

Terms of Reference (Revised September 2018)

1. WENP OVERVIEW

- 1.1 Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs), a key commitment from the 2011 Government White Paper *'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature'*, are partnerships of a broad range of organisations, businesses and people, tasked with taking a strategic overview of the local natural environment. The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) gained formal recognition as an LNP in 2012.
- 1.2 **WENP's vision is:** A secure, healthy and improving natural environment in the West of England.
- 1.3 **WENP's mission is:** To create and coordinate a strategic plan for the restoration of the natural environment within the West of England region, and to work with our partners to integrate planning for nature and the environment into current and future strategies for spatial planning, economic development and public health and wellbeing.
- 1.4 WENP covers the four Unitary Boundaries of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; the area known as the West of England.

2. WENP STRUCTURE

In order to deliver its vision, WENP is structured as follows:

- 2.1 **The Board** is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and development of the work programme, establishing working groups as needed. Members also provide advocacy and leadership in influencing decision making in the areas where they are active;
- 2.2 **Working Groups** are established to deliver specific aspects of the work programme, and are instigated by the Board; and
- 2.3 **The Stakeholder Forum** is made up of all organisations and individuals wishing to engage with the work of WENP. It is used as a basis to share and receive information and ideas related to WENP's work programme.

The roles and responsibilities of these different groups are further outlined through this document.

3. THE BOARD

The multi-disciplinary Board will comprise senior decision-makers and leaders, including those providing financial or in-kind resources to WENP. They will provide advocacy and connectivity to key sectors, or policy areas, which WENP seeks to influence. The Board will agree and oversee WENP's strategic direction and priorities, by setting and overseeing the delivery of the work programme. The Board will inform, influence and advise at a strategic level on matters relating to the environment and public policy in order to place the natural environment at the heart of decision making in the region. The Board will convene four times a year.

3.1 Board Membership

Membership of the Board will consist of representatives from the following:

1. An independent Chair;
2. A representative of each of the four Unitary Authorities;
3. A representative of Heads of Planning, to be reviewed on an annual basis (who commits to keeping other Heads of Planning well informed on the relevant activities of WENP);
4. The CEO, or other Board nominee, of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
5. A representative of the West of England Combined Authority, who may also be the LEP representative;
6. An agreed representative of all four Directors of Public Health (who commits to keeping other Directors of Public Health well informed on the relevant activities of WENP, and ensures WENP activity is raised where relevant at Health and Wellbeing Boards);
7. A representative from the NHS Sustainability Transformation Partnership;
8. One senior representative from one of DEFRA's bodies; Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency;
9. A representative of the environmental NGO that hosts WENP;
10. Two representatives of other key environmental NGOs in the West of England;
11. The Chair of the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership;
12. The Director of the Natural History Consortium; and
13. A representative of Wessex Water.

The WENP Manager will also be in attendance.

The leads of working groups, if not represented above, will be invited to meetings as appropriate while such groups are active. Representatives of other organisations and sectors may also be invited to attend meetings as appropriate to the agenda.

3.2 Board Functions and Protocols

The Board members will support WENP by:

- Leading on the strategic direction of WENP's work programme, agreeing the work programme and ensuring its implementation;
- Convening working groups as necessary to deliver the work programme, and setting objectives for these;
- Supporting the delivery of specific tasks within the work programme;
- Acting as a gateway for government initiatives (at the national, regional and local level), and developing and prioritising funding opportunities that align with the WENP work programme;
- Providing support to campaigns that WENP or individual partners may be developing if there is general consensus to do so and they are in line with the WENP strategy;
- Seeking to ensure that WENP's position is considered in major developments within the West of England region by influencing key planning and other relevant decisions at strategic intervention points within their own organisations and the wider community as appropriate;
- Work alongside health partners to identify and deliver opportunities to promote the benefits of the natural environment for health and wellbeing;
- Representing WENP and communicating with wider stakeholders; and

- Identifying funding opportunities and supporting proposals that could help progress the ambitions of WENP.

Decisions regarding core WENP funding (and not funds restricted to projects) beyond day-to-day budget management will be made by the host and financial funders of WENP rather than the full Board.

3.3 Operational Arrangements

To ensure the Board's time together is used for maximum impact and the Board is fully accountable to the wider Partnership the following operational arrangements have been agreed:

- Each Board member will represent the views of the Partnership and not just their organisation at Board meetings;
- Board members will champion the work of WENP at public meetings, events and conferences as and when necessary;
- Actions taken by the Board should be made in the interest of WENP's agreed priorities; and
- Organisations or sectors represented on the Board must ensure that an appropriate representative attends Board meetings; nominated representatives may attend meetings where this will be of value.

In relation to the Board, the WENP Manager will:

- Send out meeting agenda and papers at least one week in advance; and
- Write up minutes and ensure they are made publicly available via the WENP website.

3.4 Accountability and Interests

Board members have the right to abstain from supporting WENP on specific matters that may be considered to represent a conflict of interest, or where an organisation may benefit by influencing a certain direction. If a member of the Board has any direct or indirect conflict of interest or relationship with any individual or organisation, this must be declared so that the Board can take appropriate action to manage the conflict. Board members must disclose any conflicts and add them to the Register of Interest, reviewed at least annually.

Any confidential interests should be declared to the Chair prior to the discussion.

The Board will consult the wider Stakeholder Forum on the work programme and will hold an annual event for stakeholders where updates on progress will be provided. This information will also be available via the website.

4. WORKING GROUPS

Working groups will be established to deliver specific tasks as identified by the Board. They may be short term task and finish groups, providing technical input, or have a longer term role in delivering practical programmes and strategic initiatives.

Working groups provide an opportunity for wider stakeholder to engage with, and help meet, WENP's strategic objectives by providing support and expertise on specific issues.

4.1 Working Group Functions and Protocols

- The scope of each working group will depend on the particular issues under consideration, but will be focused on delivery of a specific output. Working groups may be disbanded once the output has been delivered; and

- Each working group will assign a lead who will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the group's outputs, reporting back to the Board and providing any relevant information for the WENP website.

5. WIDER STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The wider Stakeholder Forum includes all organisations and individuals that have an influence or impact on the environment and wish to engage with WENP's work.

The WENP Forum, usually in the form of an Annual Conference, brings together these individuals and organisations to contribute to WENP's work and to help ensure that positive impacts for the environment are being successfully delivered. The Forum will meet at least once a year and will be open to all organisations and individuals that have provided their details with a view to being kept informed of WENP's work.

The wider Stakeholder Forum will be kept informed of WENP's activities through a regularly updated website, social media and e-newsletters.

The WENP Forum is an opportunity for stakeholders to:

- Suggest ideas regarding the strategic direction of WENP;
- Comment on progress of the Partnership;
- Network to improve partnership working across sectors for the benefit of the local environment;
- Link the work and deliver of the wider Partnership to WENP's priorities; and
- Propose projects which may contribute to the work programme so as to identify the most effective areas for coordinating partnership working.

6. STAFF AND GOVERNANCE

6.1 The Independent Chair

The Partnership Chair will be appointed on a three-year basis. The post will be publicly advertised and appointed through a transparent selection panel comprising at least two Board members. Re-appointment to the same post for a second term may be considered subject to evidence of an appropriate standard of performance having been achieved. The function of the Chair will be to:

- Work with the Board and stakeholders to coordinate a coherent vision for WENP's work;
- Chair meetings of the WENP Board;
- Work with the WENP Manager to ensure coordination of WENP's work programme;
- Champion WENP and build support for the aims and priorities of the wider Partnership;
- Influence local decision making relating to the natural environment, and provide advice and guidance to relevant sectors, organisations and policy makers promoting the economic and social benefits of the environment;
- Act as a spokesperson and represent WENP at appropriate events, meetings or functions; and
- Provide sign-off for WENP responses to consultations on behalf of the vision and objectives of the Partnership.

6.2 Partnership Manager

The Partnership Manager has the important task of the day-to-day management and coordination of all of the activities associated with the partnership. They are the main point of contact for the Board and Working Groups and provide coordination to enable them to function in the most effective manner. The Manager will also be an ambassador for WENP, representing the Partnership at external meetings, talks and presentations.

The post will be employed and hosted by Avon Wildlife Trust, by agreement from the funding partners. This may be subject to change in the future. The Partnership Manager will manage the WENP budget hosted on WENP's behalf by Avon Wildlife Trust, and any further staff working on behalf of WENP.

7. WENP DOCUMENTATION

Board minutes, published papers, key consultation responses and core documentation will be accessible via the WENP website to give the wider Partnership an opportunity to comment on the strategic matters being discussed.

7.1 Resources and Intellectual Property

WENP is established as an independent voluntary partnership, without formal legal status. As such, the Partnership cannot hold or expend funds itself. Where activities are supported by WENP, they will be led by other organisations best placed to do so. Grants and funding secured to resource a specific task will be held and expended by a nominated member of the Partnership. This nominated member will be accountable to the WENP Board and will report annually on the budget spend and provide appropriate financial reporting as requested.

Similarly, any data or intellectual property of the Partnership will be held by a nominated member which will be accountable to the WENP Board regarding its accessibility, use and distribution. From time to time, WENP may wish to endorse the work of other organisations or partnerships. Any endorsements must be relevant to the themes of WENP's work programme and agreed by the Board.

7.2 Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure appropriateness for WENP's strategy.

The Board will monitor the performance of WENP and the delivery of its aims and objectives, ensuring that WENP remains effective and relevant to local needs.