



Environment & Energy Board

Date: Wednesday 7 December 2022

Time: 10.00 am **Public meeting** Yes

Venue: National Brownfield Institute, University of Wolverhampton, Springfield Campus, Grimstone Street, Wolverhampton, WV10 0JP

Membership

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)	Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Councillor Rob Clinton	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Steve Evans	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Peter Hughes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Majid Mahmood	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Kerry Murphy	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Jim O'Boyle	Coventry City Council
Matthew Rhodes	Energy Capital
Suzanne Ward	Environment Agency

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 Craig Evans, Governance Services Officer
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Email craig.evans@wmca.org.uk

AGENDA

No.	Item	Presenting	Pages
Meeting Business Item			
1.	Welcome and Introduction to the National Brownfield Institute	Chair / Paul Davies	None
2.	Apologies for Absence	Chair	None
3.	Notification of Substitutes	Chair	None
4.	Declarations of Interest	Chair	None
5.	Chair's Remarks (if any)	Chair	None
6.	Minutes - 28 September 2022	Chair	1 - 4
7.	Matters Arising	Chair	None
Business Items for Noting / Consideration			
8.	Environment Programme Update	Jackie Homan	5 - 12
9.	West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap Update	Richard Rees / Jordan Gerrard	13 - 18
10.	SMART Hub Update	George Simms	Verbal Report
11.	Emergency Tree Fund Update	Mike Webb	19 - 26
12.	Trailblazer Devolution Deal Net Zero & Environment	Ed Cox	Verbal Report
13.	Greener Together Forum	Jackie Homan	27 - 34
Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 1 March 2023			



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Environment & Energy Board

Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)
Councillor Rob Clinton
Councillor Steve Evans
Councillor Peter Hughes
Councillor Andy Mackiewicz
Councillor Majid Mahmood
Matthew Rhodes

Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Birmingham City Council
Energy Capital

In attendance via MS Teams

Councillor Kerry Murphy
Suzanne Ward

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Environment Agency

Item Title No.

- 1. Welcome and Introduction to the Birmingham and Black Country EcoPark**
The Chair welcomed board members to the meeting for the start of the 2022/23 municipal year and invited introductions of the Environment & Energy Board members.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jim O'Boyle (Coventry).
- 3. Minutes - 9 March 2022**
The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.
- 4. Matters Arising**
The Chair agreed for a response from a member of the Environment team to a public question regarding when the next West Midlands Greener Together Forum would be scheduled.

The Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer noted electronic invitations were due to be sent imminently and the date of the next forum would be held on 21 November 2022 in Coventry.

5. Community Green Grant Update

The board considered a report from the Community Green Grants Project Officer to provide a progress update on delivery of the WMCA Community Green Grant, covering projects funded, grant take up and wider community engagement.

The aims of the Community Green Grant were to;

- i. Increase or improve green spaces close to where people live,
- ii. Connect people to nature, especially communities experiencing green deprivation,
- iii. Enhance the local environment,
- iv. Tackle barriers to accessing green spaces.

Resolved:

- (1) The funding available to not-for-profit groups in the combined authority area through the small and large grants be noted.
- (2) The support available through the environment team to small charities and grass roots groups to look at how they can increase biodiversity through a community green grant be noted.
- (3) Board members in their role as local leaders, considered how to promote the community green grant especially in areas of low take up.

6. Net Zero Neighbourhood

The board considered a report from the SMART Hub Lead officer to provide an overview of the decision to award £1.65m grant funding to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to deliver the first Net Zero Neighbourhood (NZN) demonstrator in Brockmoor, and to set out the proposed approach to working with other constituent member authorities to continue to develop their NZN plans.

In March 2021 the WMCA Board approved £5.1 million funding from the Investment Programme to fund the development of the priority initiatives to deliver on the WM2041 Five Year Plan. The Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator programme was awarded £2.1million as part of this decision.

The aims of the Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator were;

- i. To take a place-based approach to retrofit and wider improvements to neighbourhoods such as new green spaces and transport links,
- ii. To create a replicable finance model based on wider benefits (health and wellbeing, employment opportunities and inclusive growth) to enable scaling-up of retrofit.

While the funding made available through the Investment Programme was intended to fund the first demonstrator project, a key aim of the demonstrator phase was to develop a pipeline of Net Zero Neighbourhood projects to help attract further funding and investment into the programme in the future, with each of the seven constituent member local authorities invited to first complete a Net Zero Neighbourhood Expression of Interest (EoI) form and then complete a full Net Zero Neighbourhood plan by early July 2022. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's plan for Brockmoor was the plan that best aligned with the goals of the programme, providing high confidence of successful delivery and had been selected to receive the remaining £1.65m Investment Programme funding.

Resolved:

- (1) The decision to award £1.65m grant funding to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to deliver the first net zero neighbourhood demonstrator in Brockmoor was endorsed.
- (2) The intention to create a net zero neighbourhood working group to support other constituent members to further develop their net zero neighbourhood plans and identify areas of particular interest where there could be potential for specific collaboration with other work and stakeholders was endorsed.
- (3) Board members provided feedback on how to be engaged or informed on specific areas of the programme, outside of any board meetings.

7. Presentation: Industrial Energy Taskforce - update on progress

The board received a presentation from the Chair of the West Midlands Industrial Energy Taskforce to provide an update of the taskforce that was established on 3 August to focus entirely on the impact from the recent rise in energy costs on energy-exposed businesses in the region which was business-led with the taskforce producing an interim report due in November and final report in June 2023 on support from government.

The purpose of the West Midlands Industrial Energy Taskforce was;

- i. To identify and support short-term interventions to deliver more effective support to energy-exposed businesses to reduce their energy demand and exposure to wholesale prices.
- ii. To identify and promote medium-term interventions to adjust regulations and levies and to reduce network costs and other burdens which fall disproportionality on West Midlands businesses.
- iii. To lobby government to recognise the unique situation facing the West Midlands and to enhance its commitments to addressing the challenges facing energy-exposed businesses in the region.

The presentation noted the immediate 5-point plan following the first meeting of the taskforce in September of government to support for the demographic of the West Midlands region as the energy crisis was having a disproportionate impact on the region and businesses, with the most exposed businesses to increased energy costs being small to medium manufacturing businesses exporting or competing in global markets.

Resolved:

(1) That the presentation be noted.

8. Presentation: Trailblazer Devolution Deal Net Zero and Environment

The board received a presentation from the Corporate Strategy Lead to provide an update, overview of principles and summary of policy areas of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal.

Officers from the Environment team highlighted from the presentation the net zero and environment asks to government through the Trailblazer Devolution Deal for energy and energy efficiency, as well as adaptation and natural environment.

Resolved:

(1) That the presentation be noted.

9. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 7 December 2022.

The meeting ended at 11:55am.

Environment and Energy Board

Date	7 December 2022
Report title	WMCA Environment Programme Update
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts – Leader of Solihull Council
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, Chief Executive, West Midlands Combined Authority Email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of 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 Board is recommended to:

- 1) Note the progress across the WMCA environment programme
- 2) Suggest any areas for future update at the Environment and Energy Board meetings

1. Purpose

To provide an update to the Board on the progress across the environment work by the respective team at the WMCA, including a forward look on priorities over the next 3 years.

2. Background

The Environment Programme

2.1 The WMCA environment programme has grown significantly over the last 3 years and our work is increasingly being noticed at a national level and receiving recognition for its quality and ambition. The most recent example of this was securing the A score from the Carbon Disclosure Project, which now gives international recognition for our work. The programme has 5 strands, with associated plans or strategies produced or in development:

- #WM2041 green paper – this paper outlined the direction for the WMCA's net zero and environment agenda – published January 2019 - <https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s3856/Appendix.pdf>



- Behaviour change – July 2021 – not published
- WMCA Natural Environment Plan – published September 2021 - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/zi2jv0s5/natural-environment-plan.pdf>
- WMCA Circular Economy Routemap – published September 2021 - <https://governance.wmca.org.uk/documents/s5989/Appendix%202.pdf>
- Summary of Climate Impacts for the WM – published November 2022 - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/d2pons0q/summary-of-climate-change-impacts-in-wmca-area.pdf>
- Air Quality Framework – in development

2.2 Over the next 3 years, our priority is to transition the programme (summary overview in Appendix 1) from planning into a delivery/investment phase, as well as influencing and advising other areas of activity through integration. This paper provides updates on a selection of WMCA environment programme key initiatives from the above programme areas for discussion at the Environment and Energy Board.

Natural Environment

- 2.3 The work on natural environment is delivering across a range of programmes, including Community Green Grants (an update came to the Environment and Energy Board in September); tree planting; and establishing the West Midlands Walking Trail. We are also engaging strategically with Defra on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and financing for natural environment projects across the region.
- 2.4 **Community Green Grants.** To date, we have awarded just under £245k in grants: 9 small grant projects funded (5 Birmingham, 2 Walsall, 1 Wolverhampton, 1 Coventry) and the first large grant (£100k). We are working to identify funding to extend and broaden the programme to support community environment projects more generally.
- 2.5 The Environment Team is developing the following programmes to accelerate and coordinate tree planting across the region:
- **West Midlands Forest Partnership**, funded through the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund, aimed to bring different organisations together to coordinate more effectively on tree planting. There is an additional paper on the Partnership at this Board meeting.
 - **Virtual Forest.** The website (www.wmvirtualforest.co.uk) allows everyone who has planted a tree in the region to register its location and type, so that we can track planting numbers. The site also hosts advice and links to partners involved in tree planting across the region. Current planting total since January 2020 is just over 270,000.
 - **Community tree giveaways.** The Environment Team is attending a number of community events to give out trees provided by the Woodland Trust.
- 2.6 The **West Midlands Walking Trail** is listed in our Natural Environment Plan. An outline route has been developed and we are preparing a business case to take the trail forward for funding.

- 2.7 Strategic programmes. There are two main projects:
- The **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**. The WMCA has been invited to be the responsible authority for an LNRS. We are awaiting the guidance from DEFRA to finalise approach.
 - **Natural Environment Investment Fund**. This is a further commitment in the Natural Environment Plan. An 'invitation to tender' will be published shortly to identify a partner to help us understand the route to establish a Fund. This will set about scoping the potential range of options for natural environment projects and initiatives in the WM region that may be suitable to explore further to develop investable propositions that could attract private finance. This is also part of the TDD asks to DEFRA.

Circular Economy update

- 2.8 The Environment Team has been working to deliver commitments made in the September 2021 WMCA Board paper that accompanied the Circular Economy Routemap. There are three key pieces of work underway: the industrial symbiosis business case, a framework to support repurposing of buildings and a business case to reduce construction waste.
- 2.9 **Industrial symbiosis** is an approach to industrial decarbonisation which involves the direct reuse of one company's waste streams, as another's raw products, and is a proven method of creating significant business savings, whilst also reducing carbon emissions and contributing to a region's competitiveness and supply chain resilience. A business case for a regional industrial symbiosis programme has been created, alongside business partners, local authorities, and central government. We are now pursuing funding options.
- 2.10 **Repurposing to Zero**. Building repurposing is the process of reusing an existing building, for a purpose other than that for which it was originally designed. When a building is repurposed, it can also be retrofitted to improve its energy efficiency; this can reduce the carbon emissions associated with schemes by up to 70% and reduce the costs by 10%. A 'Repurposing to Zero Framework' has been prepared to offer guidance on how to approach a repurposing project.
- 2.11 **Zero Waste Construction Hubs** would see a materials recovery hub operating in the West Midlands, to reclaim usable materials from building sites which would otherwise be sent to landfill (the construction sector is currently responsible for around 55% of all waste produced in the region). Consultants were appointed in August 2022 to support the WMCA in creating an investible model for a Zero Waste Construction Hub in the region.

Air Quality Framework

- 2.12 In February 2022, the WMCA Board approved the development of an Air Quality Framework for the region. This will complement the Air Quality Action Plans currently led by the constituent local authorities. The development of the Framework is timely, given that we are anticipating new air quality targets from the Environment Act (2021). These will include new targets for pollution from particulate matter.

- 2.13 The Framework is being developed in conjunction with Environmental Health, Planning and Public Health Officers in the local authorities. The work is being led by a secondee from WSP, who is sitting within the Environment Team at the WMCA. The work is supported by the University of Birmingham's WM-Air team who were also instrumental in producing the paper that went to the February CA Board. The Framework was due to return to the CA Board early next year, but the delay to the publication of the national air quality targets will result in delays to finalising the Framework.
- 2.14 Whilst the Framework might be delayed, work is continuing on planning for significant behaviour change campaigns linked to reducing air pollution from particulates, particularly from domestic log burning. This is being initiated through winter and spring 22/23; this work will hopefully form the precursor to a DEFRA air quality grant of just under £1m. An application for the grant was submitted in September (with the outcome due in March) to support monitoring and behaviour change campaigns in all 7 constituent authorities of the WMCA.

Climate Adaptation

- 2.15 Climate adaptation has received much less attention and resource as part of the climate emergency, compared to the journey to net zero. The planet has already warmed by 1.1°C since the industrial revolution and is on course for 3°C temperature rise, far above the advisable Paris Commitment target of 1.5°C. As extreme weather events become more common and severe, people, infrastructure and the environment will be adversely affected with significant knock-on implications for our economy. Adaptation will become an increasingly important part of the climate emergency response.
- 2.16 WMCA commissioned work earlier in 2022 to begin our work on adaptation. This has included:
- Summary of climate change impacts for the WMCA area – this was recently published to coincide with COP27 adaptation day.
 - An Adaptation Plan for the WMCA – we have a plan for how our directorates can build adaptation into their programmes and will be working with them to support next steps.
 - Financing adaptation interventions – we are finalising some work on how adaptation can be funded to help unlock investment in measures.
 - We are engaging with regional partners through WM Adaptation Group funded by Environment Agency.
- 2.17 Adaptation also forms part of the devolution deal proposals for DEFRA. It is in two parts:
1. A clear responsibility and funding for local and regional authorities in relation to climate adaptation. Our recent work indicates that the West Midlands will be particularly vulnerable to extreme heat and surface water flooding in the future. This will affect communities and infrastructure.
 2. Funding to make communities more resilient to the future effects of climate change.

Cross-cutting Work

- 2.18 To mobilise the different parts of the environment programme relies on finance, behaviour change (including community engagement) and business engagement. This work is woven into the different programmes of activity, but there are some key areas that it are important to highlight here.
- 2.19 **Finance.** There are two approaches to sustain the work that has begun through the Environment Team: 1) funding applications (this relies on funding being available to support specific parts of the programme) and 2) identifying routes to different types of investment. With regard to the latter, the work around natural environment financing is probably the most mature, and this was highlighted in Paragraph 2.7. We are also exploring commercial opportunities linked to the circular economy programme, through the business case development, and the Green Finance Institute have supported a piece of work on financing climate adaptation (this also has overlaps with the natural environment financing).
- 2.20 The **behaviour change** work is:
- Delivering **specific campaigns** across programmes. Examples include: the Right Tree, Right Place campaign with community outreach events; a campaign on 'Is Your Home Ready for a Heat Pump?' to ensure homeowners are equipped with knowledge when thinking about retrofit; and, initiating work on air quality behaviour change campaigns.
 - A **Net Zero Citizens' Panel** will also be up and running at the start of 2023. The WMCA will be working with Involve to deliver this. Involve has previously run the national Climate Change Citizens' Assembly for the Climate Change Committee.
 - The **Greener Together Forum** will also continue to meet in different locations across the West Midlands. The Forum is open to anyone to attend and the agenda setting will now be supported through a new Advisory Board that will ensure an inclusive and representative input into the Forum.
 - The **Carbon Literacy Commonwealth Games legacy training** has launched and is freely available for 2,500 members of the public. Learners complete three e-learning modules and one facilitated session online to achieve the Carbon Literacy certificate and accreditation. Training is available until at least 2024.
- 2.21 Finally, the **Net Zero Business Pledge** is working to support West Midlands businesses of all sectors and sizes to be part of the regional journey to net zero. We are working with Sustainability West Midlands as our delivery partner and 2023 will see the launch of a new website to support the Pledge, as well as a toolkit to provide practical support for the business community. 80 businesses have signed up so far.

3. Financial Implications

None from this report.



4. Legal Implications

None from this report.

5. Equalities Implications (*)

There are no specific equalities implications from this report – these will be assessed as project plans and business cases are progressed in more detail.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

We see the delivery of our environment programme as being very closely tied to the WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework; this will form a key part of the projects and programmes developed. Ensuring our work on environment is fair and provides opportunities and improvements in quality of life for people across the West Midlands is a fundamental part of our approach to delivery. There are significant co-benefits related to health, well-being and economic opportunity, including jobs and skills, linked to the different projects outlined in this report. The whole programme will aim to improve outcomes for people living in the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

The focus of the activity is on the constituent local authorities of the WMCA. Some of the work will inevitably benefit from a broader geographical reach to the non-constituent authorities.

8. Other Implications

None.

9. Schedule of Background Papers

Note; (*) denotes mandatory field

Appendix 1: Environment Programme

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March 2023

March 2024

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March 2026



Environment and Energy Board

Date	7 th December 2022
Report title	West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap Update
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts – Leader of Solihull Council
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, Chief Executive, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of 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 Board is recommended to:

- 1) Note the progress made in implementing the Circular Economy Routemap.

1. Purpose

To provide an update to the Board on the progress of the West Midlands Circular Economy Routemap since it was approved in September 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1 A circular economy is a system that designs out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible and regenerating our natural systems through economic activity. It is much more than a sophisticated term for recycling. Rather than depend on linear and extractive, wasteful processes, a circular economy encourages repair, reuse and regeneration of resources and materials, as well as a transition to renewable energy. Encouraging more circularity in our economy will be essential for the region to achieve its ambition of net zero carbon emissions by 2041.
- 2.2 In support of our ambitions for a more circular economy, the WMCA published a Circular Economy Routemap (<https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/5134/wmca-circular-economy-routemap-final-full-document.pdf>) on 17th September 2021. The Routemap outlined a vision for how the region can become more circular, prioritising three sectors in the first instance:



- Manufacturing – the sector with the largest carbon footprint in the West Midlands.
- Construction – which is the largest producer of waste by volume in the region.
- Food – where the region is home to international expertise in food manufacture, as well as a thriving third sector in food and sharing.

2.3 As agreed by the WMCA Board, the Routemap's implementation focuses on the production of business cases for:

- An industrial symbiosis programme – to facilitate materials recovery and business investment in key regional sectors and locations.
- A Zero Waste Construction Hub pilot – to support the recovery of usable materials in the construction sector.

3. Industrial Symbiosis

3.1 Industrial symbiosis is an approach to industrial decarbonisation, that involves the direct reuse of one company's waste streams, as another's raw materials, and creating a closed loop. As well as supporting industrial decarbonisation, industrial symbiosis can generate significant cost savings for businesses, increasing business resilience and competitiveness in the process. The West Midlands has been identified as one of four industrial symbiosis hotspots in Europe by the SCALER project, demonstrating the opportunity that exists in the region for this approach.

3.2 In March 2022, the WMCA appointed the Useful Projects consultancy, with support from International Synergies (global leaders in industrial symbiosis and delivery lead form National Industrial Symbiosis Programme in the early 2000s) and economic consultants, MetroDynamics, to develop a business case and implementation plan for a programme in the region.

3.3 Following engagement with the private sector, universities and research councils, and partners in central and local government, we have created a business case for a programme with a blended delivery model. This would include a virtual network, as well as potential for place-based initiatives:

1. An appointed facilitator team with deep knowledge of industrial symbiosis and experience in delivering such programmes would work with the private sector across the WMCA area to create a regional virtual network of waste exchanges that could take place between all sectors.
2. Place-based activity and investments would be encouraged in five strategically important priority sectors:
 - Food waste
 - Composite materials
 - EV battery manufacture
 - Materials for land remediation
 - Cast metal foundry sand

3.4 Taking this approach to the delivery of the programme will bring maximum benefit to existing businesses in the West Midlands, whilst ensuring that the region's economy is prepared to exploit the opportunities of the future. Modelling conducted for the business case shows that the proposed programme would create an annual GVA uplift of £1.4m, divert up to 14,000 tonnes of carbon per year, and create of safeguard 50

jobs. The proposal has been costed at £3.1m over five years. Developments in priority sectors would lead to additional investment opportunities, brought about by separate business cases and funding bids. This approach has been designed to be complementary to the wider industrial decarbonisation work that is building on the industrial cluster decarbonisation approach of the Repowering the Black Country initiative - <https://www.blackcountrylep.co.uk/our-strategy/place/repowering-the-black-country/>.

3.5 Now that the programme proposal has been finalised, activity will focus on attracting funding to the programme. The regional allocation of UKSPF, and the industrial decarbonisation elements of the TDD, have been identified as potential sources of funding. We are also continuing to engage with Defra and BEIS, to understand their interest in supporting the programme. In November 2022, the WMCA was approached by DEFRA officials on the potential of mentioning the proposal in the finalised Waste Prevention Programme for England.

4. **Zero Waste Construction Hubs**

4.1 The construction sector is responsible for around 55% of all waste produced in the region and it is estimated that 13% of materials that arrive on building sites are never used. With over 220,000 new homes and major infrastructure projects planned, embedding circularity within construction can unlock new opportunities, generate cost savings and build resilience within supply chains.

4.2 One way in which we can start to reduce construction waste is through the Zero Waste Construction Hub concept, which would see a materials recovery hub operating in the West Midlands, to reclaim usable materials from building sites which would otherwise be sent to landfill, and sold on to small trades and DIYers, or donated to community groups. The concept would seek to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

4.3 Useful Projects, with support from MetroDynamics, were appointed in August to support the WMCA in creating an investible model for a Zero Waste Construction Hub in the region. The project has so far focused on understanding the scale of the opportunity for the region, as well as analysing the behavioural, technical, and regulatory barriers to the recovery and reuse of materials. This will lead to the development of a data driven, costed, business plan with clearly mapped benefits.

4.4 The project to develop the business case and delivery plan started in October 2022 and is scheduled to be completed in March 2023. A key part of the project includes engagement with industry partners, and it is anticipated that a partner or partners will be identified to co-lead on the delivery of the proposed model for a zero waste construction hub. This will also help to identify and secure funding and timescales for implementing a pilot hub.

5. **Other activity**

5.1 **Repurposing to Zero**

- 5.1.1 Building repurposing is the process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than what it was designed for. Repurposing differs from retrofit, where the building continues to serve its original purpose in a more efficient manner. Encouraging a 'reuse first' approach to existing built assets will be important for the region to achieve its carbon ambitions, as existing buildings have large amounts of carbon embodied in their structures. The reuse of existing buildings can also have social and economic benefits for the region, through the regeneration of local centres, and by enabling a more flexible and strategic approach to the use of the built environment.
- 5.1.2 Following a successful bid to the West Midlands Innovation Programme, as part of a partnership with the Innovation Alliance for the West Midlands, the Environment Team has been leading on the delivery of a project titled 'Repurposing to Zero'. The project engaged partners in the public and private sectors to understand the commercial and regulatory barriers to repurposing buildings, and completed data analysis to determine the scale of the opportunity for bringing buildings back into use in the West Midlands.
- 5.1.3 After confirming the feasibility of the approach, the project has created a 'Repurposing to Zero' framework (due for publication in January 2023) that can be used to showcase best practise guidance for approaching the reuse of existing spaces. In doing so, the framework will help to capitalise on the opportunity present in the West Midlands.
- 5.1.4 The framework is in its final stages of design, before being made public. We will share this with stakeholders involved with the project, including local authority planning officers. After the project has been completed, further work will be undertaken to understand how the West Midlands can create a regulatory and fiscal environment that supports the reuse of buildings.

5.2 Circular community work

- 5.2.1 The Environment Team has also worked with the Commonwealth Games, as part of the Circular Economy Action Group, to create a circular legacy for the Games. This legacy has included the donation of media vans to the Active Wellbeing Society for use as mobile share shacks, and the Commonwealth equipment giveaway which will see 16,000 items being donated to community groups, schools, and sports clubs in the region. We will be looking to extend our focus on community initiatives for the circular economy programme in 2023/24 and we are currently identifying the best approach for this, for example, product repair or sharing initiatives and supporting toolkits.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Work will continue with the priority areas agreed by the WMCA Board to ensure that these proposals move beyond the concept phase to create tangible benefits for the West Midlands. With the business cases produced, our priority for next year will be securing funding and investment to begin implementation.

6.2 We will also be focusing on more community-centred circular economy activity, building on some of the successes from the Commonwealth Games in developing better sharing systems for communities across the region.

7. Financial Implications

There are no immediate finance implications arising from this paper.

8. Legal Implications

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this paper.

9. Equalities Implications (*)

There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report, as it is an update on work to date. The work carried out as part of the Circular Economy Routemap's implementation contributes to the achievement of the WM2041 objective, which will have significant social and economic benefits for the region.

10. Inclusive Growth Implications

There are significant co-benefits related to well-being and economic opportunity, including jobs and skills, linked to the different projects outlined in this report.

11. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

The focus of the activity is on the constituent local authorities of the WMCA. Some of the work will inevitably benefit from a broader geographical reach to the non-constituent authorities including the industrial symbiosis programme.

12. Other Implications

None.

12. Schedule of Background Papers

Note; (*) denotes mandatory field

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Environment and Energy Board

Date	7 th December 2022
Report title	Emergency Tree Fund – Update
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts – Leader of Solihull Council
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, Chief Executive, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of 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 Board is recommended to:

- 1) Note the recent success of the Environment Team in securing a significant grant of £300,000 from the Emergency Tree Fund.

1. Purpose

To provide an introduction to the Board on the Emergency Tree Fund grant awarded to the WMCA in the autumn of 2022.

2. Background

- 2.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) published its Five Year Plan in 2021 to understand how the region can achieve net zero by 2041 as well as a Natural Environment Plan to restore, protect and enhance nature.
- 2.2 Both of these strategies outline action that we would like to take around forestry and tree planting. The evidence for the Five Year Plan indicates that forestry cover should be increased from approximately 1.5% today to 13%, aligning as much as possible with the long-term aims for England (this equates to planting an additional 5.7m trees by 2026 and 19m by 2041, the WMCA's target date for net zero). This will require significant coordination of all regional stakeholders from constituent and

non-constituent local authorities, which have their own forestry and woodland plans and targets, as well as environmental NGOs and private sector organisations.

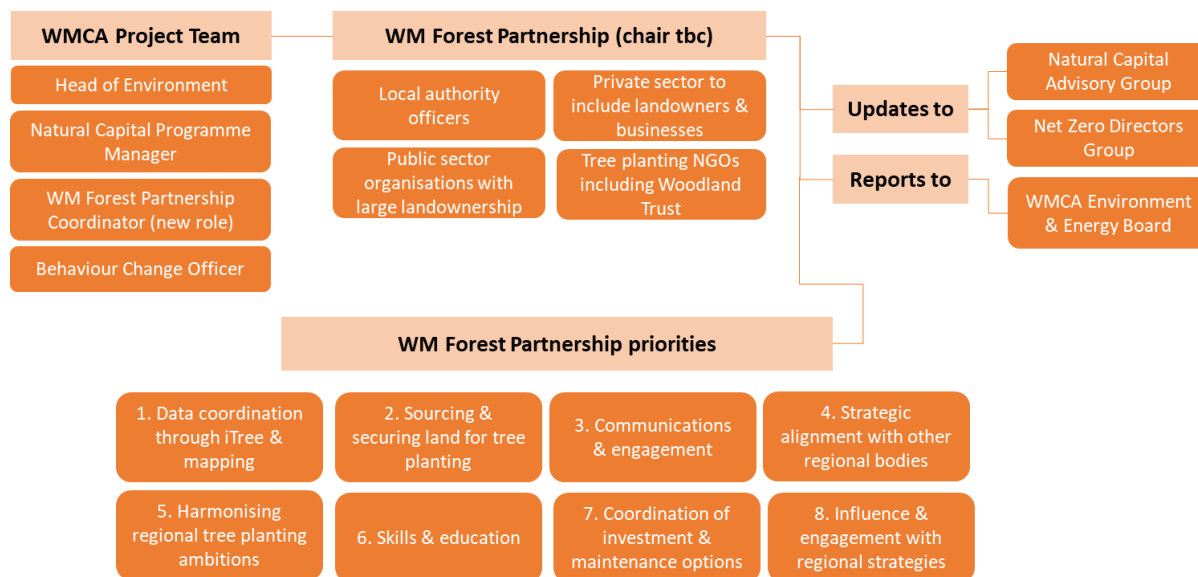
- 2.3 This cannot be delivered by the public sector alone, particularly with respect to the availability of land and financing for both planting and maintenance. The grant of £300,000 from the Emergency Tree Fund (ETF) allows us to set up a West Midlands Forest Partnership (WMFP), the aim being to bring together a collective to deliver against these ambitious targets. The membership would build on the existing relationships we have formed as part of delivering the West Midlands Virtual Forest platform.
- 2.4 The ETF is managed and given out by the Woodland Trust and in this current round of funding a total of £2.1m was awarded to six local and combined authorities.

Project Overview

- 2.5 The project objective is to support the activities of all partners of the WMCA in reaching their tree planting targets through identifying a way to coordinate the different projects and programmes required to meet the strategic objectives. The project will run over two years, commencing in January 2023.
- 2.6 The outputs include:
- 1) Establish a West Midlands Forest Partnership to work towards the regional tree planting target outlined above.
 - 2) Build engagement through extending the WMCA's Virtual Forest. This platform was set up to engage citizens and organisations more widely around the regional tree planting targets. We would like to grow support and membership, through private sector engagement as well, particularly working with landowners to maximise space for tree planting.
 - 3) Mapping current trees across Coventry, Solihull and Birmingham. This will extend the work initially undertaken through the Black Country Consortium's i-Tree survey, making it the largest study of its type 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.

West Midlands Forest Partnership

- 2.7 The WMFP itself will comprise the stakeholders identified in the diagram below. We feel that it is essential to get a spread of stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors to enable us to deliver the tree planting target we have for the region. This cannot be delivered by the public sector alone, particularly with respect to the availability of land and financing for both planting and maintenance. We will be clear, in the Terms of Reference for the WMFP, that the aim is to bring together a collective to deliver against ambitious targets. The membership would build on the existing relationships we have formed as part of delivering the West Midlands Virtual Forest platform.



Governance structure of the WMFP

- 2.8 In terms of the remit, we have identified 8 key priorities. These are outlined in the subsequent paragraphs (2.9 – 2.16).
- 2.9 **Data coordination.** Local authorities, and other bodies, hold different data around tree planting, and have taken different approaches. We will be looking to see how the WMFP can help coordinate some of that to support lobbying with central government or delivery of wider activity, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The data from the i-Tree survey will form an important part of this wider data story and we will have comparable data from across the WMCA geography.
- 2.10 **Sourcing and securing land for tree planting.** This will be one of the hardest elements of delivering the regional target for tree planting. Local authorities, and the WMCA, are limited in terms of the availability of land for planting trees and this is why we are also looking for private sector representation on the WMFP. The ETF will also provide funds to run a landowners' summit to identify new areas of land, as well as running an ongoing campaign to identify and secure land for planting.
- 2.11 **Communications and engagement.** Reaching out to people across the West Midlands is a really important part of the tree planting effort. We have begun to do this through our Virtual Forest platform, but also through in-person events. We want to explore how we can deliver more outreach activity to enlist support from people in West Midlands communities to deliver the tree planting target. The key will be to link people and community groups who want to plant trees, with the available land identified.
- 2.12 **Strategic alignment with other regional bodies.** The WMCA is not the only organisation working to increase tree planting. We want to make sure that we are

coordinating with Local Enterprise Partnerships and the work of the Midlands Engine on tree planting and wider natural environment issues.

- 2.13 **Harmonising regional tree planting ambitions.** The local authorities and WMCA have different ways of articulating their tree planting targets. These range from actual numbers of trees to be planted through to ambitions for canopy cover on a ward-by-ward basis. The plan is not to change the way local authorities undertake their work on tree planting, but to understand what this means in terms of total numbers of trees/ canopy cover and how we can provide the most effective social and environmental outcomes from the tree planting that is done. It will also support other elements of work, for example the ambition to establish a West Midlands tree nursery/ tree nurseries as we will have more clarity on numbers of trees required.
- 2.14 **Skills and education with communities.** The communications and engagement piece provides one level at which we want to reach out to people, but there are also other opportunities that might exist around citizen science, engagement through schools and employment opportunities, for example. We have committed to scope opportunities for Natural Capital Apprenticeships in the Natural Environment Plan – some regional organisations are already working on this (Birmingham City Council, linked to the Future Parks Accelerator programme and the Wildlife Trusts, which have a traineeship programme).
- 2.15 **Co-ordination of options for investment into tree planting and maintenance of trees.** We want to work with the WMFP stakeholders to understand the range of investment and funding mechanisms that can be brought into delivering the regional tree planting ambitions. These fall into opportunities around:
- 1) agro-forestry;
 - 2) investment and revenue for nature-based services; and
 - 3) private sector ESG and understanding how we can align this with opportunities identified through data and mapping.
- 2.16 **Influencing and engaging with other regional strategies.** The WMFP can support the input/ influence into other regional strategies where appropriate, providing opportunities to include tree planting as part of the wider narrative.

i-Tree Survey

- 2.18 The i-Tree survey is seen as an essential element for the long-term strategic planning for management of urban forests; it has already been completed in the four Black Country authorities. Planning for urban forest management requires knowledge and understanding of the broader composition and condition of all trees within a geographic boundary so includes those both on public and private landholdings. The proposed i-Tree survey will deliver the data for the remaining WMCA constituent authorities of Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry and, when added to the survey already undertaken for the Black Country local authorities, will

provide a comprehensive picture for the WMCA region to inform tree management decisions and ambitions.

- 2.19 Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry all currently have data around their own publicly held tree stock in relation to species and, to some extent, around quality but know very little about other trees within their respective authority boundaries. This gap in knowledge is recognised by their respective Urban Forest Managers and is a priority action for these local authorities, such as referenced in the Birmingham Urban Forest Master Plan 2021 – 2051, but all lack the financial resource to individually commission this research.
- 2.20 The data arising from the i-Tree survey will provide data on:
1. The wider tree species composition.
 2. The current structure and condition of the urban forest
 3. Mortality rates
 4. Delivery of essential ecosystem services – function analysis
- 2.22 Understanding the **species composition** will allow Urban Forest Managers to make long term plans for how they need to build resilience into the urban forest through diversification of tree species. This will allow longer term planting plans to include forecasts of future tree species requirements allowing this in turn to be passed on to tree nurseries. By giving advanced notice growers will allow them to take a more informed approach to stock production and meet the growing need from the local authorities and other landowners.
- 2.23 Understanding the **current structure and condition** will be essential to inform where potential issues may arise. We are all aware of the changes in climate and this is being most felt in urban centres. Understanding that some tree species will struggle to cope with changing temperatures and fluctuating water availability (and where these are) will allow us to identify areas where trees may be lost in the medium to long term. In addition, the work will allow us to identify risks from new pests and diseases as a result of climate change.
- 2.24 i-Tree records data on all trees within the sample plots to better understand the **natural mortality rate** of trees, which allows the Urban Forest Managers to more accurately determine what planting rates are required for long term sustained growth of canopy cover.
- 2.25 Expressing the **ecosystem services functionality** of trees in terms that wider stakeholders understand is crucial in developing appreciation of trees and acceptance of the need for increased tree cover in urban locations. For many it is only the disbenefits they see: leaf fall, shading, sticky deposits and messy fruit. Being able to express in financial and quantitative terms such as volume of water intercepted, amount of particulate matter captured or carbon sequestered brings a tangible and easily communicated element to messaging around tree planting activity. Being able to quantify the benefits of tree planting in measurable terms

adds an essential element to grant applications that funders are increasingly looking for.

- 2.26 Delivering the i-Tree survey will allow the WMCA to actively share data with local authorities and to work jointly in a comprehensive and informed manner through the WMFP to deliver tree planting plans and targets.

Next Steps

- 2.27 The project will begin in January 2023. Immediate next steps will include:
- Advertising for the West Midlands Forest Partnership Manager post. This is a two year post, funded through the Emergency Tree Fund grant. The job description has been approved and is ready for advert.
 - Prepare the 'request for quotes' to procure the i-Tree survey. This will build on the work that has already been undertaken across the four Black Country authorities.
 - Decide the membership of the WMFP, establish the terms of reference and hold the first meeting.
- 2.29 The Environment Team will bring regular updates on the progress of the WMFP work programme as it develops.

5. Financial Implications

There are no immediate finance implications arising from this paper. The work outlined will be supported through the grants provided by the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund.

6. Legal Implications

None from this report.

7. Equalities Implications (*)

The project will include engagement with a range of communities across the region with a particular focus on enhancing the environment of those areas of greatest deprivation where feasible. We will also make sure that the recruitment process for the Forest Partnership Lead follows HR equalities guidance.

8. Inclusive Growth Implications

The project will include engagement with a range of communities across the region allowing for opportunities for involvement in tree planting and aftercare activities, which promote engagement with the outdoors which is beneficial to health and wellbeing. Increased tree canopy cover can also improve air quality at a local level and it can help to reduce the ambient air temperature which may become increasingly important as extreme weather events become more frequent.



9. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

Though the project will concentrate upon the 7 met geography of the WMCA is it proposed that we engage with stakeholders from the wider non constituent geography of the WMCA to achieve greatest impact.

10. Other Implications

None.

11. Schedule of Background Papers

None.

Note; (*) denotes mandatory field

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Environment and Energy Board

Date	7 th December 2022
Report title	West Midlands Greener Together Forum Update
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Courts - Environment, Energy & HS2
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, Chief Executive, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
Accountable Employee	Ed Cox, Director of Public Service Reform email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Katie Jepson, Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer email: Katie.jepson@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment and Energy Board is recommended to:

Note the opportunity to hear directly from West Midlands Citizens at the Forum and consider their recommendations and concerns.

1. Purpose

This paper provides a progress update on delivery of the West Midlands Greener Together Forum. It is accompanied by the briefing paper from the most recent meeting.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Greener Together Forum was established in March 2022 by the WMCA with the aim of creating a space for environmental NGOs, climate activities, community groups, the public and others from across the region to discuss the route to net zero and inspire collaboration. The Forum provides an open and inclusive platform for the sharing of information which is relevant to the region's journey to net zero as well as providing a space for the WMCA and other organisations to update one another and the wider community on the work being undertaken to achieve these targets.
- 2.2 The meetings provide an opportunity for Forum attendees to hear from a range of people on the chosen theme, providing some inspiration to take into breakout rooms. The meetings conclude with a plenary discussion. The Forum meetings are held in the evenings to maximise the opportunity for people to attend. They will

move around the region but will always be hybrid to enable everyone that wants to to join the discussions.

- 2.4 Briefing notes and slides are shared with Forum members after each meeting, uploaded onto the WMCA website and a blog write up is posted online. We have agreed that all Greener Together Forum briefing notes will be shared with the Environment and Energy Board to ensure the opportunities, challenges and opinions of the Forum members are heard by the Board and actions, which are in the power of the WMCA, can be taken.
- 2.5 The meetings to date have covered regional tree planting ambitions, retrofit and, most recently, fuel poverty and support being provided for people given current cost of living pressures. Officers from the WMCA Energy Capital Team, Dudley MBC and Coventry City Council came and presented to the Forum. The notes from the most recent meeting are attached to this Board paper.
- 2.6 A new Advisory Board is going to be established to agree agenda items for future meetings. It will meet for the first time in January. The aim is to have organisations on the Board that represent different interests from across the region with the aim of making the Forum as inclusive as possible.

3. Financial Implications

There are no finance implications as a result of this paper. Any financial implications will be considered on a project-by-project basis, with funding and approval sought through the appropriate channel/authority.

4. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications as a result of this paper. Any legal implications will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

5. Equalities Implications (*)

The work that has been undertaken and planned to address behaviour change is central to the addressing the challenges related to climate change; as achieving net zero requires significant behaviour change. However, we have been clear from the outset that WM2041 must also have significant social and economic benefits for the region. The work that we will be taking forward to address these issues will be driven by behaviour change principles and data available to us, ensuring interventions consider equalities issues in their design and therefore constructed and targeted appropriately and equitably. Ensuring that we have strong deliberative routes for the public to engage with, will provide the opportunity for them to directly influence policies and programmes which will affect their lives and the region.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

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'. Delivering the Greener Together Forum will support many of the outcomes due to the different topics discussed in each meeting.

- supporting the principle of powerful communities through engaging in deliberative democracy to help citizens feel influential;
- Improving education and learning around the climate emergency;
- reduction of health inequalities;
- addressing climate resilience through the promotion of nature-based solution to dealing with climate change; and,
- equality (reducing the numbers of people living in deprivation, which includes lifting people out of 'green deprivation' and fuel poverty).

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

The behaviour change programme of work covers all local authorities of the West Midlands and the delivery will also involve non-constituent members, where appropriate.

8. Other Implications

None.

9. Schedule of Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Summary note from 21st November Greener Together Forum.

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1.0 Introduction

This note outlines discussions had at the third West Midlands Greener Together Forum on the 21st November 2022, where the topic discussed focused on addressing fuel poverty. The Forum brought together speakers from Local Authorities involved in tackling fuel poverty;

- **Matthew Eccles, Affordable Warmth Delivery Manager, West Midlands Combined Authority** – leads on the Sustainable Warmth Competition and Warm Homes Saves Lives programme.
- **Helen Langley, Senior Agency Support & Development Officer, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council** – manages retrofit programmes within Dudley and creates materials for the Dudley Energy Advice Line (DEAL).
- **Bret Willers, Head of Climate Change and Sustainability, Coventry City Council** – leads the climate change programme of work at Coventry City Council which includes the adoption of retrofit and energy efficient zero carbon technologies for homes and businesses.

Please see the presentations from the meeting [here](#) and the Forum Terms of Reference [here](#).

2.0 Forum Logistics

2.1 Creating an Advisory Board for the Forum

We have held three sessions in 2022 for the Forum, covering tree planting, retrofit and fuel poverty. To ensure that the Forum is diverse, and action focused, we are inviting representatives from the business, faith, youth, and climate activist communities to shape future Forum meetings. The Board meetings will be transparent with feedback provided to Forum meetings. The plan is for the Board to meet for the first time at the end of January 2023; it will meet for 1-2 hours, online, every other month. The Combined Authority are contacting relevant organisations and groups to invite a representative to join the Board.

- 2.5 Receive the monthly West Midlands Combined Authority Energy and Environment newsletter by registering [via this link](#).

3.0 Tackling Fuel Poverty

The following points outline the questions/ issues raised during the most recent Forum meeting (in italics) and the responses provided below.

- 3.1 *It is important to share what is happening locally, but the WMCA do not have enough funding to fulfil plans. The WMCA needs to lead a campaign to demand funds from government to meet retrofit plans.*

The WMCA is currently negotiating a Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD) with government, which will redefine the powers of the WMCA across the region. Net Zero is a key part of the ask, and funding for retrofit work will be part of the TDD to fund whole neighbourhood projects rather than through single measures. There are also asks to work towards creating an organisation that can support end-to-end customer journey support through retrofitting.

3.2 *Concerns on current retrofit schemes not being successful and fuel poverty advice only being shared online which means those digitally excluded are not accessing the information.*

- Each local authority has their own advice services to support people with fuel poverty advice. For example, Dudley Council have their Dudley Energy Advice Line for people to call and [Warmer Homes West Midlands](#), delivered by Act on Energy, have phone services, and visit people in their homes .
- [SHAP shared this video](#) on the success of the Warmer Homes West Midlands scheme, and have recently received an [additional £1 million in funding](#) by the Energy Savings Trust through Ofgem’s Energy Redress Scheme to continue to support people in the region.
- [Groundworks Green Doctors programme](#), sees energy efficiency experts visit people in their homes and has referral from front line services

3.3 *If warm spaces are successful could there be something similar for working? A free coworking space for those working from home.*

This would be something each Local Authority, who are managing the warm home centres, would need to decide.

3.4 *Can the WMCA have a policy for all new builds to be energy efficient?*

The WMCA do have a [Zero Carbon Homes Charter](#) which is aimed at developers, housebuilders and other stakeholders involved in delivering housing within the region. [The Routemap](#) is an action plan setting out how we will achieve the principles set within the Charter. However more work is needed to create a mandate.

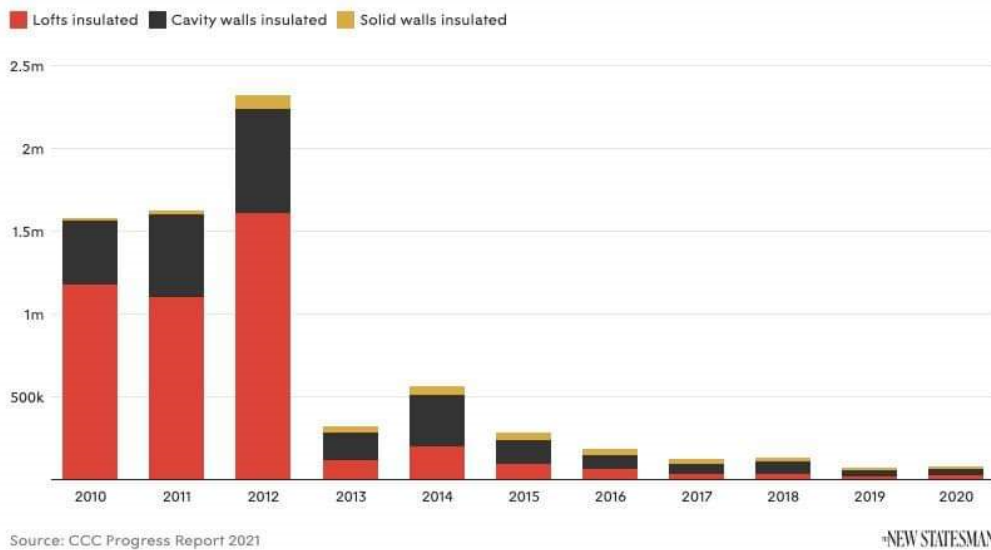
3.5 *Is there a way of identifying who is most at risk of fuel poverty and is there a map showing areas people are suffering to target support?*

Friends of the Earth have mapped areas across the UK where people are in fuel poverty (<https://mapst.ac/foe/fuel-poverty#6.18/53/-2.75>) and Matthew Eccles, in his presentation, shared that the WMCA area scores the worst for fuel poverty amongst all counties with 20.1% in fuel poverty compared to the English average of 13.2%. Coupled with the second highest percentage of properties in the lower EPC bands (Energy Performance Certificates) tells us why people in the region are struggling.

There is also a strong correlation between the funding available for home retrofit schemes and the uptake. A question was asked on if there is anything to show the uptake of retrofit schemes since 2012, and this graph shows the decline in insulation since the funding cuts.

UK home insulation is at a fraction of its 2012 level

Home insulation measures carried out per year in Great Britain



3.6 Difficult to access current funding and schemes

Current schemes are oversubscribed, and services are seeing people who wouldn't usually access their services requiring help. [Dudley Energy Advice Line](#) has seen a 20% increase in people accessing their advice line, with 3,000 people supported in 2021/22.

[Groundworks Green Doctors programme](#), see's energy efficiency experts visit people in their homes and has referral from front line services. They have seen a huge increase in people wanting to access the service.

3.7 Needs to have easy access to good information on retrofit and energy efficiency

Dudley Council do have advice clinics to support people throughout the year, as well as 40 warm home hubs. However, it was mentioned that these spaces need to be where the community go rather than expecting people to visit new places.

Energy champions programme at Dudley Council is a 2-hour course – challenge that this is not enough time to truly train people to be knowledgeable on energy efficiency.

The WMCA, through the Warm Home Saves Lives programme, will share good practice across the region on community-led schemes that are supporting people in fuel poverty. The WMCA have begun a film series where we are following homeowners who are in the process of, or have already completed, retrofitting their homes. These videos are shared to support people in seeing the true impact of retrofitting your homes. The first video of Harriet and Chris Martin's home can be [viewed here](#).

4.0 Community Updates

4.1 Footsteps Tread Lightly Conference is being held on Sunday 27th November at the Al Hijrah Masjid in Small Heath. The conference theme is 'Energy price crisis how affects faith communities and action being taken'. The event is free, please register to help plan for numbers:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tread-lightly-2022-tickets-458320778787>

Footsteps have also launched an Energy Champion programme which is a faith community response to the energy crisis by helping people to reduce energy use, pay fuel bills and keep warm and healthy. Find out more on the programme; <https://footstepsenergychamps.org.uk/>

This briefing note will be shared with the WMCA’s Energy and Environment Board, which is next meeting on the 7th December 2022.