

Q3 2009/10 Theme Overview

Partnership Theme: Environment

How well are the outcomes and improvements being delivered?

Action to deliver environmental outcomes continues to progress well, with all actions planned for Q3/Q4 delivered or underway. As previously reported, performance data is only available annually and/or with significant time delay for most of the environment NIs. Unconfirmed Q3 monitoring data for recycling rates (NI192) has indicated an actual annual performance of 43.82%. The performance target is 43.24% recycling and composting, this indicates that the Partnership may marginally exceed the 2009/10 target.

District Councils have now completed the second survey (of 3) on street cleanliness (NI195) for 2009-10. The figures cannot be used to track performance over the year as sites surveyed are randomly selected and are affected by seasonal variation, therefore only the annual figure (a combination of the 3 surveys throughout the year) is a true reflection of performance. However, the average figures from the two completed surveys to date indicate performance to be on track for meeting county targets.

Progress on NI197 (Biodiversity) has been good during the third quartile. The Local Sites Monitoring Project commenced on the 5th October as part of the new Natural Environment Service and the new ecology team is well on track to produce management prescriptions for the 34 roadside verges. Contact is being made with partner organisations and a selection of landowners who are being approached for access permission (to which some negative responses have been received). Requests have been made to District Councils for information over Biological Heritage Sites in their ownership; responses will be chased in the coming weeks. This project is not only delivering against NI 197, but is also monitoring changes in area of Biodiversity Action Plan habitat for Core Output Indicator E2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy and fulfilling the need for Local Development Frameworks to be based upon up to date information.

Climate Change activity mapping was initiated during Q3 to inform the development of breakthrough actions for the Lancashire Partnership's Big Ticket Issue process, but also to demonstrate activity underway to reduce emissions in Lancashire (NI186) and to adapt to climate change (NI188). This information will be presented in an annual report highlighting progress during the year since the launch of the Lancashire Climate Change Strategy in April 2009. This activity information is key in the absence of any timely data on CO₂ emissions, which is normally published 2 and a half years in arrears by government.

Activity on fuel poverty and reducing domestic energy use continues to benefit from a strong partnership between the district councils, the County Council, Blackpool & Blackburn with Darwen and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre. Relationships are now being developed with Lancashire Children's Trusts, Social Services and the PCTs linking up work on fuel poverty, child

poverty and seasonal excess deaths. However, as previously highlighted, there are strong concerns amongst all partners that this activity will not be picked up in the NI187 random sample survey used to monitor performance. Targets may be wrongly perceived to be missed due to the flaws in the imposed survey methodology rather than an actual decline in performance. A number of other authorities within the region and nationally have expressed similar concerns.

An equality impact assessment is currently underway for the environment theme. Due to the diversity of the NI's within the theme a number of delivery groups are being engaged to complete the assessment for their particular specialist area.

What are the prospects for the future?

Future prospects continue to look good, there are strong partnerships within the environment theme and relationships are now being developed with other themes to work together on joint outcomes.

Despite the concerns raised in the half year performance report, all 12 authorities have participated in this year's NI187 survey on the grounds of partnership working. However the original concerns over the survey methodology still stand and need to be explored further before initiating the 2010/11 survey. A particular issue is the relative high cost (approx £1,600 per district) associated with completing the survey in return for data of questionable quality which is diverting limited resources away from delivery. Completion of the survey, following prescribed methodology, is a requirement placed on local authorities by government.

Work is ongoing to develop and sustain the new Lancashire Natural Environment Service and continued input from districts is needed to ensure their survey priorities are identified, particularly with respect to their Local Development Framework work, and the management of BHS's in their ownership.

Concerns around capacity and budget efficiencies continue to be raised by a number of partners across all delivery areas, and the impact these may have against delivery of the six LAA targets.