



# Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee

**25 October 2024**

Title:	Place & Connectivity Directorate Highlight Report: October 2024
Report of:	Judith Barker, Executive Director – Place & Connectivity
Lead Member:	Councillor Bridget Smith, Lead Member, Communities and Environment
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required

## Recommendations:

A	Note the content of this report.
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## Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

x	Enabling resilient communities
x	Achieving best value and high performance

## 1. Purpose

1.1	This report provides a general update on the key activities of the Place and Connectivity Directorate in relation to Environment and Sustainable Communities, which are not covered in the other reports to this Meeting.
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## 2. Updates regarding National Government

2.1	Since the last meeting, the Government has confirmed priorities for each of the Departments. The remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities crosses several Government departments, so we have briefly summarised the most relevant below for ease of reference.
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2.2	<p>The published priorities of the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivering our mission to boost energy independence and cutting bills through clean power by 2030</li> <li>• taking back control of our energy with Great British Energy</li> <li>• upgrading Britain’s homes and cutting fuel poverty through our Warm Homes Plan</li> <li>• standing up for consumers by reforming our energy system</li> <li>• creating good jobs in Britain’s industrial heartlands, including a just transition for the industries based in the North Sea</li> <li>• leading on international climate action, based on our domestic achievements</li> </ul> <p>Our GSEnz Hub team meet with the Department officials regularly to enable sharing of information and early insight into the developments and priorities. The next meeting is on 25 October.</p> <p>We have seen a number of recent announcements on the following areas which are of interest to this committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in renewable energy storage – putting in place and cap and floor scheme to ensure a minimum income and reduce barriers to the market for building up storage capacity</li> <li>• Carbon capture schemes which were announced this month in Teesside and Merseyside</li> <li>• The establishment of a Solar Task Force and development of a solar roadmap</li> <li>• Proposals for a refreshed local grant for warm homes as well as the continuation of the public sector decarbonisation grants and social housing decarbonisation grants</li> </ul>
2.3	<p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are focussed on fixing the foundations of an affordable home and leading on devolution; handling back power to communities and rebuilding local governments.</p> <p>This includes the work on the Local Growth Plan which CPCA are working in partnership with our constituent authorities to develop, using the shared evidence base, priorities and knowledge. We have been asked to develop a document with 3-5 priorities which are currently focussed on 3 key sectors. These are still emerging themes and proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand and intensify our globally significant science and technology cluster, centred around Cambridge but drawing on and developing assets and linkages with the wider region, strengthening the UK’s position as a science and technology superpower.</li> <li>2. Deliver a leading-edge Advanced Manufacturing and Materials Powerhouse</li> <li>3. Exploit our unique position as Britain’s breadbasket and leader in agriculture, agri-tech, food security and production, to deliver and trade global advances in sustainable food systems.</li> <li>4. Address critical gaps in water, energy, connectivity, and transport infrastructure to fuel growth in our three key clusters.</li> <li>5. Provide new and affordable homes for our communities and retain and attract world class talent and workers in our three key clusters.</li> </ol> <p>Much work will continue towards workshops with Government and informed by the national Industrial Strategy which was published on 14 October. The Local Growth Plan will continue to develop and be shared through the CPCA Board and committee structure into 2025.</p> <p>Members will be aware of the recent Government consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which closed on 24 September. CPCA made a submission to that consultation and the feedback is being analysed. We are awaiting the further planning proposals from Government and how they might impact on the planning system and the Mayoral Combined Authorities particularly. It is expected by the close of the year.</p> <p>On 10 October we saw announcements about the following including the establishment of ‘The National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority’ (NISTA):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <b>Ten-Year National Infrastructure Strategy</b> be released next Spring alongside the Spending Review with funding being linked directly to both ‘economic’ (Road, Rail, Energy) and ‘social’ infrastructure (Schools, Hospitals etc).</li> </ol>

	<p>2. <b>The Infrastructure Bill</b>, which aims to streamline NSIPs, reform compulsory purchase rules and modernise planning committees, will be introduced within this Parliamentary session.</p>
2.4	<p>The DEFRA priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning up Britain's river, lakes and seas</li> <li>• Creating a road map to move Britain to a zero waste economy</li> <li>• Supporting our farmers to boost Britain's food security</li> <li>• Ensuring nature's recovery</li> <li>• Protecting communities from the dangers of flooding</li> </ul> <p>This department oversees the local nature recovery strategy which is the subject another agenda item.</p> <p>We have participated in a roundtable discussion with DEFRA officials on how devolution may work within their agenda, and this will feed into the work led by MHCLG on the devolution bill.</p>

### 3. Regional updates

3.1	<p>The Committee will recall that on 1 August CPCA was hosting a visit of the National Infrastructure Committee and held a roundtable to discuss the infrastructure gap and in particular how energy was holding back growth. The report is due in early 2025.</p> <p>Meanwhile the Commission have published a report into cost drivers of major infrastructure projects in the UK which is available on the website.</p>
3.2	<p>In September the GSEnzHub concluded their interviews for a new independent chair. A verbal update will be provided to the Committee on the appointment.</p>
3.3	<p>The Committee have sought clarity from officers on the landscape of the retrofit delivery in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which is complex.</p> <p>CPCA is the accountable body for the Greater South East Net Zero Hub which covers 140 local authorities across the SE and is one of 5 regional hubs delivering on behalf of the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero. A slide deck sets out their remit and work as an Appendix to this report. There is a paper on this agenda regarding the Warm Homes Grant. The GSEnzHub do not deliver some grant schemes in this geography as other partnerships were already delivering in this space:</p> <p><b>Peterborough Retrofit Consortium</b>  Peterborough City Council was a founder member of the Warmer Homes Consortium which has now 23 Local Authority members, led by Portsmouth City Council. All Consortium members also deliver the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) fuel poverty outreach programme which is managed by AgilityEco.</p> <p>The Warmer Homes Consortium was originally set up to deliver First Time Central Heating projects back in 2018. The Consortium has successfully bid on and delivered successive funding rounds. Peterborough City Council is currently exploring options for a future strategy.</p> <p><b>Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP)</b>  The Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP) is a formal collaboration between all 5 Cambridgeshire District Councils and Cambridgeshire County council. CERP has been established for over 10 years and is the key channel through which government funding for domestic retrofit activities has been delivered into Cambridgeshire. This is branded as Action on Energy.  <a href="https://www.actiononenergycambs.org">https://www.actiononenergycambs.org</a></p>
3.4	<p><b>Forward Agenda items</b></p> <p>Presentation items for forward agenda include (and potential timings):</p>

	<p>December Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally Determined Contributions Project – presentation by County Council on this work</li> <li>• Ox Cam Pan Regional Partnership Environment Principles – presentation and agenda item</li> <li>• Water Resources East – presentation on water scarcity and management issues</li> <li>• Fenland Soil – presentation on the work of Fenland Soil</li> <li>• Natural Cambridgeshire - presentation on the work of Natural Cambridgeshire</li> </ul> <p>February Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Area Energy Planning</li> <li>• Addressing the issue of drought-damaged roads</li> </ul>
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## 4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix 1: GSEnz - CPCA Overview
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## 5. Implications

### Financial Implications

5.1	None
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### Legal Implications

5.2	None
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### Public Health Implications

5.3	Climate and infrastructure developments can have major positive and negative impacts on public health.
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### Environmental & Climate Change Implications

5.4	None.
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### Other Significant Implications

5.5	None
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### Background Papers

5.6	None
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