



West of England Nature Partnership
Joining up the dots for nature

Board Meeting

23 November 2017 // Floating Harbour Studios, Bristol

Attendees

Selena Gray (SG) – WENP Chair
Matthew Heard (MH) – Natural England
Zoe Willcox (ZW) – Bristol City Council
Cllr Nicola Beech (NB) – Bristol City Council
Philip Anderson (PA) standing in for Patricia Greer – WECA & LEP
Heather Elgar (HE) – WENP Manager

Apologies

Dominic Mellon (DM)
Ian Barrett (IB)

Minutes

SG opened the meeting, noted apologies and welcomed new Board members ZW and NB.

Restoring Nature (HE in absence of IB)

Environmental Data Review:

- WENP has commissioned an independent Environmental Data review on the needs for and provision of environmental data in the West of England.
- Workshop held on 20 November to explore shared vision and challenges to getting there. Working 'destination statement':
Stakeholders have a shared vision with agreed targets & priorities. Collection, management, analysis & presentation of data are efficient & effective. Good data infrastructure enables effective data flow. Decision makers fully integrate environmental data into decisions on budgets, planning and community engagement (all sectors). These decisions then protect and enhance the natural environment. People value and better understand the natural environment and the data informing the decisions.
- Public online survey is now live for consultation with wider stakeholders. In-depth interviews will be held with ~20 key stakeholders.
- Final report with recommendations planned for February 2018.
- MH noted that this should explore linkages with Natural England Strategic Licensing Projects.

Action: HE to share ToR with NB

State of Environment:

- HE briefly introduced wider work around State of the Environment and historical background to this work.
- Next phase of this work is to be scoped. Broader scope could be looking at additional metrics, looking at changes over time, and developing indicators on the State of the Environment in the West of England.

Action: HE to scope



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South West LNPs:

- Proposal shared with South West LNPs earlier this year to expand WENP's ecosystem services mapping methodology across the region. While other LNPs are generally in agreement that a wider, shared methodology is beneficial, funding is a challenge, and there has been no progression yet on this proposal.

Action: HE to reengage

Lawton Group:

- This is a new WENP working group, which builds on the work of the previous Iconic Landscapes & Wildlife working group and the Lawton principles of 'bigger, better, more, joined up'. Aim of the group is to bring NGO network together (plus a representative for UAs) to agree on the conservation priorities and best opportunities for landscape restoration and enhancement in the West of England, taking a landscape-scale and evidence-based approach.
- The group will next meet in December or January (TBC).
- Need to take forward a strategy for the Severnside Nature Improvement Area (NIA). MH noted that the NIA designation, which aims to take a wider ecosystem approach to conservation, in practice comes with little consequence, and that we need to evolve our thinking on how to best take forward the NIA concept in the region. There are several layers of existing conservation efforts in the Severnside region – our focus should be to join these efforts, as well as ensure alignment with planning for the Severn Enterprise Area.
- ZW commented that we may need to involve more than one UA representative in this work.
- SG agreed that we need to ensure we are involving the right people who have & use the local data (i.e. UAs).

Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership (BACP):

- HE attended recent workshops held by the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership. Workshops reviewed all current, planned and prospective projects across the catchment, with the aim to take a strategic view on priorities, opportunities to better connect projects, and opportunities to upscale projects.
- Key takeaway for WENP is to ensure BACP's evidence base and priorities are fed into the joint GI Plan process as appropriate.

Adaptation and Resilience Framework:

- The Framework, coordinated by Wessex Water, aims to ensure climate change adaptation and resilience is effectively embedded into local plans. HE mentioned that WENP are connected with this work.

Spatial Planning (ZW)

JSP & Joint GI Plan:

- JSP published previous day for public consultation.
- Green Infrastructure (GI) embedded in Policy 5 around place-making. Four UAs have committed to a joint GI plan.
- Focus now is on getting the JSP through the Inquiry – ensuring sufficient evidence to be able to robustly defend the Plan.



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- Regarding GI, a Project Initiation Document (PID) is currently being developed for the joint GI plan; this should identify the required work packages and timeframes for delivery of evidence to support the JSP growth and wider Plan objectives. The PID is expected to be circulated in December.
- SG commented that the GI plan should be ambitious and be specific about how it will protect, enhance and mitigate.
- NB noted we need to consider timeframes according to the realistic delivery of site developments – for example, some sites are predicated on transport infrastructure being built first.
- ZW commented that Bristol City Council (BCC) is looking at applying Private Open Space standards to urban living. HE felt an opportunity to tie this into WENP's Green Access mapping work.
- Action: Need to tie in WENP's work around data (Environmental Data Review and the Lawton Group) with the joint GI plan, to ensure we're working with the best datasets and agreed priorities.

Action: WENP to respond to JSP consultation

Action: HE to looking into linking BCC's ANGST mapping with WoE Green Access mapping

Responding to strategic consultations and planning applications:

- HE noted that part of WENP's work plan is to respond to consultations and planning applications where appropriate and strategic.
- ZW and NB raised concern on whose behalf is WENP responding – a response could potentially conflict with a response lodged e.g. from BCC or another UA.
- MH commented that this concern has been raised historically but never resolved.
- NB suggested more beneficial to influence via direct engagement with planners and stakeholders rather than a formal response via online consultation.

Economic Development (PA in absence of LA)

WECA Update:

- PA provided an update on WECA's strategy development.
- From public consultation over the Summer on WECA strategy discussion paper, critique included insufficient featuring of the environment, climate change and air quality.
- LA has noted letter from WENP regarding the strategy discussion paper. WENP and WECA to meet to discuss WENP's suggestion of an Environment Plan.
- Pending government Industrial Strategy could further shape WECA's strategy.
- SG raised example of London Environment Strategy, which interlinks air pollution, green space, zero carbon and circular economy, and whether there is appetite from WECA to do something similar.

Action: HE to arrange meeting with LA and SG

Natural Capital Trust (HE):

- Now at testing phase of the Natural Capital Trust (NCT) mechanism. This involves interviews with developers (to determine market acceptance) and Pioneer projects (to determine replicability), a Secondment to retrospectively test the mechanism against historic planning applications, and a developer workshop in the new year (to determine wider market acceptance).
- ZW commented that mechanism needs to 'grow the pot' rather than be another way of deciding how to split the same pot. How do we design such mechanisms to ensure that the environment and social housing needs are not 'competing'? How do we drive more value from the land?



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- NB noted there is potential to tie in with and learn from Shelter campaign for better and more affordable homes, which argues that more money ultimately needs to be in the system.

AOB

Away Day:

- SG proposed that the Board should have an Away Day, to think about what WENP's priorities are, and how to best measure that we're making a difference.
- Agreed 11th January.
- ZW suggested that the Steering Group should also be invited.

Action: HE to arrange Away Day

Board Membership:

- SG proposed that Board membership could be bigger and broader. For example, landowners and developers are not currently represented.

Action: All Board members to think about - to pick up on the Away Day

Steering Group Membership:

- SG proposed inviting Richard Cresswell, Chair of the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership, to the Steering Group, to help more closely align the work of the partnerships.
- NB suggested consideration to be given to representation from a wider range of interest groups and those that represent urban GI interests, e.g. Parks Forum.

Action: SG to invite Richard Cresswell to the Steering Group

Action: All Board members to consider representation at Steering Group and on Board at Away Day

Looking Ahead:

- MH mentioned, around context of upcoming 25 Year Environment Plan and trend towards greater devolution of environmental responsibilities, that it would be prudent to have a discussion around future governance and funding.
- It was suggested an external facilitator would be most effective.

Action: HE and SG to think about how to facilitate such discussion