Proposed Response to Wiltshire Council's Consultation on:

'Our Natural Environment Plan' - A Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) strategy for Wiltshire Climate Strategy

Cllr Richard Mann, Climate Change Advisory Group

Whilst welcoming the overall proposals we have the following comments to make:

Terminology

'Infrastructure' seems to imply a human industrial arrangement when we are talking about water and vegetation which is suffering at our hands! We would do well to remember this whatever terminology is adopted.

Themes

Delivering under six themes risks siloed approaches which do not respect the natural world's living systems which are all inter-related and does not suggest a direct linkage to the wider climate strategy. For instance; might it be better to consider energy, air, water, soil and food systems as higher level objectives to which e.g. the creation of wetlands (which you also suggest) may be helpful to mitigate flooding, pollution in our rivers and at the same time provide new vital habitats is a clear contributor which may not so readily emerge from the more siloed themes suggested?

Stakeholders

Who do you consider to be your stakeholders? If communities are to be encouraged to support this work then community forums may well be in need of creation and fostering as they take on this work. As local people inhabit the spaces that are the subject of this document's intentions then we would welcome local partner organisations to work through networks of local parishes.

Regional considerations

We would ask that the plans that are made do reflect the river catchment areas that are present in Wiltshire as meaningful systems of nature. By recognising these functional natural areas then mistakes in intervention may be avoided and evaluation of any benefits will be made with clearer understanding.

Nature's way

It can often be that allowing nature to grow back is often a very effective way of creating the environment human's respond well to. So (for example) where river courses have been buried in underground pipes, they are unseen and unappreciated and the rapid flow of water through piping can contribute to downstream floods. So dig the pipes up, open them to the air to be seen and appreciated and allow the water to find its own route-it will often move in braided channels and create wetlands which reduce the risks of downstream flooding.

Strategy context

This looks complex and so will likely reduce the possibility of useful change. Can these not be unified under clear aims for all partners to work towards eg energy, air, water, soil, food, housing, health and transport?

Trees and Home insulation

It is widely recognised that tree planting and ensuring high levels of home insulation are very effective counter-measures to the climate emergency. How will these be implemented? Ideally using natural insulating materials such as fleece, wood fibre and cork.

Farming and Allotments

Encouraging the development of community engagement in farming is potentially a very effective way of promoting well being and promoting local food production (with low food miles) in partnership with the communities who will help grow and then eat the food. People who are more knowledgeable about how their food is grown will also help promote organic methods with less pesticide and fertiliser use and better soil quality with carbon sequestration.

Where farming space is not available then wider provision of allotments are likely to be welcomed.

Education work to support these initiatives would be welcome and social prescribing by the health sector should be promoted.

Regional self sufficiency

The local economy should be re-aligned to help provide locally the resources to generate renewable energy and to grow sustainably the materials for home insulation: wool and tree products. This stimulates the local economy whilst keeping transport miles low and builds local resilience as does the creation of greater food production in the region.

Priorities

There doesn't seem sufficient urgency in the priority section. Climate change is here now and is set to worsen rapidly so urgent action on tree planting and retrofitting homes with insulation should surely start now!

RM

Climate strategy as above plus:

Whilst it is good to read that 98% of our waste is managed in the UK we should aim to manage our waste in the County as this will make it evident to the residents the effects of our own choices! This should encourage much improved habits of reducing waste, recycling, re-using, repairing.