



Environment & Energy Board

Date: Wednesday 28 September 2022

Time: 10.00 am **Public meeting** Yes

Venue: EcoPark Environmental Centre for Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, 258a Hob Moor Rd, Birmingham, B10 9HH | Microsoft Teams

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
Telephone 07584 009024
Email craig.evans@wmca.org.uk

AGENDA

No.	Item	Presenting	Pages
1.	Welcome and Introduction to the Birmingham and Black Country EcoPark	Chair / Delia Garret	None
2.	Apologies for Absence	Chair	None
3.	Notification of Substitutes	Chair	None
4.	Declarations of Interest Members are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they have in an 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
5.	Chair's Remarks (if any)	Chair	None
6.	Minutes - 9 March 2022	Chair	1 - 8
7.	Matters Arising	Chair	None
8.	Community Green Grant Update	Mike Webb / Ruth Burgess	9 - 16
9.	Net Zero Neighbourhood	George Simms	17 - 22
10.	Industrial Energy Taskforce - update on progress	Matthew Rhodes	Verbal Report
11.	Trailblazer Devolution Deal Net Zero and Environment	Ed Cox / Jackie Homan	Verbal Report
12.	Date of next meeting Wednesday 7 December 2022	Chair	None



West Midlands Combined Authority

Environment & Energy Board

Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Ian Courts (Chair)

Councillor Ahmad Bostan

Councillor Oliver Butler

Councillor Steve Evans

Councillor Andy Mackiewicz

Matthew Rhodes

Portfolio Lead for Environment, Energy & HS2

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

City of Wolverhampton Council

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Energy Capital

In Attendance

Mairi Clarkson

Ed Cox

Jim Davies

Angela Eason

Councillor Peter Fowler

Neil Griffiths

Cheryl Hiles

Jacqueline Homan

Katie Jepson

Rachel Jones

Paul McGrath

Richard Rees

Aqeel Rizvi

Simon Ross

George Simms

Councillor Laura Taylor-Childs

West Midlands Combined Authority

West Midlands Combined Authority

Environment Agency

Act On Energy

Birmingham City Council

West Midlands Fire Service

Energy Capital

West Midlands Combined Authority

West Midlands Combined Authority

Act On Energy

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

West Midlands Combined Authority

West Midlands Combined Authority

Marches Energy Agency

West Midlands Combined Authority

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Item Title

No.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees to the hybrid meeting and thanked attendees for either attending in person at Summer Lane or virtually.

The Chair noted a petition and public letter received to the board that was forwarded to the WMCA for noting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Simon Phipps and Councillor Waseem Zaffar.

3. Notice of Substitutes

Councillor Laura Taylor-Childs (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council) for Councillor Simon Phipps.

4. Minutes - 1 December 2021

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

5. Behaviour Change - Retrofit, Right Tree Right Place and CWG Food

The Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer provided a presentation to update the board on delivery of the Behaviour Change Programme and future work.

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) was commissioned in May 2021 to create a strategy and plan for how the WMCA influence people's behaviour to achieve net zero by 2041. Within the research, BIT used different framings within environment communications to understand what messaging resonated the most with the public and recommended environmental communications should be kept simple wherever possible and to align messaging on climate change with co-benefits of promoting behaviour changes such as improving health. In addition, BIT surveyed almost 2,000 people across the region to understand the most effective messaging for communications and found the most popular strapline of 'West Midlands Greener Together' emerged with branding guidelines and logos now developed and in use for communications by the Energy and Environment teams at the WMCA. The Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer noted however that communications alone would have a limited impact on scaled and sustained behaviour changes and would be most effective in tandem with behaviour change initiatives BIT had identified on three areas of focus for an implementation plan on the natural environment, sustainable food and home retrofit.

The Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer outlined from the presentation an update from the three focus areas of the campaign work for natural environment, sustainable food and home retrofit, noting key highlights to date and future work plans for each.

The Environment Behaviour Change Project Officer noted from the presentation there would also be citizen engagement, which would consist of a Net Zero Panel to allow the public to co-design and co-produce elements of the developing Environment team and Energy Capital work and a West Midlands Greener Together Forum to create a space for environmental non-governmental organisations, community groups, the public and others from across the region to discuss the route to net zero and inspire collaboration. Furthermore, as part of creating a legacy from the Commonwealth Games, the WMCA was in partnership with the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee's Sustainability team in creating carbon literacy training for volunteers, citizens and businesses within the region to enable people to understand and confidently communicate the climate emergency and identification of actions, as well as the WMCA having successfully applied on to the Local Climate Engagement Programme to support local authorities and partnerships to plan, commission and deliver high quality public

engagement with climate decision-making to benefit both the WMCA and the local population.

The Chair remarked on the recent positive climate emergency ratings and rankings of the WMCA and local authorities in the region and thanked officers for their work that reflected a plan for action represented from positive behaviour changes.

The Chair noted his observations from the report and firstly commented on the 'Right Tree Right Place' within the Natural Environment Plan to outline the importance and value of tree planting, hedges for biodiversity and risk of gardens not being developed on, loss of trees from people who may see them as a nuisance and collaboration with landowners to identify available land for tree planting. The Chair also noted the importance of sustainable food being local and a skills differentiation between new build and retrofit homes to lobby government through the Sustainable Funding Programme.

In response to a question from Matthew Rhodes who enquired if there would be a link between the tree programme and circular economic opportunities in the use of tree waste being turned in to biochar to fertilise street trees, the Head of Environment advised Birmingham City Council were undertaking work on this with their tree nurseries but that the WMCA could also investigate as part of the circular economic workstreams.

Resolved:

- (1) The opportunity and resources available for Councillors through 'Involves Local Climate Engagement Programme' on participatory and deliberative public engagement was noted.
- (2) The Commonwealth Games Carbon Literacy training for volunteers, citizens and businesses across the region was noted.
- (3) The consideration of local leaders to engage in future behaviour change campaigns and support the communications activity was noted.

6. Levelling Up White Paper

The Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform gave a verbal report to outline the Levelling Up White Paper as well as the process established at the WMCA for exploration and the offers and asks to put forward to government in relation to a trailblazer devolution deal offered by government to the WMCA and Greater Manchester Combined Authority to negotiate further deals unlike other areas in England.

The Levelling Up White Paper was published on 2 February 2022. Within the paper, it defined 'levelling up' as:

- Increasing opportunity across the UK, and
- Reducing disparities between and within regions.

The WMCA had identified 20 workstreams to address with government for levelling up, with one of the workstreams being net zero so that energy and environment was incorporated in to all other workstreams in housing, regeneration, planning, health, social capital and social economy.

There had been several informal meetings of the mayor, local authority leaders and other regional stakeholders, as well as initial meetings with government officials and ministerial aides where several principles had been articulated to help guide the trailblazer devolution deal process.

Following these discussions, the Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform referenced from the report the six devolution asks over the three areas of stimulating the low carbon and smart energy sector, decarbonisation of heat (retrofit) and local area energy planning.

The full extent of the timetable for the trailblazer devolution deal was not known, however the WMCA planned to have a draft proposal by June 2022 for submission to government before summer recess.

The Chair thanked the Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform and his team for their work on devolution to the region but noted concerns that the report did not reference the transport agenda such as vehicles in reducing emissions and improved transport routing, identification of best practices and products for retrofit use and to be mindful of language used for energy planning for the public to understand and have headings that are meaningful and showcase action for simplification.

Matthew Rhodes extended his thanks to the WMCA in having a framework for engagement but noted concern of the industrial decarbonisation in employment of people within the region for achieving net zero being a challenge and threat to jobs. Matthew noted that resolving the issue of a transition from the current economic base to net zero was most important for retainment in productivity of skilled jobs in the region and was a huge task. Matthew noted positive investment opportunities such as the Gigafactory in Coventry would provide great opportunities for greener technologies for the future, however further opportunities and investment in reconfiguring foundries in the black Country in enabling green fuels, employment of people and production of cleaner products would be required from the WMCA and public sector to support this transition.

Resolved:

- (1) The publication of the Levelling Up White Paper and reflections on its implications for the WMCA area was noted.
- (2) Feedback on the collaborative governance for development of the trailblazer devolution deal was considered.
- (3) The opportunities to maximise environment and energy within the trailblazer devolution deal was considered.

7. Retrofit - SMART Hub and Net Zero Neighbourhood

The SMART Hub Lead for the WMCA provided a presentation to update on progress on the Energy Capital team's SMART Hub (Sustainable Market for Affordable Retrofit Technologies) Programme, which focussed on home retrofit for getting homes in the region to net zero and reducing fuel poverty.

The priorities of the SMART Hub were to increase knowledge and capacity for retrofit in local authorities and social landlords, make the most of available funding and find ways to leverage funding and finance, support supply chain growth and increase demand.

The aim of the SMART Hub programme was to build capacity across local authorities and other partner organisations in the region and to lay the foundations for longer term growth in the market for home retrofit. These aims would be grouped in to three activities of capacity building, demonstrator projects and market development support to establish which the SMART Hub Lead outlined the current and future activities, as well as opportunities in greater detail during the presentation.

The Chair noted from the report he would like to have seen an emphasis on what the solutions were to obstacles and barriers for retrofit homes and raised points on components within the supply chain, standardisation of builds and promotion of systems and practices for officers to note and consider.

Resolved:

- (1) The work of the SMART Hub in supporting retrofit across the WMCA area was noted.

8. Marches Energy Agency and Act on Energy

Rachel Jones (Act on Energy) and Simon Ross (Marches Energy Agency) gave the board their verbal personal experiences in the delivery of retrofit programmes, particularly local authority delivery schemes and an update on the Sustainable Warmth Programme.

Rachel firstly noted the energy price cap coming in April and then October that would cause an increase in fuel and energy bills had initiated an unprecedented demand in contact from families, younger and single people for services to receive advice and support to enable solutions for the short and longer-term alongside interventions already announced by government on council tax support, rebate on energy bills. Rachel noted that 70% of families had enquired about the existing household support fund administered by local authorities. Rachel noted the importance of taking householders on a journey due to the concern in unaffordability of householders to heat their homes to prepare for.

Simon provided an update of the Sustainable Warmth Programme funding held within the Marches Energy Agency to provide customer support and offering a 'hand holding' role for householders across the WMCA area where the funding flowed from the Midlands Energy Hub. The Marches Energy Agency provided a wealth of support to householders in obtaining new technology and heating controls for people's homes and where eligibility was not met, further support offered through other initiatives such as home visits for low-cost measures, billing support, negotiations between householders with energy suppliers and loft and cavity wall insulation. Simon outlined the support to local authorities to help with area-based mapping for the next round of Sustainability Warmth Competition funding from 1 April and providing internal briefing notes and monthly reports to move the programme forward. Simon noted that from a householder perspective was surprised by the vulnerability of householders coming forward into the program and the amount of work needed to effectively hand hold them through the process, as well as during and after the install process due to supply chain stresses and workmanship not being as it was post-install to ensure the technology was usable for householders. Simon noted the importance of local authority representatives to please support us to support your officers who are doing this program to make sure they've got all the support they need internally to unblock blockages.

Rachel and Simon offered meetings with Councillors on further information they could provide for supporting their local authority areas and the importance of prioritising the price cap agenda especially with just under £20million of the Sustainable Warmth Fund Programme being received in to the WMCA to ensure it is all spent and to promote for the public who don't have smart meter readings to take a meter reading prior to the 1 April price cap.

The Chair noted the importance of 'hand-holding' as a difference between a job well done and not well done in that people feel looked after in that process where quite often an attitude of fall off can occur.

In response to a question from Councillor Peter Fowler who queried the concern, frustration and fear some members of the public may have to installing smart meters, Rachel noted the importance of householders having a smart meter to accurately record energy use to suppliers whilst householders can monitor and adjust usage accordingly.

In response to a question from the Chair on whether smart meters can tell householders what utility items generate the greatest energy increase, Simon noted by experimenting with different household utility devices to see from the smart meter interface a spiked or slow increase would enable this transparency, however it was unknown if householders were aware to do this with the Chair noting information given to householders to advise would help.

Agreed:

- (1) The Chair noted that not all Councils in the West Midlands region were present or represented at the meeting and requested for a letter, e-mail, or press release to be sent to all Constituent and Non-Constituent Authorities to advise of funding available to support residents. The Director of Inclusive Growth and Public Service Reform agreed for the WMCA to work with Rachel and Simon to promote this.

[The meeting ended at 11:57am]

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Environment and Energy Board

Date	28 th September 2022
Report title	Community Green Grant 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 Ruth Burgess, Community Green Grants Officer Ruth.Burgess@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment and Energy Board is recommended to:

- a) Note the funding available to not-for-profit groups in the CA area through the small and large grants
- b) Note 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
- c) Consider, in your role as local leaders, how you could promote the Community Green Grant especially in areas with low take up.

1. Purpose

This paper provides a progress update on delivery of the WMCA Community Green Grant relating to the Environment and Energy Board remit, covering projects funded, grant take up and wider community engagement.

2. Background

2.1 With the approval of the Five-Year Plan, the CA Board allocated a budget of £725k to support a programme of Community Green Grants to improve access to green space. The overarching aims are to:

- i. Increase or improve green spaces close to where people live (e.g., within ten-minute walk)
- ii. Connect people to nature, especially communities experiencing green deprivation

- iii. Enhance the local environment (e.g., tree planting, increasing biodiversity)
- iv. Tackle barriers to accessing green spaces, e.g., concerns around safety or the lack of awareness of local green space

2.2 There are two different type of grant:

- i. 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.
- ii. Larger grant (£25k- £100k). We envisage running two large grants (possible more if they are coming in at the lower end of this range).

2.3 Currently the timeframe for the Community Green Grants (CGG) is 2 years and will end in March 2024. Further funding is being sought to extend the CGG scheme.

Progress to date

2.4 The Community Green Grants Officer (CGG Officer), who works within the WMCA Environment Team, has led the work to set up the structure of the grant, the administration and assessment process. They now lead on the work to ensure the grants are meeting the outcomes of addressing ‘green deprivation’ and to provide support to applicants.

2.5 Following a procurement process Heart of England Community Foundation was appointed Dec 2021 to manage the administration and financial elements of the grant.

2.6 A GAP (Grant Approval Panel) was established to support the grant assessment process. The panel is made up of WMCA staff, an officer from Heart of England Community Foundation and external trusted organisations. The GAP meet each quarter to assess eligible applications and approve final awards. To keep the 7 local authorities actively involved in the process, a local authority representative was appointed for each area. This local authority representative is informed each quarter on the relevant area applicants, with an opportunity to comment on the project/ make sure it does not adversely affect existing projects.

Grant Support

2.7 WMCA Community Green Grants is a rolling grant, applicants can apply at any point. Support to potential applicants is available through the CGG Officer and the application [support documents](#) available on the Heart Of England Community Foundation website.

2.8 After the initial [grant launch](#) in January 2022 regular “meet the funder” workshops have taken place across the region through the area Voluntary Sector Councils. The Voluntary Sector support organisations such as One Walsall, Dudley CVS and BVSC have been a great source of support to CGG inviting the CGG Officer to take part in relevant forums and promoting the grant through member newsletters.

- 2.9 GAP reviews of the application and processes have refined the support resources available to applicants. A high level of support is available to all applicants through the CGG officer including one to one advice and site visits. Large grant applicants are required to contact the WMCA before a formal submission. Support to large grant applicants is available through the CGG officer and Natural Capital Programme Manager.
- 2.10 Monthly webinars have been delivered through the WMCA to provide support to potential applicants and funded projects on topics focused on ways to increase biodiversity. It is a challenge for small organisations who are not environmental experts to find meaningful and achievable ways to build the requirement of “increasing biodiversity” into their projects. We have been supported by experts including RSPB and Birmingham Tree People to deliver short webinars on a variety of topics. These are recorded and available on the WMCA YouTube channel.
- 2.11 A guide was produced with support and expertise from the GAP on [Top Tips for Increasing Biodiversity](#) and is available on the HoECF application portal as well as on the WMCA website. Through these events, networking, and the regular webinars we have a Community Green Grant database of over 200 organisations or interested individuals.

Promotion

- 2.12 The grant has been positively received with regular initial enquiries. Promotion is mainly through WMCA comms, local authorities, and the relevant area voluntary sector networks. Below is a record of significant enquiries between Sept 22 and August 22, this is where a meeting has taken place either virtually or in person following initial contact.

Grant meetings/project visits:

Birmingham	40
Coventry	17
Dudley	12
Sandwell	12
Solihull	12
Walsall	18
Wolverhampton	23

Application and Grant Awards

- 2.13 Applications received and approved, Q3 approval will not be confirmed until end of September 2022.

Area	Received Q1, Q2, Q3 2022	Approved Q1, Q2	In progress
Birmingham	33	3	19
Coventry	4	1	9
Dudley			4
Sandwell	3		2
Solihull			3
Walsall	4	2	2
Wolverhampton	3		3

2.14 Two grant tranches' have taken place to date with a total of six projects approved (£105k)

Funded Projects

Q1 2022

2.15 **Kings Rise Academy, Opening KRAKEN (Kings Rise Academy Knowledge and Education in Nature) to Kingstanding £8,494.50 Birmingham.** The development of a school garden to make it available to the wider community. This includes 2 weekly clubs (Little Bugs Club and The KRAKEN Gardeners Club) for new users. There will also be a summer celebration and Harvesting event opening the space to 1000+ plus people over the time of the approved funding.

The WMCA funded portion of the project commenced in June and is due to finish April 2023. Significant progress has been made with the planting of a wildflower meadow. Pictures below show the site before funding and the CGG funded wildflower meadow.

2.16 **Old Hall People's Partnership, The Bentley 'Growing Great' Pocket Park £18,650 Walsall.**

Creation of a pocket park in Bentley, Walsall. The project will provide residents with a green space to enjoy and the opportunity to garden and grow fruit & vegetables. The pocket park will include wildflower areas, raised beds to grow herbs and vegetables. Biodiversity will be encouraged through the inclusion of log piles, hedgehog homes, bird & bat boxes and solitary bee houses. A project coordinator will work with local people of all ages to do the work to establish the pocket park and the maintain it. The project will ensure an accessible green space is established in the area for the community to enjoy for years to come.

2.17 **Sustainable Life, Access to Ten Acres £16.050 Birmingham.** An exciting project that will clear 1.6 acres of brambles on the Ten Acre site to make it accessible to the public and restore a hidden orchard. Sustainable Life have successful cleared areas of Ten Acres and will continue this great work to increase the access to green space in the area.

Volunteers will support the work and activities will include a Plum Festival to celebrate the opening of the orchard area. Other work will include delivering workshops and working with residents to encourage care and maintenance of the site. The project will help to maintain important habitats and help the area become a place where a diverse range of plants and wildlife can thrive.

Q2 2022

- 2.18 **Caldmore Community Garden (Caldmore Village Festival), Let's Meet at the Garden £17,692 Walsall.** Caldmore Community Garden is an established community garden in Caldmore, Walsall. Since the pandemic the amount of people coming to the garden has increased due to the lack of local green space. The garden is always looking for new ways to engage the local community and provide people without gardens with a safe and inviting environment.

The project will focus on increasing the biodiversity of the garden through the cultivation of a new "boggy area". There will also be building and installing bat boxes and working with the Bat Conservation Trust to identify the bat species on site. The funding will also allow the garden to continue their weekly garden Saturdays for local families which provides essential hands-on experience with nature for children in the area.

- 2.19 **Feeding Coventry: Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill Green Project £25,000 Coventry.**

Feeding Coventry is a small charity working to support food resilience across Coventry. They are based in Foleshill Community Centre. They run a social supermarket and education programmes to reduce food waste and encourage sustainable food practices. They have had success with setting up 2 community gardens and want to build on this success with 3 new green spaces.

The funded project will be creating accessible green space in 3 areas of Coventry: Foleshill, Herbert Art Gallery, and Kairos Women's Centre. The work will increase the biodiversity through the planting of community gardens where people can grow food/wildflowers and learn about the importance of natural habitats in urban areas. The aim of the project is to co create urban garden areas with the local community to give greater control over local green spaces and reach people without access to gardens.

- 2.20 **Kingstanding Regeneration Trust: Brookvale's Birds & Bees Project £19,344 Birmingham.**

Kingstanding Regeneration Trust is a charity based in Erdington supporting NEET (not in education, employment, or training) young people in North Birmingham into training and work.

The organisation is situated at the old park keeper's cottage within Brookvale Park they have been funded to clear the 70 square metre cottage garden that is overgrown

and littered. The area can then be used to engage young people aged 16-25 in green skills. The participants will be given the opportunity to complete entry level qualifications to help them get jobs and apprenticeships in the green industry. The wasteland area of the park will also be transformed with significant planting and habitat creation. The work will include regular open days and work with local schools and residents' groups to engage the local community with the project. An outdoor classroom will be established for the future benefit of young people working with KRT.

Looking Ahead

- 2.21 Q3 applications will be assessed by GAP end of September, Q4 assessed December. Currently 3 further quarters are planned for 2023.
- 2.22 It is important the grant is taken up in all areas of the CA. The CGG Officer has spent time this summer visiting projects in Sandwell, Solihull, and Dudley to offer support and encourage applications. Applications are expected to come in from these areas over the next 2 quarters.
- 2.23 WMCA is supported by Heart of England Community Foundation in carrying out the evaluation of the project. Each funded project will complete a detailed project report measuring the impact of the grant. The CGG officer is currently exploring other ways additional benefits can be measured such as wellbeing and engagement with environmental issues.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 This programme is part of the £5.1m funding secured from the Investment Programme at the CA Board in March 21; £725k was specifically allocated to the Community Green Grants programme.
- 3.2 Thus far, just over £105k has been invested across 6 projects during the first 2 quarters of this calendar year. This represents just over 15% of the budget available for grants (after the deduction of administration costs). In addition, the 6 successful applications represent 12% of the overall applications (47).
- 3.3 It is worth noting that there have been no submitted applications from Dudley and Solihull although 7 are in the pipeline. In addition, Sandwell and Wolverhampton have not had any successful applications. This suggests that this programme requires greater promotion/visibility within each of these respective areas in order to increase take-up, as well as sign-posting to the resources available to support applications.

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 (*)

CGG prioritises applications from projects in areas of high deprivation (IMD 10-20%). A common theme of projects applying is food poverty and incorporating growing food for the community into the project plan. Additional common themes are mental health and isolation, the projects are aiming to provide people with a place of safety where they can find community and support. It is expected that these themes will continue to be strong as the grant continues. The outreach work that is being undertaken by our Community Green Grants Officer is ensuring that we make the grant accessible to as wide a range of organisations as possible who are working to achieve this.

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'. The Community Green Grants will support outcomes around:

- reduction of health inequalities;
- addressing climate resilience through the promotion of nature-based solution to dealing with climate change;
- improving education and learning around the climate emergency;
- supporting the principle of powerful communities through providing support to deliver change and create better places; 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 Community Green Grant covers all constituent local authorities.

8. Other Implications

None.

9. Schedule of Background Papers

None

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Environment & Energy Board

Date	28 th September 2022
Report title	Net Zero Neighbourhood
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 Strategy, Integration and Net Zero email: ed.cox@wmca.org.uk Cheryl Hiles, Director, Energy Capital Email: Cheryl.hiles@wmca.org.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Environment and Energy Board is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse the decision to award £1.65m grant funding to Dudley MBC to deliver the first Net Zero Neighbourhood demonstrator in Brockmoor
- (2) Endorse the intention to create a NZN working group to support other constituent members to further develop their NZN plans and identify areas of particular interest where there could be potential for specific collaboration with other work and stakeholders.
- (3) Provide feedback on how members would like to be engaged or informed on specific areas of the programme, outside of any Board meetings.

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the decision to award £1.65m grant funding to Dudley MBC 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.

2. Background

- 2.1 WMCA is funding the Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator programme as part of its strategy to cut regional carbon emissions to net zero by 2041. The #WM2041 strategy and its associated Five Year Plan shows that we need to retrofit nearly 300,000 homes in the region by 2026 to meet our targets. 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.
- 2.2 The Net Zero Neighbourhood Programme - part of Energy Capital's SMART Hub home retrofit programme - aims to develop a place-based approach to retrofit, founded on extensive community engagement to generate higher rates of take up than other retrofit initiatives and generate wider benefits including: improved health and wellbeing; local employment opportunities; inclusive growth; improved quality of life and local amenities. This in turn can form the basis for a replicable finance and delivery model to scale up retrofit, creating low carbon energy communities on neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.
- 2.3 While the funding made available through the Investment Programme was intended to fund the first demonstrator project, a key aim of the demonstrator phase is to develop a pipeline of Net Zero Neighbourhood projects to help attract further funding and investment into the programme in the future. Each of the seven constituent member local authorities were invited to first complete a Net Zero Neighbourhood Expression of Interest (EoI) form and then to complete a full Net Zero Neighbourhood plan by early July 2022. They were allocated £50k each for this purpose out of the £2.1m Investment Programme funding. Five local authorities submitted a plan – Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton (two more plans from will be submitted by Coventry and Walsall at a later date).
- 2.4 Upon review, Dudley MBCs plan for Brockmoor was the plan that best aligned with the goals of the programme, providing high confidence of successful delivery. It has been selected to receive the remaining £1.65m Investment Programme funding.
- 2.5 Dudley MBC's plan outlines the ambition to create a Net Zero Canalside community, implementing the following within the area:
 - Improvements to the existing housing stock, commercial estate and to the outdate industrial estate.
 - Several transport improvements including the potential to develop the disused railway into a cycle and walking pathways and the enhancement of canal corridors

including surfaced cycleways with links to cycling and walking routes, as well as adjacent open spaces and green spaces.

- Management of demand and grid constraints to accommodate and plan for electrification for heat and transport.
- High-quality green infrastructure which will be protected and enhanced including green spaces and parks and improved links into Fens Pool Nature Reserve/SAC, the River Stour and open countryside to the south and west of the corridor.
- Educational programmes and community engagement to help design how the NZN is delivered and raise awareness of Net Zero

2.6 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council selected the Brockmoor area as:

- It has high levels of fuel poverty
- It is relatively close to the new metro and therefore provide opportunities for expanding sustainable transport links
- Relatively close to industrial areas, with wider opportunities for decentralised clean energy
- It has green space within it, an adjoining canal and a disused railway
- The housing mix is representative of the borough, and includes several homes where energy efficiency improvements can be made quickly

2.7 The Brockmoor Net Zero Neighbourhood project delivery is proposed to be divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 (2022-2025) — corresponds to the first phase of capital funding, focusing on the retrofit of a minimum of 50 homes - funded through £1.65m of investment from the WMCA and supported by additional funding including from DMBC housing department, Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) – and creation of a cycle route and community garden
- Phase 2 (2025 onwards) — corresponds to the remaining infrastructure improvements and community initiatives needed to fully implement the NZN plan

2.8 The success of the project will be based on the ability to successfully engage the community and have enough households sign up for retrofit measures and to buy into the overall approach for the area. Dudley's plan sets out clearly how the project will build on existing community engagement in the area and how engagement through the project will take place.

2.9 The following project outcomes are targeted:

Essential Outputs

- At least 50 homes are retrofitted within the Brockmoor to PAS2035 standards
- There is good to excellent feedback from all households that receive the retrofit
- Energy performance data and other benefits/outcomes are captured to support the development of the finance model
- Proposed cycle infrastructure is installed
- Transport links within the area are better integrated and support uptake of low-carbon transport options
- Establishment and improvement of green spaces within the area
- Community co-design and engagement activities undertaken to support the design of Phase 2

- Scope and financial model developed for Phase 2 for Brockmoor NZN, with the intention of replicating this model elsewhere in the region to help scale up retrofit delivery

Desirable Outputs

- The community co-design process is highly effective and a pipeline of a further 250 homes for retrofit is generated for Phase 2
- High usage of cycle infrastructure resulting from community engagement activity
- Identification and funding of grid management systems to facilitate the transition to a decarbonised energy system, including vehicle to grid and neighbourhood storage
- Engagement with the supply chain helps to inform on-going market development activities for the SMART Hub
- Private finance to support Phase 2 of the Dudley Net Zero Neighbourhood and Phase 1 of the other Net Zero Neighbourhood plans is identified

2.10 WMCA will continue to work with the full cohort of LAs to develop the plans and will set up a regular working group for officers to this end. We are actively seeking further funding for other plans to ensure the work that has gone into plan development continues to progress across the region

3. Financial Implications

3.1 The total budget for this project is £2.1million, all of which is funded from WMCA's investment programme. Of this, £100k of this covers the NZN Delivery Manager post and £350k has been allocated to constituent member local authorities to develop NZN plans. The remaining £1.65m capital funding is available for the NZN demonstrator.

3.2 The £1.65m investment from WMCA into Dudley's Brockmoor NZN will be matched by £710k funding from Dudley MBC and further grant funding will be sought. It will demonstrate the feasibility of a blended finance model for retrofit applicable to multiple housing tenures and the potential to raise significant private sector investment to support WMCA's strategic retrofit aims. It will also explore opportunities to facilitate the transition to a decarbonised energy system through local grid demand management and storage.

Element	Cost
Housing retrofit (50 homes)	£1,843,553
Cycle route (410m plus cycle parking)	£400,000
Community Garden	£25,000
Project management and consultancy	£150,000
Total	£2,418,553

This will be funded as follows:

Funding source	Amount
WMCA NZN Demonstrator funding	£1,650,000
Dudley MBC	£620,000

Other grants (Boiler Upgrade Scheme, Disabled Facilities Grant etc	£148,553
Total	£2,418,553
Additional funding opportunities not yet secured (to extend scope of retrofit)	£386,447

- 3.3 The main cost component of the project is the retrofit of 50 homes. WMCA has undertaken housing stock assessment that estimates the average cost of retrofitting a home in Dudley to reach Net Zero to be £19,800, though this does not consider recent increases in installation cost and does not include the cost of enabling works, assessment, engagement and design. The budget put forward by Dudley MBC allows for approximately £36k per home. This provides confidence that either:
- Each individual retrofit can be undertaken to a high performance standard, providing increased comfort and lower bills to households
 - More than 50 retrofits can be completed (depending on the outcomes of engagement and surveys, exceeding the minimum project expectations.
- 3.4 Dudley MBC will provide match funding of £768,553, increasing the project budget by 46% over WMCA's funding allocation and is committed to finding additional funding.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 Funding will be administered through a grant agreement and defrayed according to expenditure incurred and deliverables achieved (e.g. number of retrofits). The Energy Capital team is currently working with WMCA legal to draft the grant agreement. Milestones and payment schedule are to be finalised, but will be developed with Dudley MBC and WMCA's finance team to ensure they are appropriate.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 Effective carbon reduction actions have the potential to make a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Dudley residents and on contributing to reducing inequalities on health and wellbeing. This is particularly true in areas of high deprivation, such as the two LSOAs covered by the Brockmoor NZN. The primary shared benefits on health and wellbeing from the actions to be undertaken through the NZN Demonstrator include more efficient homes an access to affordable warmth, reduced use of combustion engine vehicles, leading to cleaner air, increased levels of activity through walking and cycling.

6. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 6.1 The Dudley Net Zero Neighbourhood (NZN) programme is rooted in the principle that the design of a new approach to energy efficiency is led by the community and the community, residents and businesses, are beneficiaries of investment and the short and long-term outcomes of that investment. The goal is for economic activity to work for humans whilst being regenerative of the environment. The WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework has 8 key principles and the NZN programme will deliver against each of them, within the scope of the funding call.

7. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 7.1 The area covered by the project will be the Brockmoor area of Dudley, as detailed in Dudley MBC's NZN plan.

8. Other Implications

None

9. Schedule of Background Papers

- 9.1 Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator Business Justification Case
- 9.2 Dudley Net Zero Neighbourhood Proposal (Dudley MBC)