

**OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT
AND CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIO**

1. I have attended the following meetings in respect of my Sustainable Environment and Climate Change Portfolio:
 - (a) Darlington Environmental Forum held on 25th June, 2007
 - (b) Public Protection Forum held on 12th July, 2007
 - (c) Briefing meetings with various Directors and Assistant Directors

Climate Change Strategy

2. Work is taking place on various fronts to progress the Darlington Partnerships Climate Change Strategy Action Plan. In addition to the work of the relevant Partnership Enquiry Groups, all of the Council's Scrutiny Committees are considering potential actions and will ultimately feed through the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee to inform the draft Action Plan. The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has received reports and discussed the role of land use planning and transport initiatives in mitigating and adapting to climate change.
3. As well as the work of various Darlington Partnership Groups and the Scrutiny Committees, a wide range of other initiatives are feeding into the Action Plan, such as the success of Local Motion in reducing carbon emissions, review of Council Transport and the Local Development Framework.

Green Champions

4. The Council is looking to encourage officers to take on the role of Green Champions within their teams. Co-ordinated by the Sustainable Development Officer, the aim is to establish a team of volunteers who will lead by example and encourage colleagues to introduce "green" practices within the office and throughout their daily lives.

Energy Efficiency Project

5. The main objective of the Leading Edge Energy Efficiency Improvement Project is to review and implement practical measures to reduce energy usage within all Council-owned and operated buildings. Early progress on the Project includes the North East Energy Savings Trust undertaking a baselining exercise free of charge (as a pilot scheme for the North East). This will establish the current position across all Council departments with respect to the maturity of plans to tackle climate change and will ultimately result in a series of recommendations for action which will be captured within the Climate Change Action Plan.

6. **Minister's Visit** - Communities Minister Ian Wright visited Darlington on Thursday 30 August 2007 to get a first hand report on the local flooding that had occurred earlier this summer and how the Council had responded. Northumbrian Water also attended the meeting, which was held at the Beehive, to explain their response to the flooding. The Minister then went on site to meet a local resident whose home was damaged as a result of the flooding. The visit was organised at short notice but was a great success and we have been advised that the Minister found it both valuable and informative.
7. **Joint Working Group with Northumbrian Water** - When local flooding occurs, there are a number of organisations that usually respond including the Council, Northumbrian Water, Fire and Rescue and the Environment Agency. The response depends on the nature of the incident, for example during the events that occurred this summer, the first three authorities were primarily involved. For the drainage systems to work effectively all parts of it must function correctly from the gullies through the main drain to the outfall. With this in mind we have set up a joint working group with Northumbrian Water to pursue the common and related drainage and flooding issue. This should help minimise the number of potential incidents and facilitate a more effective response when they do occur. The group will meet quarterly with additional special meetings as required.

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Sustainable Environment and Climate Change Portfolio