

## **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.

Middlesbrough is one of four Environment Cities in the UK. 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 has adopted a One Planet Living (OPL) Framework approach to delivering sustainability in the town. Middlesbrough Environment City is a partner in the OPL Programme and has a particular role in terms of community engagement in the OPL process.

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 charities BioRegional and WWF. 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. For the long-term maintenance of reasonable living conditions, 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.

MEC, with its partners, undertakes a range of practical, demonstration and awareness-raising projects each year. Current and recent activities include:

- Coordinating a programme of Urban Farming in Middlesbrough, including planning the annual Town Meal, working with community groups on growing projects and delivering training in growing skills. In particular, the Bee Friend project won national recognition in 2013.
- Running the Middlesbrough Cycle Centre, providing a secure cycle storage facility for commuters and visitors. In addition, running safe cycling and cycle maintenance training events through the Middlesbrough Bike Academy and Bikeability schools cycle training.
- 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, in the last year, won three national awards.
- Developing and undertaking new projects and initiatives that link health and environmental sustainability.
- Education work with local schools and community groups.
- Working with other partners on the restoration of heritage sites in the town and projects to encourage biodiversity.