

Subject: Tackling Climate Change: How can parks and green space managers in the East Midlands contribute?

Venue: Creswell Crags Visitor Centre

Date: 30 October 2008

Discussion Summary:

Following introductions by Richard Welburn, Chair of GreenSpace East Midlands, presentations were made by

- Paul Bramhill (GreenSpace) on related national and international initiatives in green space management.
- Dawn Griffiths (Natural England) on the role of Natural England in tackling climate change, linking Green Infrastructure to tackling climate change and influencing the Local Development Framework.
- Mike Meech (GOEM) on national policy, towards a programme of action for the East Midlands and how Local Area Agreements fit into the delivery.

Copies of the power point presentations have been provided and circulated separately.

Examples of current actions by green space organisations in the East Midlands were explored.

In Leicester City, mains electricity is being withdrawn from allotments and locally based wind turbine generators substituted. There are also outline proposals being considered to install 5 large wind turbines in the City. Marketing and promotion are highlighting climate change measures, e.g. the changing plant species being used in bedding schemes to respond to climate change. (Contact Richard Welburn)

Leicestershire County Council have solar and wind turbine individual units to power toilet blocks, automatic barriers and pay and display machines. Unfortunately there have been recent cases of the panels and turbines being stolen. (Contact Rosemary Mills)

The National Trust has a whole range of initiatives in place to address climate change from promoting small scale renewable energy to wetland, peatland and soil conservation measures. The 'Small Steps, Big Change' project is helping people make changes and 'green up their acts' by creating opportunities for staff, volunteers, members, visitors, schools and community groups to get involved.

Small Steps, Big Change aims to help people to look at themselves and their daily decisions, and make the small steps which together make a big change. (Contact Ted Edwards)

In Nottingham the 'O Zone' project was launched in a bid to secure Landmark funding. It was focused upon introducing measures throughout the City to mitigate the effects of climate change and included the installation of huge wind turbines and measures to reduce water consumption on the City's land. The project was unsuccessful in terms of securing the funding, but was valuable in increasing awareness and understanding of the issues and it may still result in significant improvements being made. In Daybrook the river course was diverted through the park to increase flood capacity and has resulted in greater bio diversity and landscape interest. Policy changes in respect of the planting schemes on the City's roundabouts have been influenced by climate change considerations and result in less intensive schemes and more environmentally friendly practices. Some measures however have to be carefully balanced to ensure that improvements in one area do not have adverse effects in another, e.g. meadowland planting has become much more vulnerable to fires in the hotter dryer conditions now being experienced. This results in more Fire Brigade call outs with consequent increased energy use and excessive waste of water. (contact Eddie Curry)

The development of Derbyshire's greenways is seen as an important contribution to Green Infrastructure acting as wildlife corridors to encourage the spread bio-diverse habitats. (Contact Cathy Cooke)

Paul Bramhill asked for examples of good mitigation and adaptation practice to be submitted to GreenSpace. These can then be used to network with other organisations and to enhance the data available for research. There are forms available for submitting examples on the GreenSpace web site.

Ian Wall noted the significance of the discussion taking place at Creswell Crags which has such a significant story to tell about the changes brought about by ice ages. He highlighted the distinctions between climate change which will happen naturally and global warming which is seen as being aggravated by man's contribution.

Paul Bramhill pressed the need for public realm/green space managers to consider site resilience in planning their improvements. He also emphasised

the need to deliver measures on a major scale if they were to make a significant contribution.

Fiona Clarke encouraged managers to maintain a good dialogue with their local authority planners who can help in to ensure measures are integrated and appropriate to the area.

Mike Meech referred to the work of the Technology Institute based in the region at Loughborough and the huge will to invest in improvement; nevertheless he observed that the necessary resources still fall short of what is needed. He also raised the possibility of funding being attracted to GreenSpace East Midlands to support the organisation in providing events, promoting good practice and supporting green space organisations in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The visit to the East Midlands by the Minister for the Regions may provide an opportunity to flag up the work of the Forum.

In particular there was some discussion surrounding the apparent failure of the landscape design sector to respond adequately to the challenges being presented by climate change and the potential to have a promotional video produced to highlight the issues and examples of failure and success.

Concern was expressed that in the East Midlands Cities' regeneration needed to do more to mitigate and adapt – in terms of providing suitable green spaces; new and enhanced green corridors; increased and improved water retention measures; increased shade from appropriate planting; green roofs, etc.