

Biodiversity South West
Towns Cities & Development Working Group
Minutes of the meeting Wednesday 7th February

Chair: Imogen Davenport (SWWT)

Attendees:

Imogen Davenport (SWWT)

Naomi Brookes (SWRBP)

Alison Slade (Teignbridge DC and ALGE rep)

Bill Broadbent (Devon WT)

Cheryl Marriott (Cornwall Wildlife Trust)

Gavin Bloomfield (RSPB)

Matt Low (NE)

Catherine Turtle (Cornwall County Council)

Basil Greenwood (NE)

1. Welcome and Apologies:

Apologies received from Andrew Nicholson, Jenny Ford, Rachel Sharp, Alastair Macpherson, John Mathias, Deborah Elton, and Craig Frost. Ray Perrins (SW Observatory)

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

Actions outstanding include:

Contact Craig Frost about joining the TCD group.

BG ongoing

Plan to ask Lesley Seymour of Sustainability South West Future Foundations to attend a future TC&D meeting.

ID/NB ongoing

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

Previous meeting was cancelled awaiting RSS EiP timetable. This has been outlined now and no issues about Nature Map have been raised therefore the South West Biodiversity Partnership have not been invited to participate.

NERC Duty Guidance is being prepared by DEFRA and will be published in the spring. Guidance will be in two parts, one part for Local Authorities and one for public bodies.

3. Local Development Frameworks and Nature Map

The Guidance is being finalised by Mike Oxford and will be ready for release soon. Paper copies and CDs will be provided to each Local Authority Planning Department. There were concerns that the guidance is too long and that a summary leaflet is needed. **Action: ID and NB to pull together bullet list for summary leaflet and circulate to group for comment.**

Group discussed possibility of submitting the guidance as Supplementary Planning Documents. But there were concerns about this approach and the fact it would have to undergo community consultation. Should it be SPD to the RSS? If we flag the document to Regional Assembly then when it comes round to a refresh it could then be considered for a SPD. Concern now is to promote the guidance as LDFs are being prepared.

Nature Map is strongly promoted in the RSS and this is the hook to use in promoting to planners. There may be value in getting the guidance endorsed by Regional Assembly. **Action: BG to follow this up.**

All opportunities to promote the leaflet need to be taken. Use contacts and existing newsletters, such as the Local Government Newsletter, the secretariat for this is provided through Regional Assembly. **Action: BG to follow this up.** It could be uploaded to planning portal. A press release and cover letter need to be prepared to accompany release to show this document is useful to planners. It would be useful to have someone who has used Nature Map to do this. Alison Slade volunteered. **Action: AS to produce article and cover letter.**

Group discussed monitoring LDFs. Cornwall working with District Authorities and LRCs looking at Annual Reports and biodiversity monitoring with full state of the environment aerial photography every 5 years. Question is how to do sensible and meaningful species with limited budgets. AS suggested to GO monitoring change in priority habitats and species like monitoring for changes in CWS. There are some set conditions like SSSIs but still need resources to do this. It was clarified that Local Wildlife Sites are DEFRA's term for CWS etc. There is a need to review own Local Wildlife Site criteria especially if not all BAP habitats are picked up.

The LRC in Dorset are trying to come up with a standard system and one which reports on wider biodiversity as well as SSSI condition, no LAs have taken this up yet.

Standardisation of planning forms and biodiversity checklists are being produced nationally and will be launched in Autumn 07. This will include protected species, site issues and mitigation, and could be translated into monitoring if there is someone at LA to do so.

Action: AS to put ask for advice on the ALGE website.

Appropriate Assessment was made a requirement of LDFs in October 2006. Teignbridge now have to look at effects on European Sites including indirect effects. This will be rolling out across region. NE will be leading this. In Dorset there is a sub regional study as this problem is so acute for Dorset in the RSS and this may roll out of AA. There is a need for mitigation in Dorset with regards to heaths and an interim planning framework has been adopted by each LA.

RSS Appropriate Assessment is currently being undertaken and there is feeling that LDF will follow. The Report will go to Regional Assembly on 8th February and the report will be available soon. The consultation will be completed by 4th March and there are 2 sessions on this in EiP. The Regional Assembly is committed to doing as good a job as possible but the RSS is not site specific therefore any areas of uncertainty will have to be taken forward in LDFs. A proposed sentence in RSS states that any LDF policy which would lead to impact on European Site would not be in accordance with RSS.

RSS EiP starts in April and ends in June. NE represented at all but 2 sessions and Katie Selleck is lead. There is a big focus on sub regional sections. The NE key issues are ensuring Appropriate Assessment is right, ensuring vision in RSS right and include environmental facet, integration of sustainable development in document, environmental assets and transport. At the sub regional level the key things are the environmental impacts at local level e.g. Bournemouth and Poole. There is particular concern about the increase in housing figures.

There is a REN session about EiP on 12th February to ensure as much joined up thinking within environmental organisations to spread work load.

4. Biodiversity South West Review of Work Programme and Structure

NB and ID outlined need for review to ensure all opportunities being taken advantage of and identified. Ensure the added value of the partnership's work.

There are a number of actions identified in BIP for this group and others for individual organisations.

Promoting new best practice guidance attached to PPS9 – there is a role to promote but make this action less specific and see what documents are needed in annual work plan.

BG is working on Growth Points Initiative led by DCLG to fast track development. One of the tools being promoted under this is Green Infrastructure. Guidance on Green Infrastructure is needed, particularly with regards to best practice introducing a plan. Avon received funds to produce a plan and using their experience would be useful **Action: ID to invite Avon to talk on this project at next meeting.** There is a need to improve knowledge, expertise and promotion of GI. GI is an opportunity in the region but there is concern about producing generic guidance for region as it will be different in each growth area. Felt there was a need for case studies though and needs further discussion. Felt that guidance needed for LA's and Developers as both will be instigating this work and need to produce Master Plans, Area Action Plans etc. Could try to work with CIRRIA or obtain endorsement from them for developers and Regional Assembly for LA guide. Meeting of GI group required to take this forward. **Action: BG to call GI group together in couple of months to discuss. BG to contact colleagues in other regions for examples of guidance.**

Group to continue to promote and influence Nature Map implementation.

CABE produced some guidance on green open space and its management etc. Group felt it would be useful to get a feel for what work is taking place. Groundwork has a regional contact and is working on green open space as are the Wildlife Trusts.

The BIP needs revisiting and the repeats need to be taken out. Actions need to be merged to make SMARTer. NE has a remit to develop a lot of the action in the BIP. BioSW to look at what BIP can deliver and ensure join up between organisations. Group decided there was a need for a GI group, Green open space and access group.

Group picked up on green roofs but this has been parked for present. Priority is to input into LRCs and data to inform planning decisions to ensure tie in. Monitoring also important. ID will attend BIRG meeting to see if more can be done regionally with LRCs. BIRG will investigate sector biodiversity data needs, opportunities and delivery and also monitor work of BioSW and report against BIP.

Need to consider Marine Spatial Planning as LA's likely to be more involved. Also need to know what LBAPs need to support their work.

After discussion group came up with targets:

- GI group and document
- Green spaces linkages
- NM LDF guidance and advocacy
- RSS
- NERC Biodiversity Duty
- Training events if needed on things like LDF, LAA
- Local Area Agreements
- Biodiversity data and monitoring – cross working with BIRG

5. AOB

Name change of group proposed and accepted. Group will now be known as Planning and Development Group which better reflects their role.

6. Date of next meeting

TBC