

**Committee/Board Name and Date of Meeting:**  
Local Enterprise Partnership

**Meeting Date:**  
08 September 2022

**Report Title**  
Environmental Sustainability Plan

<b>Is the paper exempt from the press and public?</b>	No
<b>Reason why exempt:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Purpose of this report:</b>	Discussion
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Has it been included on the Forward Plan?</b>	Not a Key Decision

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### **Executive Summary**

Sustainability was the third pillar of the Economic Plan and to capture proposals and actions the development of an Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) is due to commence to further develop the MCA's response to the climate and environment crisis. This Plan will be co-developed with stakeholders and the general public. It will provide a vision for South Yorkshire's environment in 2040, and set out a plan for how different stakeholders in the region can contribute to this shared vision.

### **What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?**

The climate emergency and the decline of ecosystems are impacting homes and communities, infrastructure, agriculture, water supplies, and the natural environment in South Yorkshire, and it will do so with increasing frequency and intensity in the years ahead. The impacts to society and the economy will be profound. All partners have a role to play. Co-operation on use of resources and collaboration at regional level will be of great benefit in addressing these challenges.

Understanding these and setting out the policy frameworks to address them will give the region the tools it needs to meet the challenges.

## **Recommendations**

The Board is asked to note this development and to discuss:

- (a) how it would like to be involved in development of the Plan going forward
- (b) specific external stakeholders that should be engaged in this Plan

## **Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel**

None at this point

## **1. Background**

### **1.1 Why develop a plan for environmental sustainability**

While activity is underway to address sustainability issues (see Annex A), there are three main strategic imperatives for pursuing this Plan:

- 1.1.1 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) (2020) enshrined three strategic objectives namely to achieve economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion for the region. The MCA is currently developing a range of workstreams to realise these. The second strategic objective, as listed above, requires us to build upon that foundation and explore how the MCA can work with partners to deliver on environmental sustainability commitments. The SEP identified that the climate emergency is threatening livelihoods and economic stability and emphasised the importance of growing green technology sectors, improving environmental sustainability, and embedding circular economy approaches among other ways to respond to the challenge. Specifically, the SEP promised that:  
  
“SY MCA’s plans for environmental sustainability will set out a more comprehensive vision and set of policy actions on the transition to a net-zero carbon and climate-resilient economy.”
- 1.1.2 The UK government is taking forward powers in the Environment Act (2021) that require Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to be developed to cover every area of England. The government’s clear preference has been that MCAs, where they exist, lead such strategies and thereby take on a new statutory duty to deliver them. On 23rd March 2022, the MCA Board provisionally agreed that the MCA would lead on this for South Yorkshire. Defra describes LNRS as follows:  
  
*“Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature’s recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.”*
- 1.1.3 An Environmental Sustainability Plan will enable delivery on the manifesto commitments outlined by Mayor Oliver Coppard. The Mayor’s ‘Plan’ for South Yorkshire stated:  
  
*“As Mayor I will ask the Mayoral Combined Authority to work with partners such as the Wildlife Trust to develop and deliver a South Yorkshire Natural Environment Strategy, so that we can protect and restores nature, and invests in our ecosystems.”*

## 2. Key Issues

### 2.1 What this plan can deliver

At this early stage, the ambitions for this plan include the following:

- **Address challenges:** Better understand and navigate the trade-offs, synergies, and complementarities between environmental and economic prosperity.
- **Embed environment sustainability:** Inform all activities undertaken by the MCA, not just those that would be traditionally seen as falling into nature or climate themes.
- **Engage public:** Use the Climate Assembly to engage the general public and co-develop a vision. This Plan needs to have universal buy-in to be successful, as achieving outcomes will need the support of actors across the region.
- **Address any gaps:** Identify 'gaps' in our areas of work whereby the MCA could go further towards realising environmental sustainability goals.
- **Leadership:** Adopt a position of leadership on this agenda, working with relevant stakeholders to pursue better outcomes beyond what the MCA is capable of alone.

### 2.2 Process

#### **Phase 1 – forming a shared vision**

The initial phase of this work will articulate a vision for the natural environment and sustainability in South Yorkshire. It will co-create a vision shared between the MCA, the LEP, other partners and stakeholders, and engagement with the general public through the upcoming Climate Assembly. Officers will explore the possibility of making external appointments to form an expert steering group. Work on this will continue through Q3/Q4 of 2022.

#### **Phase 2 – strategy development**

This phase will begin by exploring conceptual frameworks that match the vision articulated in Phase 1, and the trade-offs that exist with other organisational objectives. It will review existing activity undertaken by the MCA and partners and identify gaps in provision.

#### **Phase 3 – developing actions**

This phase will engage a range of external stakeholders to co-produce a set of actions that fill in the gaps in provision identified in Phase 2 and encourage some “stretch” to match ambitions with the scale of the challenge. This will involve the MCA’s governance structures, including the LEP Board, as well as a range of partners such as the Local Nature Partnership, business groups such as the Chambers of Commerce, community groups, and the general public.

#### **Phase 4 – finalised plan**

Finally, a set of actions will be agreed for the MCA to pursue with partners.

## 3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1**  
Do minimum - Continue with existing areas of work without developing this Plan. It is recommended that this is discounted as it would miss the opportunity to provide a framework that explains the regions approach to the environment, and gaps in provision would remain unexplored.
- 3.2 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**  
Risk: the MCA will have no clear way of meeting its climate and environment emergency declaration.  
Mitigation: the MCA can do more of what it's doing as and when resources allow.
- 3.3 **Option 2**  
Delay - Await the regulations and guidance for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy before proceeding with an overlapping Environmental Sustainability Strategy. It is recommended this is discounted as it will lose vital mobilisation time.
- 3.4 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**  
Risk: the likely DEFRA responsibilities are not expected to provide resource to fulfil the totality of action required.  
Mitigation: start the development of the plan and then follow with matching resource when the information on DEFRA resource is known.
- 3.5 **Option 3**  
Proceed as set out in this paper
- 3.6 **Option 3 Risks and Mitigations**  
Risk: this is a broad agenda so there is the potential for responses to be 'spread thinly'.  
Mitigation: defining and limiting the scope at an early stage to focus minds on a targeted set of themes.
- 3.7 **Recommended Option**  
Option 3
4. **Consultation on Proposal**
- 4.1 This plan builds in contributions and engagement with a range of internal and external partners. A detailed engagement plan will be developed.
5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**
- 5.1 The timetable of the phases is currently being developed to ensure MCA / LEP have a clearer understanding of milestones for this work.
6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**
- 6.1 Financial implications of this Plan have factored into the annual budget. Development of the LNRS is due to be fully reimbursed by Defra 'burden payments'.
7. **Legal Implications and Advice**
- 7.1 LNRS will be a statutory document.

## **8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 At this stage it is hoped that the existing Policy team working with the Net Zero Project Director can contain this work. If additional resources are required, this will be factored into the MCA Business Planning process and subject to MCA decision making.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 Development of this plan will ensure consideration of equality and diversity issues; this is likely to be most relevant when engaging with external stakeholders. We will ensure information in electronic form complies with accessibility requirements and any in person events are accessible to a range of needs.

## **10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 Whilst a significant proportion of total emissions are outside the direct control of the MCA or constituent Local Authorities, programmes undertaken at regional level can and will drive down emissions, deliver added benefits and lay the groundwork for further reductions. Formalising the assessment of all programmes and aligning them to wider a wider Environmental Sustainability plan will give this greater impetus.

## **11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 N/A

## **12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 N/A at this stage in the process.

### **List of Appendices Included**

A Existing MCA activity

### **Background Papers**

None.

## Appendix A – Existing MCA activity

- **Net Zero (NZ).** In November 2019, the MCA declared a Climate and Environmental Emergency. In January 2020, the MCA Board approved the Climate Response Framework (CRF) which split the challenge into five areas: Leadership, Carbon Reduction, Carbon Capture, Climate Adaptation, and Climate Economy to achieve a Net Zero economy by 2040. The MCA's Net Zero Work Programme is cross cutting, being delivered through all policy themes. At present, MCA-funded Net Zero interventions cover transport, housing, and infrastructure. Some other broader activities that the MCA supports, can and do have a beneficial effect on the climate goals of the region, but the impacts so far are modest.
- **Active and public transport.** Reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles has an important role in reducing air pollution and carbon emissions, improving health, saving space and more. The MCA has earmarked £126m over 5 years from the CRSTS programme for active travel investments and was awarded £8m for a fleet of zero-emission buses.
- **Flood risk management.** The *Connected by Water* action plan published earlier this year was co-developed by the MCA alongside multiple partners. It sets out how the region will respond to the challenge of flood risk. The MCA has an ongoing role in helping to identify funding opportunities to deliver against the plan, engaging the public on these activities, and more.
- **Woodland Creation Partnership.** In 2020, SYMCA funded a Woodland Creation Partnership with the aim of increasing tree coverage in the region, working with all local authorities and a range of other stakeholders. The project has supported multiple investments and recently secured £0.5m in funding from Defra to expand activities.
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).** SYMCA has provisionally agreed to fulfil a Statutory duty to deliver LNRS for South Yorkshire, responding to new requirements on regional and local authorities to take greater management over the natural environment. Working closely with the SY Local Nature Partnership the MCA is preparing the ground in terms of stakeholder engagement and developing an evidence base ahead of commencement of the Strategy, slated for later in 2022.