

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER PLANNING**APPLICATION TO DEFRA FOR LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP STATUS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on progress to deliver the Local Nature Partnerships element of the Natural Environment White Paper.
2. To seek approval for the County Council to support the submission of an application to DEFRA to establish the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership.

Information and Advice

3. The Government has stated that it wants this generation to be the first to leave the natural environment in a better condition than it inherited and in June 2011 it published the Natural Environment White Paper, *"The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature"*, outlining its vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years. The mission to 2020 is to *"halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people"*.
4. The White Paper recognises the value of the natural environment in supporting economic regeneration, improving public health and wellbeing, giving improved educational outcomes, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, helping climate change adaptation, and providing vital 'ecosystem services' such as atmospheric, climatic and hydrological regulation, nutrient cycling, soil formation, pest control and pollination.
5. However, the White Paper also highlights that nature is often taken for granted and that the services and benefits it provides are undervalued, particularly in conventional economic assessments and during decision-making. It states that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing, and that action needs to be taken across sectors rather than by treating environmental issues in isolation.
6. The Government recognises that effective action is best achieved through a partnership approach, and wants local authorities to work through partnerships, linking national environmental priorities to local circumstances. To this end, it is encouraging and supporting the creation of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) which will work at a strategic scale, demonstrating local leadership, raising awareness about the vital services and benefits that a healthy natural

environment brings, and contributing to the green economy. Such partnerships will work alongside Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards and actively engage with other sectors and organisations not traditionally associated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

7. A one-off fund of £1 million has been provided by the Government to fund capacity-building work to develop the broadened agenda required by the new LNP approach. A successful joint bid was made to this funding pot by organisations within Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (including both County Councils, both Wildlife Trusts, and both Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships), for the development of a 'Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership'. A total of 47 bids covering most of the country were successful, including neighbouring bids from Lincolnshire, the Humber Estuary, the Peak District and South Yorkshire.
8. The capacity-building funding has supported a series of events in April and May with key organisations from the business, community, education, environment, health and land management sectors. These events have explored areas of shared interest and helped to identify both the potential mutual benefits of forming an LNP and some of the key strategic objectives.
9. DEFRA has now written to all the potential LNPs inviting the submission of applications to formally establish the Partnerships. It has also indicated that there will be a single round of applications in June 2012 and that Government intends to announce the successful Local Nature Partnerships in early summer.
10. It is anticipated that, having considered the outcomes of the development work, the partners in Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire will have reached a decision on whether they wish to submit an application to DEFRA by the end of May. Approval is, therefore, sought for the County Council to support the submission of an application to formally establish a Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership.

Other Options Considered

11. The County Council could choose not to support the submission of an application to DEFRA. The County Council is, however, one of the leading partners in the current work arising from the Natural Environment White Paper and has taken the lead role in the development work for the Local Nature Partnership. If the County Council does not support an application, the remaining partners could still choose to submit one but it is considered unlikely that they will do so.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. Key messages arising from the events with the business, community, education, environment, health and land management sectors were that a Local Nature Partnership could offer the opportunity to deliver benefits across sectors and at a greater scale than is achievable through existing county-based environmental partnerships. The potential to identify and overcome barriers to action; share evidence, expertise and experience; and provide strategic support to communities were also consistent themes. The identification of the potential added value of a

Local Nature Partnership by cross-sectoral partners has informed the recommendation to support an application to DEFRA for formal establishment of a partnership.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

The Government has indicated that it expects Local Nature Partnerships to be self-sustaining and it is, therefore, anticipated that all work associated with a Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire LNP would be contained within the existing resources of the partners.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) To note progress to deliver the Local Nature Partnerships element of the Natural Environment White Paper.
- 2) To approve County Council support for the submission of an application to DEFRA to establish the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership.

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Conservation Team Manager (0115 969 6508)**

Constitutional Comments (SHB.15.05.12)

14. Committee has power to decide the Recommendation.

Financial Comments (DJK 15.05.12)

15. The contents of this report are duly noted; any costs arising from formation of a Nottinghamshire LNP would need to be contained within the existing Conservation Revenue budget for 2012/13.

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All