
OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Darlington Planning Forum** – To enable Environment Scrutiny Committee to fulfil its monitoring role of the Development Control Best Value Review we received the Minutes of the meeting of the Darlington Planning Forum held on 30th November. As Chair of Environment Scrutiny I also attended the meeting and was encouraged by the comments received by the Forum Members.
 - (b) **Work Programme 2005/06** – We have given consideration to the Work Programme of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2005/06 and in doing so examined Cabinet's Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern. We continually add to our Work Programme and monitor ongoing items.
 - (c) **Darlington Cycle Network** – We gave consideration to the update of the Darlington Cycle Network with particular reference to the future plans of Darlington as a Cycling Demonstration Town. Hopefully the creation of a cycling network throughout the area will convince the residents of Darlington to use cycling as a form of transport more often. We were advised that the network would concentrate on connecting residential areas to destinations such as the town centre, schools, leisure facilities and major employers and that the views of young people were a key feature of the plans.
 - (d) **Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy** – We received a six-monthly progress report covering April 2005 to October 2005 on the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy actions that come with the remit of Environment Scrutiny Committee and in doing so noted the progress made to address the issues raised in relation to Economy, Environment, Transport and Leisure. The updates are provided through the themed groups of Darlington Partnership.
 - (e) **Monitoring of Best Value Review of Culture** – We received a progress report in relation to the Improvement Action Plan, an outcome of the Best Value Review of Culture, completed during February 2003. The Plan also incorporated recommendations following the Audit Commissions inspection of Sports and Leisure completed during September 2003.
 - (f) **Update on Cultural Strategy** – The Local Cultural Strategy 'Moving Up' was approved by Council on 5th December, 2003 and since then there has been progress in meeting the strategic objectives of the Strategy. We were advised of some of the highlights of the cross authority achievements associated with the philosophy of the

Strategy and the Moving Up Action Plan contained under some of the objectives of the strategy. We shall continue to monitor the Cultural Strategy and note its progress.

- (g) Joint Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee Annual Site Visits -** The Committee has undertaken its annual tour of sites together with Planning Committee to recently completed or nearing completion approved planning applications. The choice of sites took in a range of different development types across the Borough and reflected typical applications, which are considered by the Local Planning Authority and highlighted various issues for us to consider at each location.

- (h) Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items –**
 - (i) Neglected Land Review Group –** We continue to make progress on the Neglected Land Review Group and have had a further meeting that enlightened the Group as to the various powers available to the Council, which could be used when dealing with problem land together with environmental issues surrounding the sites.

**The Mayor, Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee**