

MIDDLESBROUGH ENVIRONMENT CITY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FACT SHEET

Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) was established in 1992 through a national competition. It was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee in June 1997 and received charitable status in June 1998. The aim of the Environment City initiative was to demonstrate ways of managing cities and large towns in ways that are more environmentally sustainable, improving the quality of people's lives without harming the environment. Four Environment Cities were created, with Leicester, Leeds and Peterborough being the other three. All remain at the forefront on promoting sustainable living although not all still actively use the Environment City name.

Middlesbrough Environment City works closely with Middlesbrough Council, public sector organisations, local businesses, voluntary sector groups and local communities to create a more sustainable town. Middlesbrough Council adopted a One Planet Living (OPL) Framework approach to delivering sustainability in the town and is currently refreshing its town-wide Green Strategy based on OPL. OPL is a global initiative based on 10 principles, which define what sustainability means in an easy to understand way. The model was developed by international charity BioRegional. The OPL concept is based on acknowledging that the world's resources are limited. At present the UK population is using resources as though society had three planets to support it. Our demands must be reduced to one planet, but the challenge is to do this by improving environmental conditions and local well-being in an affordable way. OPL is described in terms of 10 principles that include basic principles of environmental sustainability such as reducing reliance on fossil fuels and tackling waste, through to wider quality of life issues such as culture, heritage, health and happiness.

Middlesbrough Environment City is a partner in Middlesbrough's sustainable living agenda and has a particular role in terms of community engagement. MEC, with its partners, undertakes a range of practical, demonstration and awareness-raising projects each year. A selection of current and recent activities include:

- Running energy saving projects, including schemes to encourage vulnerable residents to take up energy efficiency measures and training residents and front-line staff in tackling fuel poverty and promoting energy efficiency. This work has won several national awards. We also chair the South Tees Affordable Warmth Partnership.
- Providing a range of activities to encourage people to cycle and walk more. This includes running the Middlesbrough Cycle Centre, providing a secure cycle storage facility for commuters and visitors. In addition, MEC provides safe cycling and cycle maintenance training events through the Middlesbrough Bike Academy and Bikeability schools cycle training.
- Work with young people to improve their life skills through participating in environmental action; the One Planet Pioneers project is part of the National Lottery Community Fund Our Bright Future programme.
- Being an active partner in the £10m You've Got This project, a South Tees wide programme funded by Sport England to help people become more physically active.
- Coordinating a programme of food related initiatives. This includes chairing the Middlesbrough Food Partnership, which is one of only four locations in the UK to have achieved the Sustainable Food Places Silver Award, currently the highest accolade of any Food Partnership. We also run an annual programme of sustainable

food related activities, including horticulture skills training, cooking skills and organising the annual Town Meal that attracts around 5,000 visitors each year.

- Education work with local schools and community groups, including the delivery of Forest Schools both at our base in Acklam and in local schools.
- Running a National Lottery Community Fund supported project, “Community Actions” to support local communities in Middlesbrough to develop their own environmental projects that also address social and health issues.
- Working with other partners on the restoration of heritage sites in the town and projects to encourage biodiversity.