



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Monthly Environment Board Catch-Up

Thursday 1st December 2022, 10:00-11:00

Notes

		ACTION OWNER
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>SR welcomed Jennifer Panting, BEIS, local net zero team and supports the LNZ Forum.</p>	
2.	<p>Current service issues, pressures and risks</p> <p>Steve Read informed that WSCC don't have any particular new risks or issues at the moment. They are still tackling familiar ones. He noted that while it was a mixed position for councils, WSCC seem to be in a relatively good place with regards to 23/24 budget. The government's autumn statement may have eased some pressure across the board. However, WSCC will face major challenges in 2024/25.</p> <p>Ralph Kemp, Cheshire East, flagged the difference between authorities with Cheshire East having a potential £30m overspend with just £12m in reserves. Difficult options will have to be considered, such as reducing recycling services. The entire council is in a "how to be balance the books" mode. They are grateful to BEIS for public sector decarbonisation grants but it's difficult to deliver in time and they will be asking BEIS if they can carry on outside of the deadline.</p> <p>Sarah Valdus, Wiltshire, is just settling into the role but would echo what Ralph has said. Wiltshire are working on a 3-year budget setting process. Discussions are happening which could see big cuts but will depend on what goes on in detail of settlement coming out. There are massive issues in the DN service to respond to ecology work and it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain ecology staff. Sarah would be interested to hear about apprenticeships in this area. Steve Read</p>	

	<p>informed re. discussions with Defra on staff shortages in different areas but no answers at the moment. David Dale informed that this is a repeated issue on difficulty in recruiting, training and retaining staff.</p> <p>ACTION: David Dale to share a report from ALGE showing “grown your own” as a method to tackling recruitment issues.</p> <p>Steve Palfrey reported that Suffolk’s budget position is more akin to WSCC. It is thought that members will be able to avoid taking the worst of proposed cuts following the Autumn Statement news but won’t know for sure until detail is received.</p> <p>Suffolk is mentioned as being the next in the series to receive a County Deal. It was misrepresented by the Chancellor as involving a directly elected mayor, but they are going for a directly elected leader model. This will need enabling legislation which government are proposing to put through as part of the Devolution Bill next year.</p> <p>Suffolk have received a letter from Defra re. LNRS asking for confirmation that Suffolk are still a provisional Responsible Authority and saying that the webinars postponed from October will now go ahead early in the new year. Defra are behind but still want to progress with this and so have offered more funding to tide Suffolk council over which they are mindful to accept. Is any other council doing anything different?</p> <p>Martin Dickman reported for Buckinghamshire, within budget framework it’s been tough, and members are taking a long while to get to position. They are taking a 1-year budget as to look ahead to 3 years’ time would be impossible, there’s no way of knowing what will happen. Members have decided against closure of HWRCs and are grappling with the potential consequences of the Energy Generation Levy.</p> <p>James Potter mentioned Hampshire CC are going through a major reorganisation. His department and another one will be merged form A strategic departments called “Hampshire 2050” and an operational one called “Universal Services” where James will sit.</p> <p>Quintin Carroll, informed that Cambridgeshire CC, will go through with their budget plans for next year. On the environment side there’s nothing that they’ve offered which is palatable . Quintin gave congratulations to Suffolk for going for a single tier authority rather than 3 tier which is the way Cambridge have gone.</p> <p>ACTION:; David Dale informed that ADEPT is trying to collate info about budget pressures and what’s happening across services on an anonymous basis. Please do feed up through your Place Director with your headline pressures to submit which will be anonymised and used</p>	<p>DD</p> <p>ALL</p>
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in conversations with BEIS, Defra etc.

LNRS – Our Defra colleagues will have felt the frustration in the delays as much as ADEPT members, which political pressures have contributed to. Further guidance is hoped to be received in January. Civil servants have now briefed the new ministerial team and have been given the green light to go ahead next April. ADEPT hope to work with Defra to run the delayed series of webinars on LNRS in new year.

The Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee's Chair has criticised Defra for a "culture of delay". Steve Read informed that Kathryn Bell, seconded to Defra from Cumbria Country Council, will join the January ADEPT Env Board meeting and, in the meantime, Steve, Hannah etc will have a meeting with David Hill where this can be raised. The WSCC cabinet member has been writing to Defra re culture of delay on RAWS for more than year.

Ola Ladapo , for Defra, has taken the main reflection from conversations above in terms of understanding the issues the delays are causing. The Secretary of State is keen to avoid further delays. There's a push for Statutory Instruments to be laid ASAP.

Working Groups

Waste

Steve Palfrey

1. The group is next meeting on 7th Dec. Agenda to include presentations from Veolia (ADEPT corporate partner), Tolvik (EfW capacity, carbon and financial outlook) and EA (POPs update). The group last met on 15th Sept as a hybrid meeting. See previous update for more details.
2. Key issues:
 - Inflation – waste contract/service inflation is very high and most LAs are expecting big budget gaps for 2023/24
 - Paralysis through uncertainty - still waiting for DEFRA to publish responses to consultations on Consistency and Deposit Return Scheme (consultations closed in Jun and Jul 2021!!). Will then require secondary legislation, guidance etc. squeezing time for implementation and adding cost and/or delay. Latest indication is that new Govt is still committed to these reforms and responses will be published by end of 2022.
 - Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in soft furnishing – EA intent is right, i.e. destroy POPs through incineration. EA position is becoming much more pragmatic – i.e. LAs to report whether or not they are achieving compliance by 1/1/2023, but this will be used to understand barriers and inform

support rather than triggering enforcement action. Big concerns for LAs and contractors regarding separation requirements. Many LAs don't currently send bulky waste to EfW and plant operators won't want more of this material (high CV and potential to cause blockages). Most HWRCs won't have space for an additional container for soft furnishings so LAs will have to limit acceptance to larger sites and/or displace a recycling stream. Cost and impracticality of separation for bulky collections, transfer stations etc. Good engagement from EA, LA waste networks and waste operators. Wendy Barratt (Waste Group Vice Chair leading for ADEPT (wendy.barratt@devon.gov.uk))

- DIY Waste – DEFRA published proposals in April 2022 to prevent LAs from charging for acceptance of DIY waste at HWRCs. Decision/outcome expected to be announced in late 2022. If implemented this could add c.£100m to LA costs, and consultation stated New Burdens doctrine would be waived!

3. ADEPT Resources and Waste Policy Position Statement – text completed, now being formatted for publication.
4. Continuation on delay around Waste Policy - waiting for gov to respond to consultation findings that they've had for the past 18 months. Rumours inform that the general feeling is that the direction of travel from Government isn't changing and so the committed to EPR, separate food collection and DRS is still the intention. Some areas of concern and not really in line with the direction of strategy and it sounds like they may be dropped e.g. free garden waste collection. This is good news, and the waste group are in agreement.
5. Energy from Waste plants and electricity incomes - The budget confirmed that government would introduce an energy generator levy. This is a separate arrangement to fossil fuels but there's one that relates to renewables. It's about imposing a 45% tax on energy profits above a base price of £75 per megawatt hour, which is probably slightly above what the market was pre-Ukraine issues. A healthy Energy share is likely to be received this year and will prob take £1m off what would have been received but would still be 3-4m. Next financial year will make a multimillion point difference to the budget. The question is, do we lobby against it, or do we think the big picture is Energy firms' super profits are being taxed to support energy prices across the county?
Martin Dickman said that EfW Energy income will bolster next 4 years' budget for Buckinghamshire, and they are expecting in region of £30m of income from it. They have already contacted the Treasury and checking whether the Generation Levy would be a qualifying change of law. If it is then the council could end up subsidising its contractor. The other option is to try and get EfWs exempted (as small generators).

Energy & Clean Growth

Carolyn McKenzie – *apologies received*

Flood and Water Management

Max Tant/Alys Bishop

The FWM group hasn't met since early October, so there isn't much to update. The main issues of note are:

1. The NIC will launch its surface water review next week. Max is expecting this to call for improve investment and governance for surface water flood risk management. They are proposing a new programme that is jointly prepared by both LLFAs and Water Companies to deliver surface water flood risk management investment. Max believes they will propose that the funding for this programme should be devolved directly to LLFAs, rather than go through the EA (this is a change following a recent meeting Max had with them), and that the funding will be for the programme, individual schemes will not need to bid. It is up to the government to respond to this, but on the basis of what Max has heard (not seen anything written), he is broadly supportive.

This is the 4th review and there might now be a pause.

Report: <https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/reducing-the-risks-of-surface-water-flooding/>

2. Still awaiting Defra's review of Schedule 3. It has been delayed by the Storm overflow reduction plan and other issues in Westminster. It is due imminently.

David Dale informed that the NIC are doing the next National Infrastructure Assessment and couple of people attended the ADEPT Leadership meeting yesterday. It's an open door for them inviting us to engage with them. This is an opportunity to work with them at a senior level.

Natural Capital & Heritage

Liz Small/Liz Milne – *apologies received*

Met 10 days ago. David Dale joined late and can report that it was a good meeting with 20 people plus guest speakers from NE covering landscape mapping tools. Adrian Lonigan (NE) covered Nature Recovery. Defra will produce Training videos on LNRS, the group suggested a couple more subjects. Budget impacts noted too. Below are some notes received from Liz Milne:

- Still awaiting secondary legislation for BNG and LNRS and details of burdens funding.
- Noted that BNG draft guidance will be shared with PAS BNG

network in December.

- Draft BNG Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan Template shared by NE for comment.
- Defra also developing training videos for LNRS – group has suggested additional topics these could cover.
- NE GI framework launch event 31st January noted <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/launch-of-the-national-green-infrastructure-framework-tickets-415969785827>
- NRN delivery partnership – can we check that ADEPT is on this please? Suggested that Hannah Bartram attends – just want to ensure we are feeding in and it's not just reliant on LGA.
- Question over the local government budget challenges and the risks this places on environmental services, potential for capacity reduction and future delivery of the Environment Act. Question asked whether there was anything ADEPT could be doing in respect of this.

Partners

Defra

Ola Ladapo

- LNRS – just to highlight to intention to reinstate the webinar series next year.
- Waste– teams are still working to publish consultation around consistency by end of this year. The steer from the Secretary of State is that we push things forward as quickly as possible.
- Reflection on Autumn Statement and fallout on challenges of inflation. Would need to make arrangements to ensure we have all we need to support our delivery.
- Impacts on staffing – Kathryn Bell has joined, on a secondment to Defra, to lead on the local delivery side.
- ADEPT have a meeting with David Hill soon and is keen to provide all necessary updates and support needed.

Environment Agency

Jennie Donovan – *apologies received*

Natural England - Adam

Adam Wallace – *apologies received*

Other Issues, Risks and Questions

Councils

Steve Palfrey welcomed Ola's positive comments about Defra being keen not to exacerbate delay and the intent to publish info ASAP. Steve would like to reiterate the message on impact of delay which

	<p>has been quite significant will have a knock-on effect to the rest of the timetable for reforms. An active engagement from Defra is required in terms of how the reforms can be implemented in as time efficient and cost-effective a way as possible. Ola observed that Defra must also recognise challenge from the Office of Environmental Protection. The key word is “engagement” and the more transparent that is the better. Ola will feedback to the team.</p> <p><u>ADEPT</u> Hannah Bartram/David Dale</p> <p>ADEPT LT mtg – 30th November ADEPT Autumn Conf held in Leeds in November – successful and well received. Focussed on Climate Change and Decarbonisation. Joint ‘paid for’ training day with CIPFA on green finance was held last week. Good mix of Place and Finance delegates. David Dale has produced a brief write up which will come out in next ADEPT newsletter. It would be good to work with Defra’s Green Finance team.</p> <p>Webinar by Environment Services Association, the main trade body for waste and recycling companies - 15th Dec. Biodiversity opportunities on waste and environment facilities.</p> <p>Climate Change Group – hoping to have more firmer proposals to bring to you in the January ADEPT Env Board meeting. Nigel Riglar is now in position and will be the rep on LNZF. Also somebody from the LAAP. The next meeting of the NZ Forum is in January.</p> <p>ACTION: ADEPT to consider how we use the networks and forums to best effect. Kathryn Bell, Defra, is invited to join the January ADEPT Env Board meeting. Senior level meetings are planned with David Hill, Defra.</p> <p>ACTION: In preparation for a forthcoming meeting with Hannah Bartram and colleagues on EA and Local Government association, please send through to Hannah any particular issues re. EA operations that you’d like raised.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
3.	<p>Any other urgent business</p> <p>None raised.</p>	
4.	<p>Dates of future meetings/calls</p>	

	Q1 – 25 th January 2023, 10:00-12:30	
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