



# **Built & Natural Environment**

**Thematic Progress Update  
September 2022**

# Lead Member Introduction

This report is the first thematic update report on the progress we are making against our Better Lives for All theme of Built and Natural Environment

Since adopting our Corporate Strategy in September 2021, we have made significant progress against the actions set out in our plan.

Some of the recent highlights include:

- ✓ Supported the delivery of Neighbourhood planning referendums for Ringmore and Frogmore & Sherford
- ✓ Planted 1,450 whip trees
- ✓ Appointed an officer to lead the work around Conservation Area Appraisals and plans
- ✓ Submitted an investment plan to UK Shared Prosperity Fund which if successful will enable the delivery of a Cycling and Walking plan for the District

Each action has a number of activities, and the following table sets out the progress against those specific activities.

Activities on Track	Activities slightly off track but plan in place	Activities at risk of not completing as agreed	Activities not yet due to start
<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>		

There have been delays with progressing our projects at Batson – for the Harbour Depot and Business units due to challenges experienced by the contractor. We continue to work closely with them and are developing a revised timetable.

At the point of preparing this report, we await the decision on our UK Shared Prosperity investment plan which if successful will enable delivery of key projects under this theme such as the delivery of a Cycling and Walking plan for the district.

Over the coming pages, we set out more in-depth updated for each action and subsequent activities.

*Cllr Judy Pearce*

Cllr Judy Pearce

Leader of the Council

and theme lead (Built and Natural Environment)



Lead Member for protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment



## Action BN1.1 Supporting the delivery of neighbourhood plans

### Key Highlights

- Since the adoption of the Better Lives for All Strategy in September 2021, we have supported the delivery of neighbourhood planning referendums for:-
  - Ringmore (17<sup>th</sup> March 2022)
  - Frogmore and Sherford (17<sup>th</sup> May 2022)
- Consultation has taken place in respect of Dartmouth Neighbourhood Plan with plan proposal and consultation running from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022 with an independent examiner being appointed on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

Consultation has also taken place in respect of a modification to the South Milton Neighbourhood Plan. This consultation ran from 7<sup>th</sup> March - 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

Modbury Neighbourhood Plan was resubmitted and placed on consultation from 11<sup>th</sup> July – 12<sup>th</sup> September.

### Key Risks / Issues

- NP resourcing and case load is a key constraint.

### Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Dartmouth – referendum
- Kingsbridge – referendum
- Modbury – following consultation this will proceed to examination
- Brixton – modification examination
- South Milton – modification examination
- Salcombe – The final examination report is imminent
- Totnes – following a public hearing, on Policy C12, the examination of the plan, including Policy C12, is to proceed

Overall Rating

Green – On Track

## Action BN1.2 Facilitate urban tree planting

### Key Highlights

- Delivered Urban Tree Challenge Fund Yr1 planting of 278 large trees at 17 sites in Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, Totnes and Ivybridge.
- Delivered Emergency Tree Fund schemes at 5 SDHC sites, planting 1,450 whip trees.

### Key Risks / Issues

- The dry summer has required more frequent watering (weekly) than anticipated (fortnightly) of newly planted trees. With a staff member resignation and recruitment, there has been some short-term covering of the watering by the GM and Localities teams. The new staff member will be in place mid-September.
- With late planting (due primarily due to a late grant announcement) and a particularly dry summer, there have a small number of tree fatalities. These will be replaced in the 22/23 planting season.
- From experience with watering in the 2022 summer season, the system has been refined and made more efficient such a higher frequency of watering can be achieved if we are subject to future dry summers within the tree establishment period.

### Looking ahead to the next 6 months



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c.325 large trees will be planted through Yr2 of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund at 29 sites in Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, Totnes and Ivybridge.</li> <li>A bid is anticipated to the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest to cover the cost of tree planting at sites in Ermington, Yealmpton, Woolwell and Ivybridge, along with maintenance payments to cover staff resource and watering costs during the establishment phase.</li> </ul>		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Overall Rating</b></td> <td><b>Green – On Track</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Green – On Track</b>
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Green – On Track</b>	

<b>Action BN1.3 Support schemes that contribute to enhancing the marine environment including Water Quality</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<p>In June 2022, the Salcombe Harbour Board considered an update on water quality within the area using data provided by the Environment agency. Water quality in Salcombe Harbour has been a long-standing concern of the Board and so analysis of water quality trends over the past 6 years was considered. The Board agreed to seek the views of the Environment Agency on its local analysis.</p> <p>Work has continued with the delivery of Batson Harbour Depot (this action having carried forward from 2021/22 delivery plan) (see Risks/ Issues below)</p>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress of the Batson Harbour Depot is slightly off track having originally been scheduled for completion in May 2022. Nationally supply chain issues are a significant challenge for the construction industry. Estimated contractor completion is now end of October 2022.</li> </ul>	
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The action for 2022/23 is the development of a new 5 year strategic business plan for Salcombe Harbour which will be progressed now that the summer season has concluded.</li> <li>September 2022 – internal fit outs of Batson Harbour Depot</li> <li>October 2022 – Water installation and completion of harbour depot</li> </ul>	
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>AMBER – SLIGHTLY OFF TRACK DUE TO BATSON HARBOUR DEPOT DELAYS</b>

<b>Action BN1.4 Map Land uses to support good decision making</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<p>The first iteration of the Devon Nature Recovery Map is live online and can be viewed here <a href="https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/environmental-maps">https://www.devon.gov.uk/environment/environmental-maps</a></p> <p>The Devon NRN Map is being developed as one of the strategic tools to help us achieve a Nature Recovery Network of wildlife rich habitats across Devon. The map will help to ensure that everyone is aware of existing wildlife habitats, networks and priorities across the county. Uses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Planning applications</li> <li>Targeting funding e.g. Biodiversity Net Gain, ELM (environmental land management payments) and funding for habitat creation linked to benefits such as carbon sequestration, flood control, water quality improvements and recreation/tourism (known as Payments for Ecosystem Services).</li> <li>Targeting conservation effort.</li> <li>Avoiding impacts on sensitive habitats e.g. through tree planting</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nature recovery map continues to be delivered and habitats added on a regular basis. This may mean that it does not currently capture all significant nature assets.</li> </ul>	



<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the ongoing development and promotion of Nature Recovery Map</li> </ul>	
Overall Rating	<b>Green – On Track</b>

<b>Action BN1.5 Commission work leading to delivery of priority cycle routes and a 20 year vision for the cycle network in South Hams</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our Investment Plan for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) has been submitted (1/8/2022). If successful it will secure funding to commission a Cycling and Walking Plan</li> <li>The proposed Cycling and Walking Plan has been discussed with DCC, Sustrans, Dartmoor and a number of transport consults.</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If SPF monies are not secured the Council will have to rely on DCC for the cycle and walking plan and this have less of a local focus.</li> <li>Expectations will be raised if the cycle and walking plan is produced, and there is limited funding for creating new cycle routes. However, funding sources are being explored that could provide capital funding to deliver activities identified in the proposed Plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioning of cycling and walking plan. The first stage of this piece of work will be the compiling of baseline evidence.</li> <li>Engaging with town and parish councils and neighbourhood plan groups to understand where communities focussed on active travel are present</li> </ul>	
Overall Rating	<b>Green – On Track</b>

<b>Action BN1.6 Work to facilitate the delivery of broadband connectivity where its needed – supporting digital infrastructure for the future</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly engagement is ongoing with main broadband suppliers (Airband, Openreach, Wildanet) and CDS (Connecting Devon and Somerset)</li> <li>Engagement with broadband champions has been taking place as and when issues arise</li> <li>Airband delivery is going through delays –our officer is pushing for updates from CDS/Airband but little information is forthcoming</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CDS have still not shared any information that was promised.</li> <li>Staffing changes within Airband mean that new relationships need to be built, but this is happening</li> <li>Project Gigabit is coming forward in the next year and the contracts will be centrally managed, so CDS, and therefore the district will be one further step removed from the delivery process. However, not having to go through CDS could be beneficial.</li> </ul>	
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to engage with suppliers and understand rollout priorities</li> <li>Ad-hoc assistance to Broadband champions</li> <li>Paper on ‘Digital Champion’ role to be published</li> </ul>	
Overall Rating	<b>Green – On Track</b>



## Action BN1.7 Commission Conservation Area Appraisals and plans

### Key Highlights

Conservation Officer, Karen Pritchard, has been appointed to lead on this activity and is already making good progress in pulling together the existing Conservation Area information to set a foundation from which the appraisals can be delivered. Conservation area information has previously been held in a variety of locations, so it has been important to pull this information together into a single library so that review activities can be prioritised and scheduled effectively and a common approach can be taken as documents are updated.

### Key Risks / Issues

- There is a risk that as some of the prioritised areas are appraised and updated, communities may have consultation fatigue, particularly those which are going through / have recently completed neighbourhood plan consultations. It will be important to time consultation activities to maximise their potential for positive levels of response.

### Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Further work will be undertaken to collate all conservation area information into a single location so that appraisals can be undertaken more effectively, and a schedule of activities can be set out.
- Towns which were deemed to be high priority are already being looked at, and this work will continue. It is likely that some of the first updated Conservation Area Management Plans (CAMPs) will be ready for consultation by the end of January.

Overall Rating

Green – On Track

This update will be considered at South Hams District Council Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm. Watch live on  YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/southhamscouncil>

