resolved:

The draft Infrastructure for Zero Emission Vehicle strategy be noted.

13. COP26 Update

The board received an update from the Partnerships and Engagement Strategic Lead on arrangements being made for the COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference being held in Glasgow on 31 October - 12 November. He reported that the region intended to use the event as an opportunity to profile trade and investment in the West Midlands. There were also plans for a 'Domestic COP' which would involve regional green zone that would mirror the thematic days in Glasgow. It was expected that the West Midlands Regional Green Zone day would be held on 11 November.

The Chair indicated that he hoped COP26 would result in a plan for changing the behaviour of people and business and what was needed to be done at scale to effect change.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

14. West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap

The board considered a report from the Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment providing an overview of the West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap, as well as the next steps and recommendations for delivery. The report was to be considered by the WMCA Board on 17 September 2021.

The Chair stressed the importance of being focused on those elements that could make a difference at scale. He noted that much of the change to a circular economy would be driven by private businesses and therefore the outcomes needed to be realistic for businesses to achieve. Suzanne Ward noted the absence of water from the circular economy work and emphasised how much pressure already existed on the supply of water to business and residential properties.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

15. Natural Environment Plan

The board considered a report from the Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment setting out the final version of the first regional Natural Environment Plan (previously referred to as the Natural Capital Plan) which reflected on the independent advice from the WSP #WM2041 Five Year Plan and extensive stakeholder engagement with natural capital leads from regional organisations, including local authorities.

The Head of Environment reported that the Natural Environment Plan had been launched earlier in the week. It identified four priority areas and indicated where the role of the WMCA in each of these areas was to lead, to enable or to collaborate. It was working closely with local authorities across the region to help deliver the plan.

Resolved:

- (1) The final version of the Natural Environment Plan be noted.
- (2) The delivery of the actions contained within the plan be supported.

16. Environment & Energy Programme Update

The board considered a report from the Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform and the Head of Environment providing an overview of the environment and energy programme, including work on net zero, natural capital and circular economy. The report also covered an update on the enabling activity being put in place to ensure successful delivery, including behaviour change, business and community engagement, data and financing.

Resolved:

The environment and energy programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.50am



Environment & Energy Board

Date	1 December 2021
Report title	WMCA COP26 Briefing Note
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts - Environment, Energy & HS2
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Jacqueline Homan, Head of Environment email: jacqueline.homan@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment & Energy Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note the report outlining the implications of the COP26 conference in Glasgow.
- (2) Note and support the next steps to build on the work at COP26

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To summarise the international outcomes that were agreed during the COP26 meeting in Glasgow (31st October – 12th November 2021). The paper also covers the Mayor's activities at COP26 in Glasgow and the 'COP26 Regional Roadshow' event hosted at Wolverhampton University.

2. Background

- 2.1 From 31st October - 12th November 2021, 196 countries met in Glasgow, the United Kingdom, for the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26). The negotiations confirmed the importance of tackling climate change and the urgent need for drastic emission reductions. The COP resulted in an agreement referred to as the 'Glasgow Climate Pact'. The government claims that the 'Glasgow Climate Pact keeps the critical 1.5°C global warming goal alive', although the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) continue to fall short of this target.
- 2.2 From a regional perspective, our objectives from our involvement in COP26 were:
- To raise the profile of the region for trade and investment opportunities;
 - Create a 'buzz' around net zero within the region to encourage even greater participation among businesses and citizens;
 - Build our partnership with central government for enhanced powers and resources in the delivery of climate change action.
- 2.3 Crucially, the region viewed COP26 as just one step on our path to net zero rather than an end in itself – which has included the development of key regional strategies and other events such as the International Net Zero Summit, with UK100, in the summer of 2021.

COP26 Outcomes Summary:

- 2.4 The temperature targets of the Paris Agreement were reaffirmed in Glasgow. NDC reductions pledged at Paris would have been estimated to result in 3.7°C of warming by the end of the century; the NDC reductions made in Glasgow, if achieved, will result in 2.4°C of warming.
- 2.5 Specific decisions of note include:
- Nations that are responsible for 90% of the world's GDP have now pledged to go net zero by the middle of this century.
 - At the conference India pledged to reach net-zero by 2070, with a further promise of renewable energy generating 50% of India's power by 2030.
 - The US and China issued a bi-lateral agreement which insisted that the two countries would work together to reduce emissions in the next decade.
 - Further commitments were made to increase climate financing and to reduce deforestation, as well as historic (albeit weak) references to reducing fossil fuels.
 - "Loss and Damage" was developed through the Santiago Network to provide funding to developing countries to pay for loss and damage from the impacts of climate change; however, this continues to fall short of the aspirations of many developing countries.

- Over 30 countries and several car manufacturers committed to collaborate towards the goal of making all new car sales zero emission globally by 2040, and by 2035 in leading markets.
- COP26 resulted in a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreement, coined the 'Glasgow Climate Pact'.

The 'Glasgow Climate Pact':

- 2.6 The Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Agreement temperature goal of well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and with efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Pact also reaffirms the need for 'rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions', which includes the reduction of global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 (relative to 2010 base level) and to net zero by 2050 (or as close as possible).
- 2.7 Under the agreement countries are asked to 'revisit and strengthen' their 2030 climate plans by the end of 2022, with new NDCs and adjustments 'as necessary to align with the Paris temperature goal' (1.5°C). The current NDCs are insufficient to meet this target.
- 2.8 Other notable decisions reached in the agreement include:
- The Pact acknowledged the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goal; 100 countries committed to end deforestation by 2030, with almost \$14bn in public and private financing to support this.
 - The Pact recognised 'the important role of indigenous peoples' and local communities' culture and knowledge in effective action on climate change', as well as establishing the Action for Climate Empowerment, which considers human rights and gender equality. Five of the richest countries have pledged \$1.7bn to support the conservation efforts of indigenous people
 - COP nations committed to 'phase down' coal-fired power generation and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. Note that this is not a 'phase out' which weakens the agreement, although an explicit mention of fossil fuels is a historic first in a UN Climate Agreement. All major coal financing countries have committed to end international coal finance by the end of 2021, with \$20 billion in funding to support the transition to clean power announced
 - Parties 'noted with deep regret' the failure of developed countries to deliver \$100bn annually in climate finance, with a further agreement committing a number of nations reach the \$100bn threshold in 2023 and to deliver \$500bn over the period 2021-25. This can be viewed here.
 - Developed parties have been urged to double the finance committed to adaptation, from the 2019 base level. The agreement 'notes with concern that the current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient'
 - The Pact encourages Parties to consider further actions to reduce by 2030 non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions, including methane. The US and EU have signed up to an initiative to cut methane emissions.
 - The agreement establishes a Glasgow Dialogue 'to discuss the arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change', as a concession to vulnerable nations over loss and damage.

- Rules were agreed to establish a global carbon market and govern bilateral carbon trading. The Pact tightens the rules from 2015, but there are serious concerns about nations exploiting this system.
- There will be a new emission reporting framework by 2024 that will be more rigorous to avoid emission cheating.

WMCA at COP26:

- 2.9 The WMCA activities around COP26, and the lead-up to it, were strongly guided by the objectives set out at the start, and outcomes have been achieved against each of those.
- 2.10 Trade and investment: Working in partnership with the West Midlands Growth Company, delegates attending COP26 presented a 'Low Carbon Prospectus' to key investors and stakeholders. These engagements will be pursued by WMGC and WMCA through further bilateral conversations.
- 2.11 Business and citizen interest: The media activity throughout COP and its partner 'Regional Roadshow' was extensive as set out in the activities reporting below.
- 2.12 Relationship with government: The West Midlands is clearly recognised as a leading partner in the drive to net zero, as reflected in the post-Net Zero Summit engagement, and invitations to participate on key platforms in the United Nations zone at COP26. In addition, COP26 also presented the opportunity to enhance relationships with influential partners such as the C40 group, Core Cities, UK100 and ICLEI.

COP26 Activities:

- 2.13 Presence in Glasgow:
- The Mayor presented at two high profile events in the UN Blue Zone: the first, led by DEFRA and C40, focused on the importance of 'greening urban environments' through natural environment initiatives; the second saw the Mayor position the West Midlands at the forefront of low carbon transport and built environment solutions, on the UK Pavilion.
 - Andy Street also announced a region-wide programme to build a series of 'Net Zero Neighbourhoods' while in Glasgow, with Arup announced as the programme's first private sector partner.
 - Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform at WMCA, spoke at the Global Innovation Pavilion in Glasgow on the importance of innovative financing models and public-private partnerships in delivering net zero.
 - In addition, the WMCA hosted an event in partnership with Vivarail to showcase the engineering prowess of the region as the home of the green industrial revolution – this not only attracted a diverse audience from the rail industry, academia and central government, but also featured in a surprise visit from the Prime Minister, alongside the region's HydroFLEX hydrogen-powered train.
- 2.14 COP26 Regional Roadshow - part of UK government's 'domestic COP26' campaign, and co-funded by BEIS through the Midlands Energy Hub:

- Diverse range of panels, workshops and speakers, representing the region's civic, industry and research strengths. 185 people attended in person, with 176 participating online. The event was also recorded and is available via YouTube.
- In addition to the formal presentations and engagement a highly successful expo showcased cutting-edge innovations from 14 West-Midlands based businesses – highlighting that many of the solutions to tackling climate change already exist and need to be deployed.
- The event was one of four across the Midlands region and the only to attract a recorded message from a Minister (Lord Grimstone of Boscobel).

2.15 Social media output:

COP26 Regional Roadshow WM

- Pre-event communications were focussed on driving registrations to the event, which included organic social media content from the WMCA social channels. With a total of 171 link clicks through to the event registration, 90,165 reach (number of times content shown on a screen) and over 470 engagements (likes, shares etc..).
- Prior to COP26 starting we ran a poll across our various social media channels to gauge what sort of appetite there was for trying green behaviours. The polls totalled 1,404 votes, 51,588 impressions (number of time people saw the polls), 47 likes and 2 Shares. The outright winning choice from the polls was 'recycle & reuse more'. (poll choices: recycle & reuse more; be more energy efficient; use greener transport; eat a more plant-based diet).
- Event day social media communications consisted of live posting to Twitter and Instagram, with a total of 39,613 Impressions (number of times shown on a screen), 2,682 reach (number of people who saw the content), 177 likes and 62 shares on the day.

COP26 (Mayoral Activity)

- Whilst the Regional Roadshow WM event took place Andy Street was in Glasgow attending COP26. We covered his activities via social media, posting from the events he was attending. We shared three posts across the two days totalling 6602 impressions (Number of times shown on a screen), 29 likes and 15 shares.

2.16 Press Coverage:

- From November 5th to the 12th there were a total of 76 articles across print, online and broadcast. Coverage included all major regional titles as well as The Times. Broadcast coverage included interviews with the Mayor on consecutive days on ITV Central and an interview with Sky News.
- Radio coverage was generated by interviews the Mayor gave with local BBC channels while independent stations also carried coverage on the Mayor's COP26 activities on the back of WMCA news releases.
- The week's coverage was generated by a mix of interviews, statements, contributions to third party communications and WMCA news releases including the battery and hydrogen trains being taken to Glasgow, the region's Green Transport Revolution, the Mayor's transport emissions message to COP26 and the regional roadshow.
- Further coverage is anticipated over the next few days by the Net Zero Neighbourhoods press release which was issued on the 11th.

- Of the 76 articles, 3 were in print, 18 online and 52 were broadcast with a total reach of 64.5 million. 67% were regional items, 19% national, 4% international with the remainder local or other. Sentiment was 100% positive.

What next:

- 2.17 Egypt 2022 for COP27, countries are expected to provide updated and more ambitious NDCs.
- 2.18 WMCA and its partners will be pursuing a number of initiatives to maximise the opportunities generated through COP26
- Bilateral meetings with investors in infrastructure, finance, energy and the built environment.
 - Enhance partnerships with government and other stakeholders on energy and programmes such as Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrators following positive engagement during COP.
 - Develop closer links with regional businesses and intermediaries following the positive engagement and networking at the Regional Roadshow.
 - Explore international collaborations initiated through COP activities for shared best practice, delivery of joint initiatives and possible investment opportunities.
 - Pursue closer links with universities, students and other youth bodies to ensure their voices are heard and included in the race to net zero.
 - Utilise footage and assets from the events for a consistent drumbeat of net zero messaging through social and other media.
- 2.19 In addition, the WMCA will be exploring 'follow-up' events for 2022 to maintain the momentum from COP26, including continued collaboration with the University of Birmingham on its Forum for Global Challenges, investor events with WMGC, and the potential for an international summit with UK100.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None for this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 None for this report.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 None for this report.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 6.1 The #WM2041 strategy was written with inclusive growth as its heart. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are central to our work, which reflect the co-benefits that can be achieved through work on climate change. The WMCA plans also emphasise the need for a just transition in achieving net zero, creating opportunities and building resilience in all communities across the West Midlands.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

7.1 n/a

8. Other Implications

8.1 None.

9. Schedule of Background Papers

9.1

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Environment & Energy Board

Date	1 December 2021
Report title	Natural Environment Update
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts - Environment, Energy & HS2
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Jackie Homan, Head of Environment email: jacqueline.Homan@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment & Energy Board is recommended to:

- (1) To note the progress of the different elements of the natural environment programme.
- (2) To support the West Midlands Forest Partnership concept.
- (3) To support the progress of conversations with Natural England on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper is to update on progress on delivery of the Natural Environment Plan, particularly on Local Nature Recovery Strategies, a bid to the Woodland Trust to establish a West Midlands Forest Partnership and progress on the Community Green Grants.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Natural Environment Plan has previously been discussed and approved by the Environment and Energy Board and was launched in September 2021. The plan articulates a vision for the region, bringing together the different initiatives described above whilst recognising the important work that other regional actors are doing:

‘Our vision is of a West Midlands where everybody can enjoy the benefits of the natural environment and that, through careful planning and collaboration, we protect, restore and enhance the region’s natural capital to address both the climate and ecological emergencies’.

- 2.2 The plan covers a broad range of natural environment projects focusing on tree and hedgerow planting, improving access to green space for all communities across the West Midlands and developing our wildlife corridors. The aim is to improve these environments in their own right, promoting biodiversity net gain, as well as for all the region’s communities to enjoy. It also covers a number of enabling functions that will need to be put into place in order to ensure these actions are achieved (for example, securing financing and behaviour change initiatives). The actions that we propose taking fall under the following themes:

- **Widening access to green and blue spaces** for all communities across the West Midlands, initially focusing on places where there is a deficit of access.
- **Increasing tree and hedgerow planting**, but with an emphasis on ‘right tree, right place’, to support climate mitigation and adaptation.
- **Promoting wildlife corridors** and working with natural corridors (both green and blue) as well as those linked to infrastructure projects, e.g. along cycle ways.
- Recognising the importance of the **enablers of change** and supporting activity around financing and behaviour change that will enable the roll out, impact and scalability of the initiatives in this plan.

- 2.3 Delivery of these actions will require collaboration with a range of different stakeholders from government, the third sector and business. We will also work with communities across the West Midlands in terms of implementing initiatives.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- 2.4 The UK government's Environment Act (2021) formalises plans to establish Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) across England. The aim of LNRSs is they 'will be a powerful new tool that will help the public, private and voluntary sectors work more effectively together for nature's recovery, and enable collective effort to be focussed where it will have most benefit'. Each LNRS area will have a responsible authority, appointed by the Secretary of State, to lead its preparation with an expectation that there will be local collaboration with a partnership of organisations and individuals working closely with each responsible authority.
- 2.5 Each Strategy will, for the area that it covers:
- agree priorities for nature's recovery;
 - map the most valuable existing areas for nature; and,
 - map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.
- 2.6 The production of each LNRS will be evidence-based, locally led and collaborative, to create a network of shared plans that public, private and voluntary sectors can all help to deliver. This will provide a locally owned foundation to developing and underpinning the England-wide Nature Recovery Network; identifying the places which, once action has been taken on the ground, will enable the Network to grow over time. This in turn will help achieve wider environmental objectives (like carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change or managing flood risk) and contribute to green economic recovery objectives.
- 2.7 The Government anticipates that there will be roughly 50 LNRSs that together will cover the whole of England with no gaps and no overlaps. The aim is that every LNRS covers an area that is both large enough to plan for nature recovery across landscapes and meaningful to local people. It is anticipated that in many cases there will be one LNRS per county (or equivalent). The WMCA has been approached to be the responsible authority for the West Midlands and to work in collaboration with stakeholders to prepare the LNRS. We are currently awaiting a conversation with Natural England to understand what this would mean in practice.
- 2.8 There have been five pilot areas for the LNRSs (Cornwall, Cumbria, Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester and Northumberland). These have worked with a 6 step process, outlined on the government's website:
- Step 0: Government provides a map of each Strategy area, including habitats and national conservation sites
 - Step 1: Locally held data is added to the map, including locally identified wildlife sites
 - Step 2: Description of the Strategy area, including its key habitats and potential opportunities to create or improve them
 - Step 3: Identification of outcomes, achieved through creation or improvement of habitat, and grouping of these into "priority" and "other"
 - Step 4: Potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve the priority and other outcomes

- Step 5: Mapping of suitable locations for the delivery of the potential measures onto map of existing habitat (established in Steps 0 and 1)

Steps 2, 3 & 4 combine to create the “statement of biodiversity priorities” and Steps 0, 1 & 5 combine to create the “local habitat map”.

2.9 We will work with all local authority partners as conversations with Natural England begin; this will be through the Net Zero Directors Group and well as the Net Zero Officers and Natural Capital Officers Groups. We will bring an update to a future Environment and Energy Board.

West Midlands Forest Partnership

2.10 The WMCA Environment Team was approached by the Woodland Trust around the potential to establish a regional ‘forest partnership’ to bring stakeholders together more systematically to support the regional tree planting ambitions. This is based on similar work that they have supported through the Essex Forest Partnership. A meeting was held with local authorities who were supportive of the development of this approach.

2.11 Subsequently, the Woodland Trust have suggested that their Emergency Tree Fund could be a route to kickstart a West Midlands Forest Partnership (WMFP) and so a bid has been prepared to support the partnership. There are 4 elements to the bid:

- (a) **Appointing a West Midlands Forest Partnership Coordinator.** The ambitious tree planting target in the Five Year Plan, and developing the potential of the Virtual Forest, will be supported by a post to drive the work forwards. This role will also coordinate the WMFP and bring stakeholders together around tree planting programmes and seeking additional funding to support it.
- (b) **Mapping current trees across Coventry, Solihull and Birmingham.** Building on the Black Country Consortium’s I-Tree Eco study we wish to extend that to the remaining constituent authority areas, this will make it the largest study in the UK. Completing this study will provide baseline data on tree species diversity, size and condition as well as the value of ecosystem services delivered. The I-Tree Eco data will provide information that will help with long term planning for and identify areas of priority for investment in expanding and building resilience into the Urban Forest.
- (c) **Citizen engagement.** We will use existing networks and relationships, especially those that have specialist knowledge around tree planting programmes, to support the West Midlands Forest Partnership from a community perspective. We will also use this project to trial an online tool/citizen engagement platform as a means of engaging with the wider community with consultations on tree planting. Residents can offer suggestions and ideas and the platform will allow us to analyse real-time community insights. The platform could also be used to survey residents, in areas of tree planting, to understand if there have been any perceived benefits to their health and wellbeing.

- (d) Holding a **landowner's summit** to identify private land for tree planting. This is one of the actions identified in the Natural Environment Plan and the bid we are putting into the Emergency Tree Fund includes some budget for hosting an event, which will also draw on support from the Woodland Trust.

2.12 The bid was submitted for the deadline of 26th November and we will keep the Environment and Energy Board informed of the outcome.

Community Green Grants

2.13 With the approval of the Five Year Plan in March, the CA Board allocated a budget of £725k to support a programme of Community Green Grants to improve access to green space. The Community Green Grants Officer started with the WMCA in September and has been developing the grants programme, as well as meeting with community groups to raise awareness of the grants programme.

2.14 The WMCA has launched a procurement to appoint an organisation with expertise in grant administration. This organisation will manage the financial elements of the grant, whilst the CA leads on the work to ensure the grants are meeting the outcomes on addressing 'green deprivation'. The overarching aims are to:

- Increase or improve green spaces close to where people live (e.g. within ten-minute walk).
- Connect people to nature, especially communities experiencing green deprivation
- Enhance the local environment (e.g. tree planting, increasing biodiversity)
- Tackle barriers to accessing green spaces, e.g. concerns around safety or the lack of awareness of local green space

2.15 We envisage that there will be two different types of grant, with a focus on capital expenditure, but with some allowance for revenue to support grant preparation and staff time. Currently the timeframe for the CGG is 2 years and will end in March 2024. Further funding is being sought to extend the Community Green Grants scheme. The two types of grant are:

- Small grants (£3k up to £25k). There will be 20+ (depending on how much organisations apply for) of these grants and we want to encourage applications from "grass roots" organisations with already established links into communities.
- Larger grants (£25k - £100k). We envisage running two large grants (possibly more if they are coming in at the lower end of this range)

2.16 We are looking for creative ideas that meet the grant criteria, examples of potential projects are:

- Activities run at community gardens/ allotments for example tree planting, gardening, growing fruit and vegetables
- Turning unused viable land into pocket parks
- Nature playgroups that give children and families with no regular access to green space an opportunity to experience hands on activities.

- Development of green corridors linking parks/ community gardens/ other green spaces
- Development of new community green spaces that increase local access
- Projects that significantly improve the biodiversity of the area and promote behavioural change on accessing green spaces. The proposal is to run a programme with two types of grant.

2.17 The formal launch is being planned for the end of January 2022 and we will bring an update to the next Environment and Energy Board.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no immediate financial implications as a result of the proposals within this paper.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this paper or the Natural Environment Plan. Any legal implications will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

5. Equalities Implications

5.1 The work that has been undertaken on the natural environment is central to the addressing the challenges related to climate change; the natural environment has a key role to play in both mitigation and adaptation. However, we have been clear from the outset that WM2041 must also have significant social and economic benefits for the region. The natural environment has emerged as an area where there are currently clear inequalities of access to high quality green space, either because of distance or pressure on what is currently available. The work that we will be taking forward will look to address this, driven by data that is available to us.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

6.1 This report links to a number of the WMCA's eight inclusive growth priorities, which are identified as 'a catalyst for improved and sustained outcomes for people place, co-designed with partners and beneficiaries'. Improving the natural environment will support outcomes around:

- reduction of health inequalities;
- addressing climate resilience through the promotion of nature-based solution to dealing with climate change;
- supporting the principle of connected communities through enabling more spaces and opportunities to bring people together in green space; and,
- equality (reducing the numbers of people living in deprivation, which includes lifting people out of 'green deprivation').

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

7.1 The Natural Environment Plan covers all local authorities of the West Midlands and the delivery will also involve non-constituent members, which we have reflected in the membership of the Natural Capital Officer Group.

8. Other Implications

8.1 None.

9. Schedule of Background Papers

9.1 None

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Environment & Energy Board

Date	1 December 2021
Report title	Energy Capital Governance
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts - Environment, Energy & HS2
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Inclusive Growth & Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Cheryl Hiles, Director of Energy Capital email: cheryl.hiles@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment & Energy Board is recommended to:

- (1) The Board is asked to note that Energy Capital is undertaking a review of its governance in the light of national and regional energy system developments and to ensure that the outcomes of this process are considered by the WMCA as part of their governance review.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to ensure that the consultation that Energy Capital will undertake with Constituent Members regarding their future governance is formally considered and supported by the WMCA. The purpose is not to debate the issues raised in the annex to this paper, but to flag that they will be brought to the member LAs directly over the next three months for discussion.

2. Background

- 2.1 Energy Capital was established in 2016 as part of the creation of the WMCA, to develop and take forward energy devolution asks, set out in the original devolution deal, originally advocated by the Black Country LEP. The devolution 'asks' were for powers for the WMCA to have some control over local energy infrastructure investment, in order to support regional economic competitiveness and address fuel poverty more effectively locally.
- 2.2 Since 2016 the Energy Capital Board, containing strong energy sector and local leadership representation, has reported into the SED Board and more recently, also the Environment and Energy (E&E) Board.
- 2.3 In 2021 the WMCA instituted a general governance review. With the increased emphasis on climate change mitigation, the approval and focus on delivery of the #WM2041 five year plan, and developments in national energy system governance, the Energy Capital Board felt that it was timely and important to set out what they believe is the most effective governance model to achieve our goals going forward.
- 2.4 Key points include:
 - The original Energy Capital reporting line has been to both the SED and E&E Board due to both the impact of decisions about energy on the economy and local businesses, and energy sector playing a pivotal role in the region's decarbonisation objectives. We would hope to see the new WMCA governance structure reflect both of these important elements going forward.
 - The #WM2041 five year plan included a recommendation to establish a Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel. The remit of this has now been formulated, with delivery embedded within Energy Capital. This is a vital step in securing deeper collaboration with regulated infrastructure providers.
 - National energy regulators are moving quite rapidly towards recommending all local authorities are made responsible for creating 'local area energy plans' in partnership with regulated energy infrastructure providers, therefore the collaborative relationship that Energy Capital has fostered between these parties will be vital as we support local authorities to move into the next phase of delivery. The level of interest and ambition amongst Constituent Members and role of Energy Capital in supporting Local Authorities with this emerging opportunity, will be the main issue that we wish to speak with local leaders about.

- The Energy Capital Board has been very inclusive to date, to draw in a very wide range of industry stakeholders and interested parties both regionally and nationally. Although this has been highly beneficial in fostering collaboration, it is in danger of becoming too unwieldy and not sufficiently focused on its role as an accountable direction-setting board, which risks undermining the original intention and devolution ambition. How we enable increased engagement alongside focused decision making and advice provision to the WMCA is also something we wish to explore further.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The Energy Capital Board has discussed these issues and potential responses in its last two meetings, and now wishes to consult Constituent Members on a proposed way forward. We will be arranging senior level meetings with all the Constituent members between now and the end of January to discuss and seek feedback on the attached proposals. The consultation will enable an agreed way forward to be put to the WMCA by March 2022.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 None for this report.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 None for this report.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 EDI will be a key consideration of the Energy Capital governance review process.

7. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 7.1 The WMCA plans to achieve a just transition in achieving net zero, creating opportunities and building resilience in all communities across the West Midlands require affordable and ready access to energy, which this governance review is considering.

8. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 8.1 Energy Capital provides support across all of the Constituent and Non-Constituent Authorities and when funded by BEIS, the wider West Midlands.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 None.

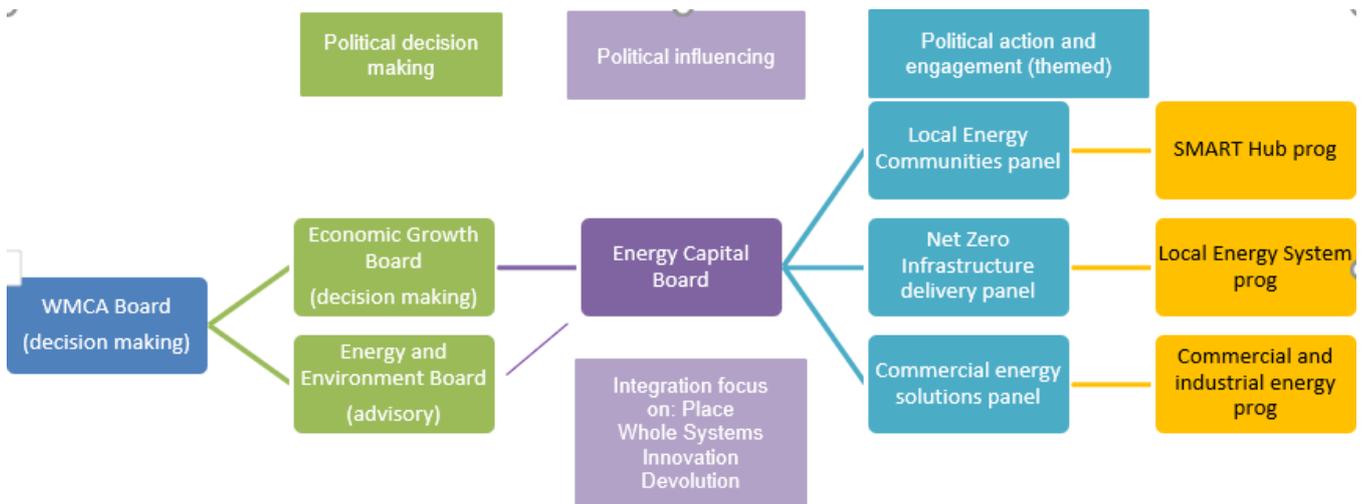
10. Schedule of Background Papers

- 10.1 None.

Appendix 1. Issues and options

- A1 The WMCA is looking to streamline its governance and focus on essential activities. Energy infrastructure is key to the economic future of the region as well as delivery of #WM2041 targets and addressing fuel poverty. At least £250M a year is invested in WM energy infrastructure, largely by nationally-regulated monopolies such as Western Power Distribution, Cadent and National Grid. Every citizen of the region pays an average of around £150 a year for this.
- A2 The national energy regulator, Ofgem, increasingly recognises that greater local authority engagement in energy infrastructure planning and delivery is necessary to deliver climate change targets at minimum cost. They envisage every local authority developing local area energy plans in partnership with infrastructure monopolies. How these organisations make decisions about infrastructure investments based on this local planning process is something that Energy Capital is currently working on.
- A3 This requirement to undertake local area energy planning will potentially impose substantial additional burdens on LAs, demanding new skillsets, including energy network planning and energy data interpretation, which are unfamiliar to local government and in short supply. It may therefore be most efficient to develop many of these capabilities collectively at regional level, to minimise costs and maximise efficiency.
- A4 However, there is significant value from greater local government engagement in energy systems planning when it is done at a street-by-street level and is integrated into spatial planning, building investment plans and transport planning and operation, as well as energy infrastructure business planning and investment. Engagement with spatial planners, transport planners and economic development officers as well as political decision makers will also be required.
- A5 The proposed Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel looks to offer an effective means of engaging infrastructure providers across energy, water and transport. The details of how constituent members will use this panel and ensure that their voices are heard here will be important in shaping the terms of reference of this panel.
- A6 The current recommendation for a new Energy Capital governance structure is summarised below. The intention is to consult with members on this between now and February and to make firm recommendations to both the Energy Capital Board and Energy and Environment Board.

Figure 1. Proposed Energy Capital Governance 2021



- *A Local Energy Communities panel would take responsibility for overseeing the development of the SMART Hub's work on domestic retrofit and fuel poverty and the delivery of the £2m Net Zero Neighbourhood programme and behavioural change work.*
- *A Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery panel would take responsibility for overseeing infrastructure investment to support regional net zero objectives*
- *A Commercial Energy Solutions panel would take responsibility for overseeing the development of the new work programmes to decarbonise commercial and industrial operations through energy efficiency, renewables and energy storage and management and deliver new strands of our innovation programme.*

A7 To ensure the Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel works efficiently, housing ('consumer'/fuel poverty) and business/economic development issues will need to be picked up by separate panels. These are proposed primarily as knowledge-sharing fora, which is a reflection of the breadth of stakeholder interest in these topics. However, the size of these groups may limit their effectiveness as scrutiny or direction-setting bodies supporting the Energy Capital Partnership Board.

A8 From an WMCA and LA perspective the potential issues and options are:

1. Do local authorities feel this structure offers them sufficient engagement and oversight of energy issues, which will become increasingly important over time? How would they like to be represented within this?
2. Whilst economy and environment remain separate within the WMCA structure, Energy Capital will continue to report separately into the Economic Growth and Energy and Environment Boards. Is this appropriate, or should Energy Capital seek to report directly into the WMCA? Are members satisfied there will be sufficiently strong mechanisms to provide robust challenge to the energy sector on behalf of the region: roles currently filled, to an extent, by LEPs and academic members of the Energy Capital Board.

A9 The purpose is not to debate the issues now, but to give an overview and flag that they will be brought to the member LAs over the next three months.