

Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership

Business Plan 2014-16

This is the first Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Business Plan. It identifies the LNP's key drivers, priorities and areas of focus, including an indicative timetable of key projects.

This Business Plan is a living document, and will be updated as and when required.

Document Details: Final approved
Status: v1
Date: 09 March 2016
Document Location: http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/partnership/info/11/local_nature_partnership/10/worcestershire_local_nature_partnership
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Background and Purpose

The Worcestershire LNP evolved from the long-standing Worcestershire Partnership Environment Group. One of 48 across England, the LNP was formally recognised by government in September 2012, with the purpose of working at a strategic 'landscape' scale. The LNP brings together a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people to deliver improvements in their local natural environment.

Who we are

The LNP comprises senior representatives from the public, private and third sectors, including professional environmental and land managers. Its broad membership provides the LNP with expertise in developing strategies, planning projects, securing funding and delivering successful outcomes on the ground. The membership includes representatives specialising in biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and design, planning, flood risk, the historic environment, access and recreation, energy, carbon reduction, forestry, agriculture, transport and economic development.

How we work

The LNP promotes open and honest dialogue within and beyond the environmental sector, making linkages to secure environmental and social gains and supporting economic growth. Partnership working is central to the success of the LNP, the structure of which focuses expertise and resources on our priorities. More detail can be found in the LNP's terms of reference.

Priorities

The LNP's overarching priorities are to improve performance in three thematic areas: biodiversity, water, and climate change. Recognising the priorities' strong inter-dependencies, the LNP is well-placed to make links between partners and working practices to effect positive change. Priorities are reviewed every two years according to policy and evidence (from, among other sources, the Biological Records Centre and Geological Records Centre and from the LNP's State of the Environment report), taking account of the LNP's ability, directly and through others, to influence change.

Objectives

Informed by our priorities, the following objectives help focus the LNP's resources:

- Support the Worcestershire LEP's sustainable economic growth ambitions¹;
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity, and the built environment;
- Promote effective management of flood risk and natural resources;
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- Support Green Infrastructure and its integration into strategic development sites;
- Promote LNP achievements nationally and collaborate with other LNPs;
- Work with Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP on LNP issues of mutual interest.

Areas of focus for 2014-16

The main operational areas of focus for 2014/16 are specific projects capable of delivering the greatest gains, and on which the greatest resources will be focussed. These will run alongside our 'standard' business of developing partnerships, raising the environmental profile, and working on short-term, specific initiatives.

- Supporting strategic sites

As part of the LNP's commitment to maximising the environmental benefits of economic growth in Worcestershire, we will work closely with the WLEP and local authorities to support housing and employment development, with a particular emphasis on the county's economic 'game-changer' sites. The LNP helps to bring together developers and statutory agencies through green infrastructure guidance, leading to a better quality and faster planning application process.

- Delivering landscape-scale green infrastructure in Worcestershire

The LNP will be identifying one or more specific geographic areas in which to deliver landscape-scale environmental enhancement project. This will allow efforts to be focussed over a strategic area, working with partners, landowners, and businesses to investigate on-the-ground sustainable resource use and explore how to best develop the environmental economy. The project will link directly to the WLEP's Strategic Economic Plan and will include a bid for WLEP and HLF funding to maximise environmental gain.

- Acting on climate change

Providing a local response to a global challenge, the LNP is co-ordinating Worcestershire's CO2 reduction programmes to capture the economic and social benefits of minimising emissions and adapting to a changing climate. The LNP will help to shape an overarching Green Deal/Energy Company Obligation programme, leading to direct expenditure in the local economy. In partnership with the county and district councils, LNP members will seek to make best use of EU funds for social housing and other funding to deliver climate change actions. Joint working between the LNP's Climate Change Group and the WLEP will help to ensure climate change remains a cross-cutting driver across Worcestershire.

¹ The Worcestershire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan and EU Structural Investment Fund Strategy provide the context for the WLNP and WLEP relationship and future delivery.

- Woodland Enterprise Zones

The LNP will work to extend the opportunity afforded by the Marches Woodland Enterprise Zone to the Wyre Forest, so that the benefits of this innovative project are felt in Worcestershire. A collaborative, cross-border project in partnership with the Worcestershire and Marches LEPs would help to identify and ultimately realise the value of local woodland and timber, bringing forward the potential of the Wyre Forest to contribute to economic growth.

Funding

The LNP is non-statutory and receives no core funding, but has the potential to influence the multi-million pound budgets and resources of its combined membership, and is increasingly the route through which environmental bids for significant European funding are developed and submitted. LNP members commit to providing staff time and in-kind support to the partnership, as necessary.

Reporting mechanisms

Task-and-finish groups take forward each area of focus, with progress reported quarterly at full LNP meetings. The LNP's autonomous status means it does not report directly to any other body, but rather has the freedom to deliver actions and determine its own way of working. The LNP does, however, provide reports and updates to DEFRA as requested, and each member is committed to reporting relevant LNP business to their respective organisation. This is guided by close co-operation with other bodies, especially the WLEP and local authorities, to ensure delivery against the areas of focus is realistic and achievable.

Future Opportunities

As the LNP develops, opportunities will be sought to consolidate its position as Worcestershire's primary environmental voice through influence and exchange with our partners. To maintain and develop positive action, the LNP has set out an indicative two-year work programme at the end of this document which sets out the potential benefits of taking forward a range of actions.

Indicative work programme 2014-16

Objective	Work area	Delivery / progress	Dates	Delivery bodies	Finance
Support Worcestershire's sustainable economic growth	Work with WLEP and GBSLEP Protocol Panel to ensure effective integration of sustainability where appropriate	- Maintain regular WLNP/WLEP liaison	Ongoing	WLEP, WLNP	TBC
	Work with WLEP on the SEP/EUSIFS Implementation Plan to integrate and embed sustainability from policy and programmes to project delivery.	- Complete Local Environment & Economic Dev't Toolkit Phase 1 (awareness raising) with WLEP	Sept 2013	WLEP, WLNP	TBC
		- Complete LEED Phase 2 (detailed opportunities)	Feb 2014	WLEP, WLNP	TBC
	Support the development of WLEP's priority Agri-Food, Horticulture, Agriculture and Forestry sector.	- Co-ordinate SEP/EU SIP environmental initiatives and assist in project selection process	Aug 2013	WLEP, WLNP	TBC
	Support sustainable growth of the county's tourism sector.	- Establish partnership agreement with WLEP; develop Sustainability Implementation framework for delivery	Dec 2013 onwards	WLEP, WLNP	TBC
		- Advise WLEP Planning & Dev't group on sustainability	Ongoing	WLEP/WLNP	TBC
Support Green Infrastructure and its integration into strategic development sites	Promote and support the WLEP Strategic Economic Plan's ' <i>Sustainable Sites and Premises</i> ' and ' <i>Infrastructure</i> ' programmes, focussing on resource management, and supporting multiple economic gains through effective GI planning/delivery on game-changer sites.	- Co-ordinate delivery of landscape-scale projects in the Vale of Evesham and Wyre Forest	Dec 2013	WLNP	LEP, HLF, TBC
		- Contribute to Worcester Tech. Park and Redditch Eastern Gateway game-changer site GI Concept Plans	Summer 2014	WLNP, WLEP, LPAs	TBC
	Mainstream GI into the planning and development process and promote best practice across the county.	- Engage pro-actively with strategic site developers, including at Worcester South	Ongoing	WLNP, LPAs, Developers	TBC
		- Support development/delivery of Minerals Local Plan	2013-on	WLNP, WCC	TBC
		- Adopt the Worcs. Green Infrastructure Strategy	Summer 2014	WLNP, WLEP Worcs. GI P'ship	TBC
Promote LNP achievements nationally and collaborate with other LNPs	Maintain linkages with adjoining/other relevant LNPs to share best practice.	- Join virtual network of LNPs	Dec 2013	WLNP, DEFRA	TBC
	Increase web presence to provide info/signposting.	- Develop streamlined website and shared information on partner sites	End of 2014	WLNP, WCC	TBC

Promote effective management of flood risk and natural resources	Ensure environmental partners and WLEP take account of Worcestershire's environmental resource sensitivities.	- Develop EU SIF projects	2014-15	WLNP, WLEP	TBC
		- Deliver EU SIF projects	2014-15	WLNP, WLEP	TBC
	Identify projects to support natural resource management, including taking forward the Marches Woodland Enterprise Zone.	- Support the Minerals Local Plan process and policies to develop an integrated natural resources package	Late 2014	WLNP, WLEP	TBC
		- Support development and implementation of the Flood Risk Mgt Strategy and Surface Water Mgt Plan	2014-15	WCC, WLNP	TBC
Work with Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP on LNP issues of mutual interest	Work with GBSLEP to ensure effective integration of WLEP and WLNP proposals where appropriate.	- Attend GBSLEP Spatial Planning meetings	Monthly	WLNP	TBC
		- Monitor GBSLEP Spatial Plan and advise GBSLEP on implications for Worcestershire	Ongoing	WLNP, WLEP, GBSLEP	TBC
Mitigate and adapt to climate change	Understand impact of climate change on key infrastructure.	- Adopt Worcs. Climate Change strategy and take forward actions in partnership	TBC	WLNP	EU funds, DECC,
	Develop an integrated programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	- Work with WLEP to secure renewable energy & green economy support in SEP programmes/priorities	TBC	WLNP, WLEP	TBC
	Work with WLEP to maximise opportunities for sustainable growth of renewable energy/green economy.	- Work with WLEP to maximise opportunities for joint action on climate change	TBC	WLNP, WLEP	TBC
Protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity, and the built environment	Maximise funding opportunities, including those from the New Environmental Land Management Scheme.	- Integrate Environmental Character Areas approach to funding streams	2014	WLNP	TBC
	Roll out biodiversity offsetting approach across county.	- Develop integrated package	By end of 2015	WLNP	TBC
	Identify opportunities to protect and enhance key biodiversity and geodiversity sites and habitats for their own sake and to support economic growth.	- Develop our approach	2015	WLNP	TBC