

South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership
Towns Cities & Development Working Group
Minutes of the meeting Friday 18th August 2006

Chair: Imogen Davenport (SWWT)

Attendees:

Naomi Brookes (SWRBP)
Alison Slade (Teignbride DC and ALGE rep)
Ray Perrins (SW Observatory)
Clare Guthrie (EN)
Bill Broadbent (Devon WT)
Cheryl Marriott (Cornwall Wildlife Trust)
Gavin Bloomfield (RSPB)

1. Welcome and Apologies:

Apologies received from Andrew Nicholson, Jenny Ford, Rachel Sharp, Alastair Macpherson, John Mathias, Basil Greenwood, Deborah Elton, Mark Ellis-Jones, Craig Frost.

Imogen gave a brief update of what the group does for the benefit of Naomi who has taken over from Heather Sohl.

2. Minutes and matters arising of the meeting on 16th June 2006

Contact Craig Frost about joining the TCD group.	BG ongoing
Pass information on SE Dorset SSA to BG.	ID done
Plan to ask Lesley Seymour of Sustainability South West Future Foundations to attend a future TC&D meeting.	ID/NB ongoing
Email GI working group regarding workshop on best practice.	BG done
Lead, with BG's support, the SWRBP response on RSS consultation and pull together comments from the group.	ID ongoing
Send RSS sub regional focus by e-mail to ID.	BG done
Email TCD group with a summary of what info is needed including flagging up implementation plan.	ID done
Comments on RSS sub regional focus to BG and ID.	All done
Comments on the RSS sections to BG, including cross boundary issues.	All done
HS to see if there are any other comments from other sector groups that could be included.	HS no further comment
Check with partnership what remit the joint RSS response should cover – just biodiversity or other issues too, such as climate change.	BG/HS done
Send Mike Oxford comments on guidance for NM in LDFs.	HS done
Provide comments on guidance for NM use in LDFs, direct to Mike Oxford and Imogen Davenport.	All done

Group discussion on whether the group should sign up to REN's sustainability response and comment only on biodiversity issues –see later.

3. Regional Spatial Strategy – SWRBP response to the formal consultation

This meeting was set up to discuss comments on the RSS which need to be submitted by the 30th August. There was a general group discussion .

Comments from BG in his absence– Suggested that the SWBP should respond to RSS as well as supporting the REN submission as this does not necessarily cover all that partnership would want to say, particularly with regard to Chapter 7 and GI, Suggested group discuss ENV4 and question if it says what the partnership wants particularly with regard to Nature Map. Response could be in

the format used by REN, a cover letter and follow up bullet points, which reiterates strong support for RSS with the recommendations. Suggest changes agreed by TC&D group and discuss who sign it off.

The Regional Environmental Network (REN) response on the environment policies is not a lengthy one and is meant to act as a support to the EIP (Examination in Public) panel. The general opinion was that signing up to and supporting the REN response was the right way forward, stressing the point that the comments need to be carried through the document as they are not at present. The REN response picks up on the transport issues and the conflicts with sustainability targets. GI needs to be made more of. In the SWBAP response we need to concentrate on our areas of expertise for detailed comments.

How to suggest SNAs are covered by LDD policies was discussed. AS pointed out there may well be objections to another restriction on development over and above those on existing designated sites. "Protecting these sites and features from harmful development" is not very helpful. There will be cases where development is acceptable in an SNA provided it facilitates links between sites and so forth and cases where development would significantly compromise the special biodiversity interest of a SNA - something is needed to prevent the latter. Nature Map should be seen as an opportunity map rather than a designation map. Achieving targets of the SNA – net gain for biodiversity as a principle, enhancement as a main thrust.

The RSS policy statements at a more general level should be telling local authorities what they should be doing e.g. delineate SNAs in LDDs – produce policies and set targets to maintain and expand priority habitats. Telling them how to do it could be too prescriptive and we're still working that out.

It was felt that policies could be more prescriptive effecting change through Nature Map and RSS; recognising that SNAs are areas of search within which there will be opportunities and working with agencies etc to identify these.

Each district will have different projects that will deliver within SNAs e.g. Cornwall districts through landscape scale projects, Teignbridge through development – suggest level of detail where appropriate.

The Policy should a) Make it clear that Nature Map exists and should be used; b) importance of protection of local sites outside SNAs; c) within SNAs identify areas for expansion of habitats not necessarily inhibiting development.

General comment about the size of Nature Map and its clarity – suggested A3 fold out map.

The Planning gain supplement would have an effect on the RSS and it would be wise to future proof – **ACTION** GB to email ID with some suggested wording to cover this.

General support for ENV1 – local sites/geodiversity an issue. Jenny Ford provided comment to ID.

ID to act as agent for the RSS response. Comments have not yet been received for every sub-region.

Appropriate Assessment - BG has gathered information from local teams regarding impacts on International sites. The RSS comment will support the issues flagged up by English Nature.

Two papers on GI from BG had been emailed. Further notes to follow. **ACTION** BG/ID to circulate to the group.

Woodland policy needs to define woodland - currently all woodland is covered. Also need to recognise that trees are not always appropriate – **ACTION** GB to email ID with suggested wording.

ACTION ID to draft cover letter and incorporate comments into draft RSS response and circulate to group for further comment.

The group expressed their thanks to Imogen Davenport for all her hard work leading on this huge task.

4. LDFs and Nature Map

- **Guidance on the use of Nature Map in LDFs – update on latest comments and timetable.**

Mike Oxford is still looking for comment particularly from planners, but this is proving difficult. There are still bits to add on Green Infrastructure and the documents list. E.g. SW Trusts rebuilding biodiversity.

General discussion within the group

Area Action Plans could be important in achieving SNA targets, but it's a lengthy process and perhaps unlikely to be used. It may be more likely on site specific issues/areas of development pressure.

All local authorities are working at differing rates on their LDFs so its important to get the guidance out there as soon as possible, but as a working draft.

The degree of certainty is an issue – SNAs are not going to be achieved in the plan period. However, it's a long term vision with opportunities, not a definite end. **ACTION** NB to ask Mike Oxford to add in a paragraph to address this.

What Local Authorities consider achievable within the plan period has come up as an issue. GB suggested this was where prioritisation within SNAs in LDDs came in, using the Nature Map to help identify areas of greatest opportunity.

The suggestion was to send the document as a predraft form on a CD for use now, with a cover letter of who to contact for more help i.e. Nature Map advocates. Idea is for it to be web based. **ACTION** NB to talk to BG about this.

5. AOB

Lyn Jenkins went to the National BAP Chairs meeting. DCLG has published LAA guidance and Defra are publishing guidance on all the NERC Bill duties in October. **ACTION** NB to circulate. The East of England Biodiversity Partnership meeting on how we implement the above – something for the group to discuss.

Idea for the next meeting – appropriate assessment discussion to tie in with when the RSS studies are available – **ACTION** ID/NB to talk to BG about the timetable. Plus EJP issues – what information we may have to gather and submit.

6. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 15th November 2006; Renslade House; 10.30am – 1pm.

Summary of actions

Action	Who	When
1. GB to email ID with suggested wording for future proofing the RSS in relation to PGS	GB	asap
2. Further notes on GI to be sent to the group	BG/ID	
3. GB to email ID with RSPB wording for woodland policy	GB	asap
4. ID to circulate draft cover letter and RSS response to group for final comment	ID	complete
5. NB to ask Mike Oxford to add in para to NM and LDFs about long term vision and not end point regarding SNA targets within the plan period	NB	
6. Talk to BG about sending LDFs and NM doc to planners with cover letter	NB	
7. Circulate Defra guidance on NERC Bill duties	NB	October
8. Discuss the Appropriate Assessment timetable with BG	ID/NB	