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9 April 2021

To: The Leader – Councillor Bridget Smith
Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer
Members of the Cabinet – Councillors John Batchelor, Neil Gough,
Bill Handley, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Peter McDonald, Brian Milnes and
John Williams

Quorum: Majority of the Cabinet including the Leader or Deputy Leader (Statutory)

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Cabinet**, which will be held in the **Council Chamber - South Cambs Hall** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **Monday, 19 April 2021 at 10.00 a.m.**

Yours faithfully
Liz Watts
Chief Executive

The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.

Agenda

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Guidance Notes for Membership of the Public for Remote Meetings

Members of the public are welcome to view the live stream of this meeting, except during the consideration of exempt or confidential items, by following the link to be published on the Council's website. Any person who participates in the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules, is deemed to have consented to being recorded and to the use of those images (where participating via video conference) and/or sound recordings for webcast purposes. When speaking, members of the public should not disclose any personal information of any individual as this might infringe on the rights of that individual and breach the Data Protection Act.

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For more information about this meeting please contact democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk

Agenda Item 4

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Monday, 22 March 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Bridget Smith (Leader of Council)
Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer (Deputy Leader of Council (Statutory) -
Strategic Planning and Transport)

Councillors:	Neil Gough	Deputy Leader (non-statutory) - Transformation and Projects
	Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience
	Dr. Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet member for Planning Policy and Delivery
	Peter McDonald	Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery
	Brian Milnes	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing
	Hazel Smith	Lead Cabinet member for Housing
	John Williams	Lead Cabinet member for Finance

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Farzana Ahmed	Chief Accountant
Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
Ryan Coetsee	Project Officer
Rebecca Dobson	Democratic Services Manager
Susan Gardner Craig	Head of HR and Corporate Services
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Kevin Ledger	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Jonathan Malton	Cabinet Support Officer
Liam Martin	AV Support Officer
Rory McKenna	Monitoring Officer
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation
Trevor Nicoll	Head of Environment and Waste
Duncan Vessey	Head of Ermine Street Housing
Liz Watts	Chief Executive
Heather Wood	Interim Assistant Director of Housing (Statutory and Strategic Services)

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Dr. Claire Daunton, Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Pippa Heylings, Judith Rippeth, Deborah Roberts, Heather Williams and Dr. Richard Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

1. Announcements

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, noted the one-year anniversary of the first lockdown in 2020, and thanked all Officers and the local communities

for work ongoing work during the pandemic.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Peter McDonald, Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery and Skills declared an interest, being a member of the South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership Board.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Cabinet **authorised** the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the public version of the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 3 February 2021.

5. Public Questions

There were two questions received ahead of this meeting.

a) From Mrs. Jane Williams

In 2016, the Council granted planning permission for the development of Cambridge North Station at Chesterton sidings. As part of that planning permission, approximately 1.6 hectares of land was designated for ecological migration measures including the retention of existing trees and vegetation, the creation of a new area of wetland habitat, and the installation of new habitat areas for invertebrates. The site, which forms an important connector between the Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve and nearby habitat areas was deemed to be of near SSSI-quality and was in particular noted for its potential as a rich habitat for invertebrates and reptiles.

When the Council released its draft North East Cambridge Area Action Plan last year, this 1.6-hectare ecological site was inexplicably not included on the spatial framework maps, and the land was instead reallocated to provide for more profitable town centre, retail, and housing uses.

In the past several months, the entire site was clear-cut of all trees and vegetation in violation of the 2016 planning permission.

In its recently adopted “Doubling Nature” strategy, the Council says that it will “make the most of our direct influence on the natural environment as the local planning authority”, but in this case, Greater Cambridge Planning has ignored its own designation of 1.6 hectares of land for ecological mitigation.

In light of the ecological devastation we have seen associated with Council-approved developments at Cambridge North and other sites, including Northstowe, how can the public have any confidence that the council actually cares about doubling nature and what measures will be taken to remediate this? Response from Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins:

Firstly, I would like to re-iterate from the start that this council cares about

doubling nature and is taking steps within its control to do this.

Secondly, in respect of the specific matter you refer to - the land near Cambridge North Station where trees and vegetation have recently been cleared, the 2016 Planning Permission and condition which you identified as designating the land for ecological mitigation, was in fact not implemented.

Instead, subsequent applications were submitted in to and approved by both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City. The land that has been cleared was included in these subsequent permissions which were implemented, and which had a condition that required the submission of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

The Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) was submitted at the time and assessed by the City Council's ecologist who found the plan acceptable. The LEMP did not show landscape or ecological features to be retained within the area of the recent works. So, there was no requirement through those subsequent planning permissions to retain the vegetation in this area, there is no breach of condition, and as such no enforcement action can be taken.

I would remind you that removing trees and vegetation from land does not require planning permission (unless a TPO is involved). Therefore, in this case, the Council had no control over these works.

Thirdly, and hopefully to give you and the public the assurance that we are committed to our aim of increasing biodiversity and doubling nature in the District, as part of the work on the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan, the Council had already undertaken a biodiversity assessment (in June 2020) of the area. This will be used as a baseline for any future applications in the area where we expect proposals from developers to meet the National planning Policy Framework requirement for net gain and our own emerging policy objectives.

The draft Area Action Plan also provides significant opportunities for delivering the Council's biodiversity objectives through a wide range of new formal and informal spaces across the site and by maintaining existing habitat through design of sites that come forward.

We are demonstrating our firm commitment to doubling nature through recent planning decisions across the District and through the emerging policies. I hope you and our residents will recognise that commitment as those new consented permissions are built out.

At the invitation of the Leader, Mrs. Jane Williams confirmed she wished to ask a supplementary question

Mrs. Jane Williams expressed admiration for the doubling Nature Strategy but said she would like assurance as to how these aspirations would be brought forward. She was concerned about how, after planning had been approved, it translated on the ground, in matters such as parameter plans, such as land

profiling, ensuring that we were doubling nature and dealing with contamination. For large sites coming forward, she would like to have reassurances, as to ensure checks and balances would be applied, because of the implications on nature and the landscape.

Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins said she recognised the concerns expressed. A strategic sites team had been established, and she was working with that team to ensure permissions and conditions were considered in detail. If it would be helpful, she would be willing to invite Mrs Jane Williams to a more detailed discussion as to how the Doubling Nature Strategy would enable such consideration.

b) From Mr. Daniel Fulton

On 18 January the Portfolio Holder for Planning said that the Council's internal audit team would be undertaking an audit of the Q2 2020 PS2 planning performance return for non-major applications submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Two months later, no report has been forthcoming. Could the Portfolio Holder please provide an update on the status of this report?

Response from Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins:

As you may appreciate the Council audit team has a work schedule so when additional work is required, it is fitted into the work stream as quickly as is possible.

The Council's internal audit team began the Audit of the Council Q2 2020 PS2 submission in February 2021 and I am advised by the Lead Audit Officer that the team expect to be in a position to report their findings to the Scrutiny Meeting on 20th April 2021.

The Leader invited Mr. Daniel Fulton to ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Daniel Fulton said he appreciated that reviewing the audit submission would involve the review of over 3000 individual documents associated with over 300 planning applications, which he realised took time. However, he said it took a team of relatively inexperienced team of volunteers, approximately two days to complete an audit so in his view, this matter needed to be progressed as quickly as possible.

The Leader of the Council responded that any audit would be taken thoroughly.

6. **Issues Arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

Cabinet **received and noted** a report from Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and Councillor Judith Rippeth, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, informing Cabinet Members about the discussions at, and recommendations from the Committee's meeting held on 25 February 2021.

The report related to:

- 2020-25 Business Plan
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee Anti-Racism Task and Finish Group
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee Covid-19 Response

7. Scrutiny and Overview Committee Anti-Racism Task and Finish Group Recommendations

Cabinet received the report from the Anti-Racism Task and Finish Group, initially convened by the Scrutiny and Overview. Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, introduced the report, noting the ongoing work of the Council and thanked Officers for their continuing work.

Councillor John Williams proposed the recommendations and Cabinet:

Approved the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 1** – Key performance indicators relating to how the council responds to BAME employees at South Cambridgeshire District Council should be reported to the Employment and Staffing Committee on an ongoing basis.
- Recommendation 2** – The Leader of the Council should assign the responsibility for equalities to the relevant Lead Cabinet Member.
- Recommendation 3** – The Lead Cabinet Member with responsibility for equalities should investigate the establishment of an equalities advisory panel/group. It is suggested that this panel/group could follow the model of the Council's Brexit Advisory Group rather than requiring a formal committee to be set up. The Lead Cabinet Member should establish the most appropriate reporting route for the equality in employment report and whether this should be reported to the equalities advisory panel/group or the Employment and Staffing Committee.
- Recommendation 4** – The new equality advisory panel/group should track the outcomes of the equalities staff forum.
- Recommendation 5** – The suitable Lead Cabinet Member should liaise with relevant officers on street naming in South Cambridgeshire.
- Recommendation 6** – The Council should produce an equalities toolkit for businesses, to help broaden their understanding of race inequality in the workplace and enable them to undertake Race Equality Impact Assessment on their employment practices. This is in line with work that has already been undertaken by Cambridge City Council. It is suggested that this toolkit should be developed by the Business Support Team. The group acknowledges that there may not currently be capacity for the team to undertake this work due to demands supporting businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic, so this work should be undertaken when capacity allows.
- Recommendation 7** – Provision of training on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural awareness for all councillors and officers. As well as requiring all councillors to attend a briefing on equality and diversity,

Cambridge City Council provided training on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural awareness which was found to be beneficial. The task and finish group suggests the same training is provided for South Cambridgeshire district councillors and officers and that all should be required to attend.

- h) **Recommendation 8** – The Council should seek to collaborate with Cambridge City Council in its engagement with BAME community groups. Cambridge City Council has taken steps to enhance dialogue with BAME community groups, the Council and other public sector organisations. As there is overlap between City and South Cambridgeshire community groups, it is suggested that this Council seeks to collaborate with and support the work already being done by Cambridge City Council to avoid duplication.
- i) **Recommendation 9** – The Council should build links with local BAME community groups. The Council should seek to understand the concerns of BAME community groups and ensure that there is a way for them to engage with the Council on issues of importance and concern to them. This relationship should be monitored and maintained through the new equality advisory panel/group.

8. **Scrutiny and Overview Committee Covid-19 Response Task and Finish Group**

Cabinet received the report from the Covid-19 Task and Finish Group, initially convinced by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, thanked the volunteers for their efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic, and introduced the report, noting the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group.

Cabinet:

Approved the following recommendations:

- a) **Recommendation 1** – The Council should ensure adequate resource is allocated for community recovery and to support parishes with further development of their community response/emergency plans, so they are as well-equipped as possible for any future crises.
- b) **Recommendation 2** – The Council should host appreciation events to celebrate the success of the community response and to acknowledge the work of community groups and volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

9. **Actions Taken under the Chief Executive's Delegated Powers**

Cabinet **received and noted** a report relating to the actions taken under the Chief Executive's Delegated Powers:

- Update to the National Lockdown Business Support Policy Addendum (Tier 4 and National Lockdown Business Support), decision taken on Friday, 5th February 2021.

10. **Quarter 3 Performance**

The Cabinet received the Quarter Three Performance report. The Deputy Leader, Councillor Neil Gough, introduced the report, noting the updates to the Key Performance Indicators for the third quarter of the year, covering the second national lockdown, and the performance against the Business Plan objectives for 2021.

The Chair of the Council noted the figures for the Council's contact centre, including the irregularities with short call lengths. The Head of Transformation responded that along with the introduction of a new call system, data from the Contact Centre would need to be analysed to ensure adequate resources would be available. The Deputy Leader mentioned an increase in calls at the end of 2020 was due to an increase in business related calls due to the Business Support Grants.

Councillor Heather Williams noticed an increase in time re-letting housing stock and the subsequent increase in expenditure in bed and breakfast accommodation, and wondered if this would be decreased. Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing responded that Covid-19 pandemic has considerably slowed down the response time for contractors to re-let the properties. The Head of Housing also noted the pandemic had also reduced the number of tenants who were willing to move into new accommodation, along with a shortage of properties for single residents.

After a further discussion, Cabinet:

Reviewed and **noted** the KPI results and comments at Appendix A and progress against Business Plan actions at Appendix B.

11. **Review of the Business Plan**

The Cabinet received the Business Plan for 2021-2022. The Deputy Leader, Councillor Neil Gough introduced the report, thanking Officers for their work with updating the plan, and key areas of focus for the Council, notably the continued progress of the local plan, along with the ongoing implications of the previous year.

The Deputy Leader (Statutory), Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, noted the continuity with the updated business plan and continued focus of the council's priorities.

After a further discussion, Cabinet:

- a) Recommended the proposed 2020-25 Business Plan at Appendix A (with the Action Plan primarily focused on delivery 2021-22) to Council for approval, with any amendments as required.
- b) Authorised the Chief Executive to make any minor wording changes required to final drafts, in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

12. **Waterbeach New Town Naming**

Cabinet received the Waterbeach New Town Naming Report. Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report, noting the importance of a collaborative approach to identify a name for the 4,500-home Waterbeach New Town East development. This was approved at the South Cambridgeshire District Council's planning committee on Friday, 29 January 2021. Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery believed the name of the new town would be an important decision, and residents within the district should be involved.

Sam Foulder-Hughes from RLW Estates expressed his support for the consultation and desire to work with SCDC and Urban&Civic. He was also supportive of working with the residents of the surrounding villages, including young people. Rebecca Britton from Urban&Civic echoed Sam's support for the process and noted the importance of this consultation, and the heritage of the surrounding district.

After a further short discussion, Cabinet:

Agreed the engagement process that the two master developers will follow to gather feedback and opinion on the name of the new town north of Waterbeach, with a report coming back to Cabinet in order to take the final decision on the name of the new town.

13. **2020/2021 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring**

The Cabinet received the Revenue and Capital Budget monitoring report for 2020/2021. Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report for the third quarter of the fiscal year, noting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on certain schemes, and the proposed capital program. Councillor Peter McDonald, Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery, thanked the Officers for distributing the business discretionary grants to businesses across the district.

Councillor Heather Williams noted the deficit in the budget for the planning department, and a decrease in the projected expenditure as part of the Investment Strategy. Councillor John Williams responded that the planning department would be working to resolve the deficit and mentioned the loss of income was due to changes in payments from central Government. The Joint Director the Planning Service mentioned the service operated at a net cost, and contingent on the number of applications, which had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In relation to the Investment strategy, Councillor John Williams also noted changes to the rules of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) but mentioned further investments are being considered through the existing partnerships.

Councillor Heather Williams asked about the Council borrowing from the PWLB. Councillor John Williams responded, noting the Council was borrowing from the PWLB to cover the Council's cash flow, but not for previous commercial

investments.

After a short discussion, Cabinet:

- a) **Reviewed** and **noted** the forecast 2020/2021 revenue position against the approved revenue budget shown in Appendix B, the projected major variances with reasons for these variances at Appendices C1 and C2 and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.
- b) **Reviewed** and **noted** the latest Capital Programme 2020/2021 position as shown in Appendix D.

14. **Home-Link Allocations Policy**

The Cabinet received the Home-Link Application Policy. Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, noting the allocations process and associated Lettings Policy were scheduled for full review, following minor policy amendments in 2018, due to changes in legislation.

The Interim Assistant Director Housing introduced a short presentation on the Lettings Policy, offering reassurances the policy could be responsive to a variety of housing requirements, and to provide an update of the continued work the Home-Link team had provided during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leader of the Council closed the discussion, expressed thanks to the Sub-Regional Home-Link Manager for her work on the policy, along with the wider team for their continuing efforts, and Cabinet:

Reviewed and **noted** the outcome of the allocations review, including the consultation feedback and **agreed** the subsequent revisions to the Lettings Policy.

15. **Ermine Street Housing Business Plan**

The Cabinet considered Ermine Street Housing Business Plan. Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, providing an update to the business plan, which included continuing to acquire stock as part of the Council's priorities.

The Head of Ermine Street mentioned the leases of the 36 additional Ministry of Defence properties, and lease extension for the properties in Brampton. Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance noted the Ermine Street Housing Company has been brought into the Council's Housing department and continued to provide housing within the district. Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licencing, was pleased empty properties were being brought back into use through the company.

After a short discussion, Cabinet:

Received and **noted** the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2020/2021 to 2029/2030 for information.

16. Exclusion of Press and Public

Cabinet **agreed** by affirmation that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item numbers 17 in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act). Paragraph 3 refers to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

17. Provision of 12 Affordable Homes at Boxworth End, Swavesey

Cabinet received the exempt report, with Councillor Hazel Smith noting this was part of the Council's ongoing Business Plan.

After a short discussion, Cabinet:

Agreed the options as detailed in the exempt report

18. Potential Property Investment Decision

[Withdrawn from agenda]

**The Meeting ended at
12.10 p.m.**

Agenda Item 6



**South
Cambridgeshire**
District Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet	19 April 2021
LEAD CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Bridget Smith	
LEAD OFFICER:	Chief Executive	

ARC LEADERSHIP GROUP OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE ARC ENVIRONMENT PRINCIPLES

Executive Summary

Background

1. In 2020 the Arc Leadership Group Environment Working Group agreed to produce a set of Arc-wide Environment Principles. The recommended principles are attached as Annex 1. They are the result of a collaborative piece of work led by a range of partners and stakeholders including:
 - Environmental NGOs (who drafted the first document)
 - Local Nature Partnerships
 - Local Government environment and planning policy representatives (we received responses from c. 20 local authorities, with representation from across the Arc)
 - DEFRA
 - Natural England
 - Environment Agency
 - MHCLG (planning policy lead)
 - University representative from the Universities' Environment Group
 - A LEP representative
 - Anglian Water
 - An Energy Hub representative
2. The document at Annex 1 has been endorsed by the Arc Leadership Group Plenary on 09 March 2021. It is hoped by having developed consensus and support for these principles, including direct engagement with Government, that these will be used to support emerging environmental policies within the emerging Arc Spatial Framework. The agreed principles will be strengthened further after being publicly considered by every partner organisation. This report has been drafted as a standard report to be used by all councils or LEPs in seeking local endorsement.

Key Decision

3. No

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a. **Endorses the shared environment principles at Annex 1 hereto; and,**
- b. **Supports the development of an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide for how the principles can be delivered.**

Reasons for Recommendations

5. The principles are not formal policy but rather a shared statement of ambition for the Arc. They are intended to:
 - support our position with respect to the environment policies emerging from the Arc Spatial Framework
 - allow use of the Arc as a place for DEFRA to test and apply its 25-year plan and funding through pilots and projects
 - support Local Planning Authorities with a frame of reference to further develop the principles through Local and Strategic Plans at a local and sub-regional level
6. The Arc Leadership Group will next be developing an Arc Environment Strategy which will provide the route map to delivering against these ambitions, including trajectories for meeting ambitious future performance targets.

Details

Outline of the Principles

7. There are five overarching principles:
 - To target net zero carbon at a pan-Arc level by 2040;
 - To protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats through the implementation of the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate and gain;
 - To be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25-year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach. We will aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development;
 - To Ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc;
 - To Use natural resources wisely.
8. Each theme has several sub-principles which describe further the outcomes we aspire to. Some of the sub-principles will evolve further as we develop our thinking, (for example, a waste/circular waste principle).
9. Having been endorsed by the Plenary, the Arc Environment Principles will be shared amongst a wider audience including the development community to

gain support and buy-in. It is intended that each partner organisation will now proceed to take these through local decision-making processes to provide even more support for the shared principles.

10. The next piece of work for the Arc Environment Working Group is to develop an Environment Strategy which will set out a comprehensive plan for how the principles will be delivered in the Arc. It is likely that the strategy will take 12-18 months to complete.

Options

11. Not to endorse Arc Leadership Group Oxford to Cambridge Arc Environmental Principles

Implications

12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

There are no significant implications.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Being green to our core

The principles are the first step in ensuring the growth across the Arc is delivered to high environmental standards, securing the status of the arc as the 'Green Arc'.

Appendices

Appendix A: Annex 1 – Arc Leadership Group Environmental Principles

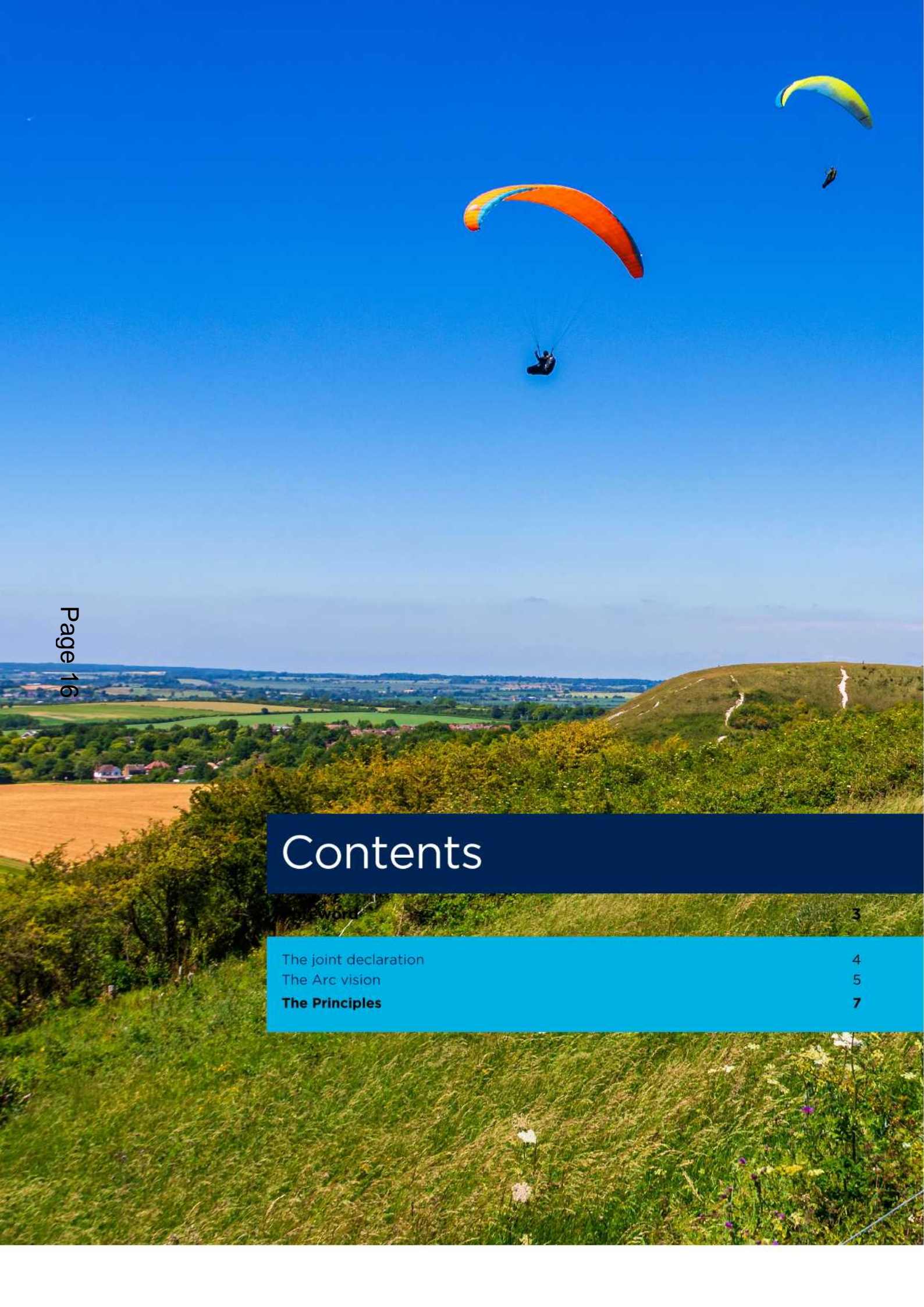
Report Author:

Liz Watts – Chief Executive
Telephone: (01954) 713430

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Shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the **Oxford-Cambridge Arc**





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Foreword

The days when we could take our environment for granted are long gone. We must now seek out every opportunity we can to protect and enhance what we have left and ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a place where we can all work and live truly sustainably.

Both the Arc Leadership Group’s OxCam Arc Economic Prospectus and the Government’s publication, planning for sustainable growth: introduction to the Arc Spatial Framework has given top billing jointly to the economy and the environment. It is now our job to ensure that the environment is at the centre of everything we do and every decision we take.

The work of the OxCam Arc Environment Working Group has been focused on putting forward this set of principles that will allow us to be outstandingly ambitious and aspirational for the OxCam Arc. If we can get this right then the world will look to our ‘Green Arc’ as an internationally significant exemplar for the very best in sustainable living and working, for practical ways to doubling nature, and innovative solutions to energy and water shortages as well as stimulating a green economy.

These principles will form the basis for the creation of an OxCam- wide Environmental Strategy that will embrace everything from green spaces, to housing standards, to sustainable transport, energy generation and transmission and water management and conservation.

It is vital, as we and government move forward with the OxCam Arc, that we take the people already living here with us. We can do this by committing to greener transport, by doubling the number of trees and acreage of accessible managed green spaces, by protecting our chalk streams and supporting local green energy production to name but a few.

If we are to double economic growth along the OxCam Arc then as a minimum we must be doubling nature and ensuring that the Arc leads the way in the zero carbon living and working of the future.

Councillor Bridget Smith,
Leader South Cambridgeshire District Council,
Chair Arc Environment Working Group

Left
Paragliding off the
Dunstable Downs Chiltern
Hills in Bedfordshire

In March 2019, Government and local partners set out their ambition for the Arc in a joint declaration¹:

“We want better places to live, which are beautiful and inspiring, to benefit the Arc’s residents today as well as tomorrow. The Government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England’s 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. We want new developments to use intelligent and sensitive design to create or enhance habitats and improve habitat connectivity, in situ and in the surrounding area. We also want to improve access to the environment for existing and new communities in order to improve health and wellbeing.”

“Conserving and enhancing the natural environment is at the heart of Government’s ambitions for the Arc. The 25 Year Environment Plan also sets out our comprehensive approach to improving landscapes and habitats, and

the aspiration to move to a policy of net environmental gain. We expect the policy for the wider Oxford-Cambridge corridor to embody this approach.”

An Environment Working Group (EWG) has been established to take forward the environmental pillar outlined within the joint declaration. The EWG will work with partners in the Arc, including those responsible for the other pillars, to ensure that the protection and enhancement of the environment is at the heart of decision-making and any actions are based on a clear and agreed evidence base.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

Above
Sunrise at Willen Lake in Milton Keynes.

Right
Elmsbrook eco-town - Bicester.

In October 2020 an economic prospectus for the Arc was published jointly by local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnerships within the Arc. It outlines the following vision:

“By 2050, the Arc will be a world leading place for high-value growth, innovation and productivity. A global hub where ideas and companies are generated and thrive, home to exemplary models of 21st century development, with a high-quality environment and outstanding quality of life, and with a strong economic focus that drives inclusive clean growth.”

The environmental principles supporting this vision are set out in this document. They are ambitious and will require the collective effort of all partners in the Arc if they are to be delivered.





The principles address how we will tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time: achieving net zero carbon, climate resilience, biodiversity net gain, environmental net gain, doubling the area of land actively managed for nature, restoring, protecting and enhancing the natural environment and ensuring renewable natural capital (resources derived from living things that if properly managed can be replenished) remains available for future generations.

The principles

The regional principles have been written and agreed by the Arc's local partners and stakeholders. They are informed by Government policy. They are a clear statement of regional intent that will help to clarify the commitment to adopting an approach that results in environmentally sustainable economic growth. This includes the protection, restoration and enhancement of the environment (air, water, land, soil, biodiversity), net biodiversity and net environmental gain, net zero carbon, the sustainable use of resources.

The principles align with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan² and the commitment in the joint declaration to embody the 25 year plans goals and ambitions.

We will also take account of other appropriate government strategies, plans and guidance. Our aim is for the principles to inform and become an integral part of developing plans and statements in relation to the Arc, local plans, local council activities and the plans and activities of activities and delivery programs for all bodies operating in the Arc. It is also our ambition to see universities, private sector developers and third sector organisations adopt these principles.

Above
Cotswolds Hills Countryside
in the area of outstanding
natural beauty.

Right
Autumn view of the river
Nene Valley, near Castor
village, Cambridgeshire.



²A Green Future: Our 25
Year Plan to Improve the
Environmentfile/799993/
OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

The Arc partners will seek to:

1.

Work towards a target of net zero carbon at an Arc level by 2040.

This will include:

- a. Ensuring all **decisions about development and new infrastructure support this goal.**
- b. Working with Government to **enhance building regulations and planning policy to actively reduce the carbon footprint of, and energy consumption in, new buildings.**
- c. Pursuing a **major programme of transformation** in existing settlements and infrastructure to reduce energy intensity and carbon emissions.
- d. Construction, operational and transport activities.

2.

Protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets, including nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats, and links between them. We will implement the spatial planning mitigation hierarchy of avoid, minimise, remediate, compensate and gain. This will include:

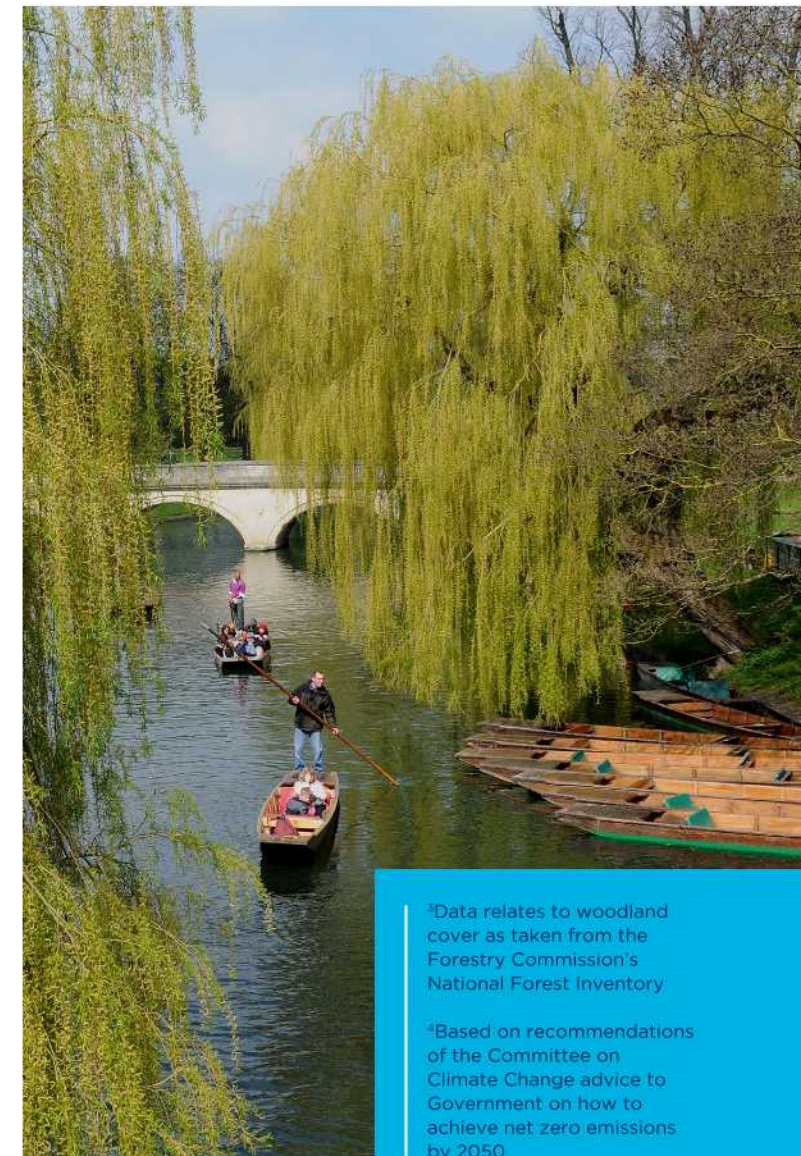
- a. Doubling the area of land managed primarily for nature in the Arc (**'Doubling Nature'**). To contribute to Government's commitment to protecting 30% of land for nature conservation by 2030. We will seek to maximise public, private and third sector funding opportunities **to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment** and maintain existing, and increase investment in, natural capital assets, working with partners including major landowners and our important agriculture sector across the Arc.



Above
Heron Valley, Rushmere
Country Park, Leighton
Buzzard.

Right
Punting on the River
Nene, Peterborough.

- b. Coordinating work on local nature recovery strategies and the Arc's contribution to **the Nature Recovery Network for England** by creating more, bigger, better-connected places, in the required condition, for nature including landscape scale interventions.
- c. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for Town & Country Planning Act developments of 20%**. This is above the 10% Government mandated minimum to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- d. Delivering **biodiversity net gain for all developments of 20% with a minimum requirement of 10%** including Nationally Significant Infrastructure and projects brought forward outside of the Town & Country Planning Act. This is to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- e. **Working with Government to develop a suitable net environment gain metric that** incorporates biodiversity net gain and, once available, to set an ambitious target to reflect the Arc's world leading environmental ambitions.
- f. Establishing **human and nature mobility corridors** across the Arc – using existing or new transport corridors for maximum environmental benefit/gain.
- g. **Increasing tree and woodland cover across the Arc from 7.4%³ to 19%⁴.** This is in recognition of the ability of trees and woodlands to deliver a wide range of environmental, health, social and economic benefits. We will ensure the right trees are planted in the right places.
- h. Protecting and enhancing protected landscapes. Enhancing landscape character areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the wider countryside.



³Data relates to woodland cover as taken from the Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory

⁴Based on recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change advice to Government on how to achieve net zero emissions by 2050

3.

Be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the government's 25 year plan. This will incorporate a systems-based and integrated assessment and implementation approach and will fully recognise the associated health and wellbeing benefits. We will aim to go beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development. This will include:

a. Page 20

All new settlements, urban extensions and infrastructure contributing to the achievement of delivering net biodiversity gain, net environmental gain, and net zero carbon both in site and route selection and in the design of settlements and transport corridors. In addition, areas of tranquillity will be protected and measures taken to avoid light pollution and protect dark sky areas. Making cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel and investing in zero emission public transport of the future.

- b. **Understanding the impact of development on the natural environment**, including cumulative and indirect impacts (taking into account associated housing and other forms of development), so that these can be addressed in line with the mitigation hierarchy, and carrying out environmental and strategic assessments as appropriate for the type and scale of development programmes including options and proper community consultation.
- c. Understanding the Arc's environmental capacity to accommodate different levels of growth and development in different locations and **ensuring that planned growth and development remains well within environmental capacity limits.**
- d. Working with Government to **enhance the building regulations and the role of planning policy so that they align with sustainability principles, and actively reduce the carbon footprint, water and energy consumption** in new and existing buildings. We will encourage Arc local partners to exceed the minimum standards required by building regulations.
- e. Promoting the switch to renewable and other sustainable energy supplies, improving travel choices, and supporting changing working practices. This will enable **improvements to the design and development of sustainable communities and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.**

4.

Ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc including through:

- a. **Maximising the health and wellbeing benefits of nature** by providing sector-leading areas of accessible nature-rich greenspace in, and accessible to, new settlements, urban extensions and commercial zones and increasing and enhancing greenspace, and access to it, for existing settlements in the Arc.
- b. **Promoting and increasing equality of sustainable access to nature and its benefits** by investing in, increasing and enhancing nature-rich greenspace in the places and communities where it is most lacking. We will improve access to greenspace and nature, ensuring Natural England's Access to Natural Greenspace standards, and (once available) Green Infrastructure Standards, are maximised for existing housing and delivered for future developments.



5.

Use natural resources wisely by:

- a. Working to address existing **water resource, water quality and flood management** issues and through an integrated approach across the water agenda ensure future issues and risks are managed, including in the context of climate change, with a focus on nature-based interventions.
- b. Ensuring that soil quality is properly protected and improved including within development, infrastructure and agricultural activities.
- c. Making **more efficient use and management of waste and resources**, working towards a circular economy with no net waste and promoting the use of sustainable building materials and construction guidelines.
- d. Working with local authorities to share best practice and coordinate action being taken on local **air quality management plans** including addressing emissions from agriculture and from installations regulated by the Environment Agency.
- e. Supporting the development of interventions that reduce the **impact of agriculture on the environment** and support productivity.
- f. Helping to build collaboration between farmers to generate catchment and landscape scale environmental improvement under the **Environmental Land Management Scheme**.
- g. Ensuring that the required mineral resources for the Arc are sourced in an environmentally sensitive manner and that mineral sites are restored in a coordinated manner to after-uses that benefit nature and people, as well as helping to provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water management.

We will continue to work with the other Arc pillars to develop appropriate environmental principles for incorporation within these workstreams.

We will review and update the environmental principles in the light of developing policies, practices, evidence, experience, knowledge and governance arrangements.



Resourcing our ambitions

To achieve delivery of these principles we will need to work collaboratively across the public, private and third sectors. Some resources are already in place and there are many more that we will need. As a starting point we will:

- Build on the work of the Arc Local Natural Capital Plan and the associated work in the 5 counties to **make publicly available, agreed baseline maps for natural capital and ecosystem services across the Arc**. Resources will be required to maintain the data and make it accessible.
- Work with the statutory agencies and with local councils to ensure ready **access to the wide range of environmental data** currently collected by them.
- **Work with government to agree methodologies** for both net biodiversity gain and net environment gain for use within the Arc. We will establish a technical group(s) to assess net gain propositions on behalf of local planning authorities and provide planning committees with independent advice.
- **Support and promote a 5 yearly environmental census** across the Arc including promoting public engagement through citizen science approaches.
- Use **evidence on health, deprivation and ecosystem services demand** (e.g. for air quality improvement) to inform planning for greenspace, habitats and **natural capital assets**.
- Work with all those that fund nature improvement work across the Arc including the Defra Group, water companies, environmental Non-Governmental Organisations, local councils, catchment partnerships, housing and commercial property developers and infrastructure providers, together with those allocating Environment Land Management System funding, and private investors to **take a more efficient and effective systems based approach to natural capital and ecosystem systems based interventions**. We will seek to ensure that funding is used strategically and not in a piecemeal way.
- **Invest in projects that deliver natural capital and environmental benefits**, such as carbon sequestration, pollinator habitats, soil improvement, flood alleviation and water resource resilience, and establish Arc-wide and more local Natural Capital Investment Plans to inform and support the emerging Arc Spatial Framework.

Monitoring

We will pursue our commitment as outlined within these principles and will work with government and local partners on the development of associated metrics and targets in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan, carbon reduction commitments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Engagement

We will engage and consult with communities, residents and people working in the Arc, as well as businesses, other organisations and NGOs, on the vision and ambitions for sustainable environmental growth in the Arc.

This document is supported by the Arc Leadership Group, Arc Universities Environment Group, Arc Local Enterprise Partnerships, England's Economic Heartland, and has been drafted with input from the Arc Local Nature Partnerships whose members include representatives from environment NGOs, local councils, LEPs, developers, businesses, business representation bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission and important contributions from central government departments, other environment NGOs and businesses.





Below
Sunrise panorama at
the Campbell park in
Milton Keynes.

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