

Climate emergency debated on the Tyne

On Wednesday 2 October, more than 60 representatives from leading organisations across the North East of England met to discuss how the region is preparing for the fall out of the climate emergency.

There were representatives from local authorities, development corporations, universities, water companies, statutory bodies and the business community. Amongst the visitors was James Bevan, the Environment Agency's chief executive, who addressed the gathered audience about the issues.

The other organisations who also spoke during the event were Durham University, NewcastleGateshead Initiative, North East England Nature Partnership and Thames Estuary Partnership.

The representatives were taken on a guided boat tour of the Tyne Estuary Partnership project, led by the Environment Agency and Ground Work NE & Cumbria, and shown first-hand how the River Tyne is preparing for the effects of Climate Change. They ventured from Newcastle Quayside to Jarrow before turning around and returning to moor up in sight of the beautiful array of iconic bridges.

Climate Change is the biggest threat we face – and it is happening now. We are already seeing the effects of the Climate Emergency in the UK through hotter, drier summers and wetter winters. The impact on people, communities and wildlife – and the habitat on which they depend – is huge.

The Environment Agency is doing everything possible to respond to the challenges of Climate Change, build resilience, and protect communities now and through the next century in a new flood and coastal strategy. We will work across government, business, and with communities up and down the country to manage the impacts of climate change and understand how we can adapt to a different future.

Groundwork NE & Cumbria are working in partnership with the Environment Agency – to build the Tyne Estuary Partnership and develop priority projects for enhancement and improvement. The River Tyne is one of the most iconic and well-known rivers in the UK and provides a focal point for economic activity supporting thriving businesses and communities. It responds to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan; to create connections between existing initiatives and real practical actions.

The partnership project looks to:

- Develop a strong, strategic, influential partnership invested in long term environmental and economic enhancement of the iconic estuary
- Working together to achieve improvements in biodiversity and the ecological environment to reduce silting and pollution, improving water quality
- Realising wider benefits that joined up action can achieve; natural

capital gains, health and wellbeing improvements, education, social, cultural and heritage benefits

It could include the introduction of nature based solutions such as creating a saltmarsh to help with carbon absorption and implement other crucial interventions that can reduce the risk of flooding, clean up air quality and make the area more attractive to residents and visitors to the area.

Rob Carr, Tyne Catchment Coordinator, at the Environment Agency, said:

It's hard to hear but climate change is impacting us all, right here in the north east, and we individually have the choice to reduce our personal contribution to the Climate Emergency in our day to day lives. The food we eat, the journey we take, the home we live in, the places we work and play. It's not just something that happens to others, it is happening to us – right here, right now.

The Tyne Estuary Project is looking to improve and increase the nature that runs through Tyneside along our Tyne estuary. Nature can help us manage flooding, improve air quality, capture carbon, help address social and health issues as well as attracting investment in our local economy.

The Environment Agency along with a growing Tyne Estuary Partnership have a vision for a more natural, healthy and vibrant riverside. We have identified over 70 locations where we hope to work with land owners, business, developers, Local Authorities and communities to realise our vision and help manage, through nature, the climate emergency we all face.

Chris Watson, Director of Land & Communities, Groundwork NE & Cumbria, said:

Groundwork NE & Cumbria welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and other organisations to develop a sustainable approach to the environmental and economic enhancement of the iconic Tyne Estuary. As an organisation, we strongly believe that such a local approach to sustainable development can contribute towards the fight against the much wider and significant climate emergency, which we all face.

The tour of the Tyne Estuary Project was also an opportunity for people and organisations to sign up to the [Tyne Estuary Partnership Pledge](#) to help realise the vision, hopes and plans for the Tyne and to secure its future for generations to come.