

Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership inaugural event
Held Thursday 3 December 2020

Questions for Lesley Davies
Chief Executive Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Q: Could you give us the figures again for species lost and under threat in Herts?

A: Over the last 50 years, of the species assessed in the Herts State of Nature report 76 species became extinct in the county. The analysis shows that 1446 species are 'Hertfordshire Species of Conservation Concern', which are species considered to be threatened with extinction in a Hertfordshire context. Of the 76 species which became extinct, 35 were invertebrates, 26 were plants, 13 were vertebrates and 2 were lichens. These include the burnt orchid, white-clawed crayfish and the nightingale.

Q: Also is there a list of those species somewhere we can access?

A: The Herts State of Nature report gives further information. The full list has not yet been published but anyone wishing to know more can contact the Trust.

<https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/news/new-report-highlights- plight-hertfordshires-wildlife#:~:text=A%20new%20report%20by%20Herts%20and%20Middlesex%20Wildlife,thei r%20numbers%20have%20changed%20between%201970%20and%202020.>

Q: What are the top 2 or 3 actions you'd like to see councillors do to help HMWT enhance opportunities for wildlife?

A: The Trust would like to work with local authorities in all tiers in Hertfordshire. There are a number of ways:

- a) Creating a Nature Recovery Strategy to identify areas for habitat management, creation and restoration.*
- b) Ensuring that planning policies are robust and prevent further loss of biodiversity and enable biodiversity net gain.*
- c) Embedding activities across the Council's activities which protect and enhance wildlife habitats and raise awareness of the need for nature's recovery e.g. within planning, community engagement, and greenspace management.*
- d) Councillors use their roots into their communities to promote the urgent need for action on nature's recovery and actively encourage local action for wildlife e.g. running community engagement activities with the Trust.*

Q: To what extent can HMWT influence the actions and impact of the developers involved in the large number of big housing projects already underway in Herts?

A: The Trust is involved in the planning process for the purpose of securing biodiversity net gain and preventing negative impacts of development on biodiversity. We are engaged with planning at both a strategic level (commenting on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans) and at the Development Management stage. We consider each development on its own merits and assess its potential impact purely on biodiversity issues. Through the involvement in this process, the Trust has the opportunity to influence policies that will support measurable net gains in biodiversity and protect and enhance important sites, habitats and species. The Trust may also be able to influence the location and spatial design requirements of future development to protect and enhance ecological networks. The Trust will object to planning applications where it feels appropriate. The Trust will discuss applications with developers prior to the submission of applications where there are opportunities for major biodiversity enhancements, or cases that are potentially very damaging to wildlife.

Q: What are you doing about bonfires and avoiding the burning of hedgehogs and slow worms.

A: If people are having bonfires, it is recommended that they should always check to ensure that there are no species such as hedgehogs and slow worms within them.

Q: The Sustainability Strategy proposes a 20% increase in biodiversity by 2050, but wildlife has declined 60% over 50 years. Lesley - is this target enough?

A: The Herts State of Nature report underlines what has been lost over the last 50 years and how we now need to see a massive reversal in these losses. In order to achieve resilient functioning ecosystems and allow our wildlife to adapt to climate change, we need to roughly double the area of natural habitat in the county. This ties into the national target for 30% of land to be positively managed for wildlife by 2030 which the Wildlife Trusts are collectively campaigning for. This would be around 22000 hectares of new habitat in Hertfordshire, which need to include all the priority habitats identified in the report including grasslands, heathland, wetlands and woodlands. Continuing to record species is vital to this in order to be able to measure the impact of the change. This target aims to increase both the diversity of species and the abundance of species. It is vitally important that this existing habitats and new areas are in positive management for wildlife to prevent further species declines. It would provide a consistency if the Sustainability Strategy includes a target of 30% of land in nature's recovery by 2030, as this is a national target, now with the backing of the government.

Further information is given here: <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/news/wildlife-trusts-launch-ps30-million-appeal-kickstart-natures-recovery-across-30-land-and-sea>

Q: To Lesley what about bonfire and cats

A: As cats are domesticated rather than wild species it is outside the remit of the Wildlife Trust, but the RSPCA may be able to help.

Questions for Matthew Partridge

Chief Executive Stevenage Borough Council and Herts Leaders Chief Exec representative

Q: Can you say a little more about how the HCCSP is linking with Herts planning authorities to ensure there are wildlife corridors in new developments that LINK UP across the county?

A: This is something that could be picked up by the biodiversity sub group in conjunction with the Local Authority Lead officers, who then in turn could liaise with their respective Planning sections colleagues.

Q: What are your thoughts around devolution, levelling up and combined authorities in tackling climate change?

A: From a Herts context we need to see and consider the proposals contained within the Governments promised White Paper on Devolution & Recovery before we can effectively comment on devolution and/or combined authorities. The Levelling Up fund will present some opportunities for Local Authorities which we in Herts could consider further once details for the fund are announced. With regards to the concept of Levelling Up, as in achieving greater equity in investment etc. across the country, the impact of this remain to be seen but could result in a redistribution of some funds.

Q: I know that Stevenage is no smoke and no bonfire allowed, what are you doing about St Albans and other districts?

A: HCCSP does not have authority in such matters and it will continue to be appropriate for questions to be addressed directly with individual Local Authorities. We will share what we

believe is best practice amongst ourselves with regards to the priority strands (water, transport, carbon reduction and biodiversity) policies and activities.

Q: Funding a Sustainability Festival (£30K) in each council area across Herts for 2021 to utilise community engagement re COP26 and Herts Strategy?

A: HCCSP notes the helpful suggestion and would defer this as a matter for local community groups to follow up with their local authority. Each authority would have grants and funding available and you would be able to find information publically available online via local authority webpages.

Questions related to the topic of Transport

Q: As well buying an electric car ourselves, how can community groups help with the switch away from petrol and diesel vehicles?

A: Encourage the public to consider whether a car is needed, address your need to purchase and whether active travel and modal shift may be an option for you. Utilise passenger transport where it exists and if you are purchasing a vehicle buy a smaller vehicle and use public transport for any longer journeys you make. HCCSP encourages our community groups to work with us to achieve the message of enhancing modal shift and active travel and potentially reduce the need to own a car. You could also act as ambassadors for Electric Vehicles if buying one yourself.

Q: Transport issues across Herts: when is the council going to establish county -wide electric vehicle infrastructure e.g. using the existing street light system?

A: Electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure is a specific area the transport theme group is currently looking at, in order to look at effective measures to improve infrastructure for EV on and off street across Herts, where appropriate.

Q: Much of the existing cycling infrastructure around Welwyn and Stevenage is in a poor condition or is inadequate. What plans are there to improve this?

A: Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) developed a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in 2018 that identifies and prioritises interventions to both improve existing infrastructure as well as 'plug gaps' in the network. Welwyn-Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) is currently in discussions with Hertfordshire County Council about developing a LCWIP in the early 2021 for both the Welwyn and Hatfield area.

Q: David did not mention modal shift to public transport. Is it intended to encourage this?

A: The transport group is looking at modal shift and this would most definitely include public and passenger transport.

Q: Will the transport subgroup be including aviation emissions in its remit?

A: No. CO2 emissions are currently outside the remit of individual Local Authorities. Airports are also all outside of our boundaries.

Q: Has there been any modelling on the enduring impacts of Covid on transport demand and on the valuing of Open Spaces? // Has there been any modelling of the likely enduring impacts of Covid on transport demand? Is there a threat to public transport investment?

A: Hertfordshire County Council has not undertaken any separate modelling on the impacts of COVID on open spaces and travel demand, currently. We have, however, recorded traffic speed and volume across 30 sites on Hertfordshire's road network during the COVID

lockdowns. This current data are for information only and to understand any patterns, however, due to the changeable nature of the virus and the impact on traffic, it is very difficult to make any predictions based on what's happened so far or likely to happen in the near future.

This situation is not unique to Hertfordshire, as DfT has yet to provide guidance on how we reflect changes in speed and volume due to COVID in terms of national traffic modelling etc.

Q: To reduce transport emissions, how could HCCSP manage economic growth without covering the county in new roads?

A: We are looking to develop sustainable means of transport and HCCSP are keen to encourage green economic growth. HCCSP recognises this means that local transport needs to be effective, however, it equally needs to be sustainable. The Partnership is keen to investigate measures to achieve this.

Q: For David you haven't mention cycling and creating cycle routes

A: this was wrapped up in active travel – the HCCSP transport group are looking at further encouraging active travel and modal shift, to include cycling and cycling infrastructure

Q: Is there an EV strategy for Herts?

A: A number of Local Authorities in Hertfordshire are in the process of developing their own strategies for sites they own and in relation to their own Carbon reduction policies. The HCCSP transport group will consider electric vehicle infrastructure and strategy development under its remit.

Q: Should we not be working as a whole county to seek funding and have a whole county strategy for EV points rather than district by district?

A: This is exactly what we are doing – the transport sub group fully intends to look at the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure as a partnership in Hertfordshire and to facilitate improvements wherever possible.

Q: Is there sufficient capacity in power stations if everyone switched to electric cars. Is HCCSP able to influence?

A: LAs have been working with the local network providers on strategies to ensure that sufficient electricity is available via the grid for any given local area.

Q: To David how one can change behaviour about cycling if the routes don't exist?

A: The Transport group is strongly focussed on promoting active travel including cycling and part of this will include looking at possible gaps in infrastructure.

Questions related to the topic of Biodiversity

Q: What is the HCCSP's approach to pinpointing the biodiversity strategy across Hertfordshire?

A: The recent Herts State of Nature Report which set out priorities for species and habitats for the coming years. The work programme/strategy will be developed alongside this evidence to support a Nature Recovery Plan to provide for habitat creation and management and identify species and habitat priorities. The Plans would draw on the research underpinning the Hertfordshire State of Nature, the data held by the Herts Environmental Records Centre and the Ecological Networks Mapping project. The first stage would include a biodiversity audit of the land owned by the three tiers of local authorities.

Q: Can you help us a community group 'take over' and rewild a public space e.g. verge. Great for biodiversity. Great for community engagement!

A: Dependant on where you reside the best place is to contact your local district or borough council's Greenspace Management Team. Herts County council have a Friends of Greenspaces page that links volunteers to the management of their local green spaces.

Link below:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/countryside-management/volunteering/friends-of-greenspaces.aspx#>

Q: How do we best encourage biodiversity net gain as the norm before it becomes a requirement from central government which could be a couple of years away?

A: The HCCSP Biodiversity Subgroup is going to consider where biodiversity gains are positioned with potential recommendation of specific strategic sites.

Questions related to the topic of Carbon

Q: How will CO2 reduction progress be measured? Will HCC's progress be comparable to other UK councils?

A: Most Local Authorities have been measuring their own emissions for many years; the carbon group is currently working to collate information to ensure all Local Authorities in Hertfordshire are measuring CO2 reduction in a similar fashion.

Q: The carbon emissions associated with food are critical but are not generally allocated to LAs; will this be captured by the Carbon Reduction Group?

Not at this stage because this is about scope 3 emissions. The carbon group is working on a wide range of carbon reduction measures, initially focusing on direct and indirect over which Local Authorities have control or influence, however, we are aware emissions from food are important and will be considering wider procurement related carbon emission in due course.

Q: Will the partnership be setting any ambitions for home energy efficiency and fuel poverty?

A: The overall ambition remains regarding carbon emission targets for Local Authorities. The HCCSP Carbon sub group will be looking at how to assist with measures to improve home energy efficiency and targets. Individual boroughs and districts may have specific targets and actions with in their own local climate action plans (which most do).

Q: We definitely need a cross county carbon reduction number and not work across districts!

A: The purpose of HCCSP is to add to the work of the individual districts councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), to help achieve the wider CO2 reduction across the county of Herts as a whole.

Q: Will the Carbon emissions of imports, overseas deforestation and air travel be included in the Herts carbon emissions figures? The UK Government does NOT include them.

A: We understand that the current BEIS carbon data set does not include such emissions but we are currently focussing on emission in the BEIS national data sets

Q: Will the HCCSP set specific, measurable targets for achieving a genuine, zero carbon economy?

A: Our target is the overall 2030 target. We are working very closely with the LEP and also with a number of the topic groups as well as individually at District and Borough level. In addition, many authorities are looking at more sustainable procurement.

Q: There is no theme group for local or renewable energy (or is this part of Sarika's group?) How will this important theme be addressed for Herts?

A: Local and renewable energy should be addressed by the carbon group and the actions relating will emerge as the plan is developed.

Q: Private cars = c6% of our carbon footprints. Meat eating, overseas emissions and deforestation caused by our imports = c40%. How can this be addressed?

A: this is a national issue which is much beyond the scope of HCCSP.

Questions related to the topic of Water

Q: Why are Herts residents and businesses such high water users?

A: There is no specific research to give a definitive answer but it is thought larger homes, with gardens are contributory factors. High water use can also be driven by more affluent customers. Affluence and older houses (pre-1945) either with gardens, or homes with high occupancy levels will result in high water use.

Q: Continued sewage release is destroying our rare chalk streams. What can HCCSP do to tackle this?

A: We are engaged with Thames Water to understand the problem, and encourage a resolution. The problem is driven by inadequate infrastructure and this will take time to resolve. Thames Water's first project is to extend the sewage works on the Chess by 40% and there is ambition to speed up the delivery of this project. Secondly we can help in smaller ways by working with Building Control to understand the issue of combined sewage and foul water drainage to see if there is an opportunity to reduce these misconconnections.

Q: What about the daily water leakage from main water pipes?

A: We are working with Thames and Affinity to encourage them to improve leakage. As an example, the Water Fit campaign in St Albans is addressing leaks as well as behaviour change. Both Thames and Affinity have active plans to reduce domestic leakage and local authorities will be promoting and supporting these efforts.

Q: What water use target would you like to see in District plans and what enforcement of this by planning officers?

A: there are proposals to set targets at 110 litres per person per day – to implement the tougher measure of measurement based upon appliances. We will also look to lobby Government on initiative such as introducing mandatory water labelling to assist with implementing enforcement.

These proposals are currently under review and will be formally considered in the New Year.

Q: How you protecting local river's from dumping and developers working by river from dumping their waste, I have witnessed it in person

A: Local Planning Authorities are empowered to inspect and enforce activities on development sites. However, we would encourage all residents to report suspected infractions immediately. If any incidences are witnessed locally, HCCSP urges individuals to provide details and any additional information that might be helpful to their local authority

who can talk to Planning Authorities and the Environment Agency and explore further. There is a representative from Environment Agency who feeds in to the sub group for water.

Q: Water consumption is nothing in comparison to water leakage from main pipes

A: Thames Water and Affinity are tackling this problem and local authorities will be promoting and supporting these ongoing efforts. To achieve a target proposed of 110 litres per person per day – leakage, technology and behaviour will all need to be aligned.

All other questions asked

Q: Will Herts CC be divesting from fossil fuels in all its financial investments and pensions?

A: The Hertfordshire Fund is overseen by the Pension Committee and this function is not an executive function; it is delegated by the Council to the Pension Committee. The Council administers the Fund on behalf of the members and various employer bodies in the Fund.

The below link is to a paper (see item 3 on the agenda) for the Fund position – this is continuing to evolve:

<https://democracy.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=283&MId=1999&Ver=4> .

Q: At next year's County Council should all political parties set Carbon reduction targets to be achieved in the following 4 years.

A: In line with the relevant legislation in force at the time, political parties may wish to set carbon reduction targets. There may be greater emphasis on such targets as the Environment Bill progresses through Parliament. It would be up to individual political parties to assess the need for such targets with their appropriate officers.

Q: What resources is HCC putting into delivery of its sustainability strategy? The Integrated Plan (Budget) is set to 23/24 and doesn't provide it.

A: The County Council prepares the Integrated Plan on an annual basis. The IP brings together the financial impact of service plans and the available funding to resource these over the next 4 years. Funding was made available via the IP process last year for the initial work on the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and to enable the creation of the Sustainable Hertfordshire team. Due process will be followed to seek the appropriate future funding and resources to deliver the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan.

Q: Are there any plans to focus on reduction on food waste in schools and encouraging reducing eating meat in Hertfordshire schools?

A: The County Council is very keen to work with schools across Hertfordshire and the planned engagement to support the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy was postponed due to Covid. We hope to re-engage with schools more fully next year and have a communications plan prepared. We intend to work with all schools, sharing best practice and offering support, advice and guidance. This will include information and advice on waste, including food waste.

We will work with Herts for Learning and Herts Catering and other providers to raise awareness of food waste – reducing it and disposing of it in the most appropriate manner. Information on food choices and the carbon impact of such choices could form part of that information/engagement piece.

Q: Emails contribute to climate change and many are not really needed. Like Thank you, yes. Should we all develop a policy on this?

A: We would encourage people to only send emails where necessary and if felt the recipient would appreciate the email – and to use best judgement in these matters. This is of course also dependant on your relationship with the person/s you are communicating with.

Q: Across the world only 3% of the money spent on climate change action has been targeted to the natural world. Do we need both budget and improvement targets?

A: This is a national issue – locally we have a biodiversity theme group in relation to identified themes and work will be developed accordingly. Targets are being set as part of this topic and we are setting a range of actions to improve biodiversity in Hertfordshire.

Q: Is seeking economic growth, as measured by GDP, incompatible with achieving a zero carbon economy?

A: This question is not for Local Authorities to answer – it is much more specific and outside of HCCSP's remit as a national issue. Perhaps refer to your MP for a response.

Q: I feel that we have an opportunity (if not duty) to be ambitious. What would be the most ambitious goal each theme group would get after?

A: HCCSP fully agrees and we must develop bold and significant actions which make a difference to our carbon ambitions. The four Strategic Action Plans are all at different stages and still being developed, the current work plans follow over the next 3-4 month the initial plans will continue to be worked up and more information will be brought to a public forum next year. Each theme group are developing plans that will achieve the aims of HCCSP.

Q: I am interested to know what improvements can be made to increase recycling facilities locally. Both at the recycling centres & doorstep pick ups

A: Please refer to your local authority in terms of collections. Recycling is managed by Hertfordshire County Council but in the first instance you might be best to ask your local authority directly to clarify local recycling facilities.

Please see the following link which may be of use:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/recycling-and-waste/where-can-i-recycle/where-can-i-recycle.aspx>

Q: Do you think that there is sufficient public understanding of the CEE to empower councils to act with sufficient ambition? If not how will this be remedied?

A: We are keen to improve further the public understanding of the climate and ecological emergency. We are looking to launch a dedicated website in due course, and looking at general promotional and communication tools alongside a communication strategy to enhance communication and help get the message out.

Q: Lots of talk re residents' 'behaviour change' but towards what? - and how is it proposed to measure this?

A: In terms of behaviour change HCCSP means positive behaviour which would help assist carbon reduction by making changes, for example to assist reduction and also help the wellbeing of individuals e.g. Active travel and the health benefits that brings. The local authority is responsible for a small amount of emission of CO2 but note that we can have significant influencing capability.

In terms of measuring this, a variety of ways could be employed depending on the action undertaken e.g. Carbon use coming down, measure by number of individuals engaged in an activity such as recycling, or the number of people using bikes in city centres.

Q: What plans does the partnership have (if any) to tackle factory/intensive farming?

A: This is outside of HCCSP's remit – you may wish to take up with another more appropriate organisation.

Q: How can we work collectively on behaviour change (councils/ businesses/ government/ local groups) to support the needed changes - as push back?

A: HCCSP will be looking to develop behaviour change campaigns and are keen to work with all sectors of the community to enable this – including businesses and local community groups and others. HCCSP and its members recognise the need to engage with the widest cross section of communities and look forward to working with local groups to facilitate.

Q: How do you measure the outcome and results of your projects instead of paying lip service

A: The ultimate result we are seeking is to fulfil focus on climate change ambitions and achieving net zero carbon emissions. Many partners involved in HCCSP have net neutral carbon emission targets set for 2030 and to make significant progress to achieve the same across the wider county as a whole.

Q: A lot of the actions sound very D/BC based, how can the HCCSP ensure that the work is done across the whole of the county - for the good of the residents!

A: HCCSP recognises we need to work with a range of partners across the county as well as local businesses and third sector organisations in order to achieve climate change goals. Our Local Authorities are keen to facilitate action where they are able and to work together to achieve ambitious targets. HCCSP will continue to engage county wide in order to be effective.

Q: 20-minute neighbourhoods ensure residents have leisure facilities, schools, shops, doctors etc. within 20-min walk or cycle. Something HCCSP aspires to achieve?

A: We are fully aware of this concept and the HCCSP transport sub group is looking at a range of actions which we are intended to assist with encouraging more active travel, modal shift and carbon reduction.

Q: Would you consider Passivhaus low energy social housing, like Norwich Council did recently?

A: Not all Local Authorities have social housing under their direct control (i.e. as providers), but we are however all working to achieve improved energy efficiency standards across the housing sector wherever possible.

Q: Local/ District Plans noticeably lack specific targets with respect to energy use in buildings. Will the HCCSP address this?

A: Local plans are guided by specific national policy and HCCSP is working closely with planning policy colleagues to do all we can to ensure new buildings fully meet these criteria, as far as they are able. Each Local Authority is at different stages in terms of local plans – as they emerge over time some energy efficient regulations will tighten up subject to Government legislation. Most local plans, and in particular new plans being developed, are likely to go as far as they can to improve efficiency. This is strongly guided by Government policy.

Q: Is domestic energy efficiency covered by the partnership?

A: Local districts and boroughs are already working on domestic energy efficiency measures and this is something the carbon reduction group will look to address in more detail.

Q: What support is there for Herts schools to reduce their carbon output, increase biodiversity and make travel to school by foot/bike safer?

A: In terms of Hertfordshire County Council, the Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan recognises that schools play a big part in both carbon emissions and also in offering opportunities for enhancing and delivering biodiversity. The county council initially engaged with schools prior to Covid and then had to postpone the intended engagement as the focus switched to managing and coping with the response to the pandemic. HCC have prepared a specific communications plan that is hoped to be implemented in the New Year.

The Sustainable Hertfordshire team is working closely with colleagues in Children's Services and Herts for Learning as part of this, to gather examples of best practice which can be shared. They are happy to engage with individual schools to help them identify areas where they can reduce their carbon footprint and also in seeking opportunities to deliver biodiversity objectives. The work that HCCSP is doing in relation to the delivery of the themed action plans may also provide an opportunity to showcase best practice and sign post guidance and advice.

Q: It would be great to see all school children walking or cycling to school and would massively reduce car use what plans are there to enable this?

A: The Active and Safer Travel team at HCC work with schools on their Modeshift STARS travel plans ([see www.modeshiftstars.org/education/](http://www.modeshiftstars.org/education/)) to identify barriers and opportunities to achieving active and safer travel on the school journey. This is a national accreditation scheme. Once accredited, schools are added to the Safer Routes to School ranking list for consideration for engineering measures. Schools are awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold Modeshift STARS accreditation if they can demonstrate that they've moved away from car use to more sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling and park and stride. The more significant move away from car use, the higher level of accreditation they're awarded.

HCC also deliver road safety training and education to residents and a team of cycle instructors deliver Levels 1, 2 and 3 Bikeability training to both primary and secondary school aged pupils so they have the skills to keep themselves safer whilst walking and cycling. Please email activeandsafertravel@hertfordshire.gov.uk for information on these initiatives.

Q: 3rd sector organisations undertake great work with the local community. Will all LA's have grants (small & large) to engage the community in action?

A: This is a question to follow up with individual local authorities. Please look at your local borough and council web pages under grants- or search for grants.

Q: Is there more that can be done to exploit partnership with community groups to encourage residents' engagement/behaviour change? How?

A: Many Local Authorities in Herts have specific local climate or environment forums or a means of engaging with local residents and it is initially through this mechanism that many of the partner authorities hope to engage with community groups.

Q: Is there a list of grants that we can apply for on any or all of these areas

A: Where they exist they will be listed on individual borough and council web pages under grants.