

Link2Nature: Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Partnership (WSLNP)Board Meeting Minutes

**Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 – 9am–11am**  
**Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Office, Devizes**

**1. Present:**

**Hugo Brooke (HB)** – Trustee, Butterfly Conservation  
**Stephen Davis, (SD)** – Head of Conservation Policy, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust  
**Fleur de Rhe-Philipe (FdRP)** – Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Strategic Planning Wiltshire Council (WC) [Representing the Swindon & Wiltshire LEP]  
**Gerry Hamersley (GH)** – Area Manager, Natural England  
**Gary Mantle (GM)** – Director, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (Chair, WSLNP)  
**Philippa Read (PR)** - Chief Executive, Community First  
**Bill Blumsom (BB)** – WSLNP Coordinator

<b>Abbreviations used within this document:</b>	
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
LAG	Local Action Group
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
WSLNP	Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Partnership
SWLEP	Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
GI	Green Infrastructure
MOD	Ministry Of Defence
NE	Natural England
WWT	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
NIA	Nature Improvement Area
JSA	Joint Strategic Assessment
EU	European Union
WC	Wiltshire Council
<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>1. Welcome and Apologies</b>  GM welcomed those present and introductions were made by each individual.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Frances Chinemana (Consultant in Public Health, Wiltshire Council), Hayley Bamborough (Voice and Influence Team, Wiltshire Council), Maggie Rae (Director of Public Health &amp; Public Protection), Steven Waygood (Head of Environment &amp; Chemistry, RWE Npower), Toby Sturgis (Cabinet Member for Waste, Property, Environment &amp; Development Control Services, Wiltshire Council), Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning &amp; Sustainability, Swindon Borough Council), James Sheppard (Vice Chair of Wiltshire NFU).</p>	
<p><b>2. Minutes</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2013 were approved with no amendments.</p>	
<p><b>3. Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> GM had requested thoughts regarding potential additional Board members.</p>	

<p>FdRP had spoken to Piers Hankinson, Brigadier in Charge, 43 Wessex Brigade. The Brigadier has suggested Sue Harper (SH) of the MOD and she has been invited to join the Board. BB will follow this up with SH.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> GM again requested board members to consider other potential board members and feedback to BB any suggestions. BB will also complete a matrix showing current Board Membership, any gaps in particular sectors, skills, knowledge and experience covered and attendance to date of existing members.</p> <p><b>ACTION: BB to contact Sue Harper and complete Board membership matrix. ALL to provide further suggestions for possible board members.</b></p>	<p><b>BB</b></p> <p><b>All BB</b></p>
<p><b>4. EU Strategic Investment Fund Strategy / Environmental Investment Prospectus</b></p> <p>4.1 BB gave a brief update on progress in engaging with the SWLEP. The LNP had recently held a workshop which members of the LEP and LNP partners had attended. Those at the workshop had been able to discuss both the Environmental Investment Prospectus (EIP) drafted by the LNP and the ESIF (previously EU SIF) draft strategy and provide comments and ideas for both. BB has now distributed the output of the workshop to attendees, the SWLEP and other interested parties unable to attend. BB has also attended the first Rural Development Workshop and will be attending a further one after the Board Meeting and also the final meetings of the five ESIF Task and Finish Groups which were being held in late December.</p> <p>4.2 FdRP gave a short update on the first Rural Development Group which she had also attended and said it had been a very lively meeting. The main focus had been on immediate economic growth and there was some concern expressed by members of the Group that the approach was too short-term. A Rural Development sub-group has been set up, which BB is part of, to take discussions further.</p> <p>4.3 GH expressed concern that the LNP had not had any input into the Strategic Economic Plan, which is being developed alongside the ESIF Strategic Plan. FdRP explained that deadlines were extremely tight and that this plan was being written by the secretariat as a joint effort with a draft due early next week (wc 16<sup>th</sup> Dec). GM asked if it would be possible for the LNP to have sight of the draft and be able to input and FdRP took an action to speak to Isabelle Brown (IB) about this. FdeRP also undertook to ensure that the papers from the LNP are fed directly into the LEP and to ask for the Environmental Investment Prospectus (EIP) to be placed on the next LEP Agenda. The LNP would be happy to provide somebody to discuss the Prospectus at the meeting if required.</p> <p>4.4 The draft EIP that BB had prepared was then discussed in more detail by the Board. GM and the board felt it read well and should be provided to the team drafting the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and also those working on the ESIF. FdeRP to pass on the paper to the SEP team and BB to pass the paper on to the ESIF team. An action was agreed for absent board members comments on the EIP to be sought and subject to any additional comments the board was happy to approve the EIP for wider use and circulation.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS: FdRP to speak to IB regarding LNP seeing draft SEP. FdRP to pass on EIP to LEP and add to LEP Board agenda for discussion. LNP to possibly present at LEP Board. BB to pass EIP onto ESIF team.</b></p>	<p><b>FdRP</b></p> <p><b>FdeRP BB All</b></p>

<p><b>5. Designation of Nature Improvement Areas (NIA's)</b></p> <p>5.1 SD gave a short overview of the paper arising from the work of the Biodiversity Workgroup and explained the vision, conclusions and recommendations within the paper.</p> <p>5.2 GH expressed the concern that some of the suggested areas were perhaps too large, in particular the Thames /Braydon Forest area and may be difficult for landowners and the public to identify with.</p> <p>5.3 GM felt that the vision needed to be reframed, as a vision for nature conservation, in the context of Landscape Scale Conservation Areas. NIAs are one mechanism for delivery of conservation goals and objectives. , This would enable definition of future NIAs to be tighter.</p> <p>5.4 It was also felt that the current Salisbury Plain area shown on the map was too extensive and should be matched with the Plain Action boundaries. A pragmatic approach would be to work closely with the Plain Action group for delivery of this particular NIA.</p> <p>5.5 The Board were happy with the sentiments in the vision and also happy with the longer term aims. Next steps were approved as was the vision document subject to more editing and refining in line with the points made above.</p> <p><b>ACTION: BB /SD to refine Vision and plan next steps.</b></p>	<p><b>BB / SD</b></p>
<p><b>6. Community Asset Transfers</b></p> <p><b>6.1</b> FdeRP gave a short update and explained that the Legal department were currently extremely busy with the current workload of Asset Transfers. She explained that it is the role of Area Boards to put forward bids for any potential Community Asset Transfers.</p> <p><b>6.2</b> GM sought clarification on the approach to this asking, whether a strategic or tactical approach was most appropriate depending on what bids were received from Area Boards. A hypothetical example was given by GM regarding the County's country parks and Gary asked how country parks would be treated; whether as a collective group (in a strategic manner) or one by one (on a case by case basis). FdeRP stated that initially Town Councils would be approached as it was felt that a local approach would ensure engagement and ownership within the local community near any park. GM added that often initially such transfers looked attractive but once costs were identified organisations often withdrew.</p> <p><b>6.3</b> GM felt it would be helpful if the LNP was informed about proposed major changes regarding Community assets and was made aware of any proposals at the earliest possible stage.</p> <p><b>6.4</b> FdeRP stated that thus far proposals had been based on organisations that had come forward and approached the Council to ask what was possible. Wiltshire is so large geographically that those local community solutions were thought to offer the best options for the future.</p> <p><b>6.5</b> GM indicated that he was aware elsewhere in the country of large external</p>	

<p>organisations offering to take over all public parks, including new developments, and that this was something the LNP needed to be aware of and keep an eye on any proposals that were made regarding potential Asset Transfers in Wiltshire.</p>	
<p><b>7. Proposed visit by Lord de Mauley</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b> It has now been confirmed that the Minister's visit is scheduled for Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2014. The visit will be for the whole day with half a day with the LNP and half a day with Marlborough Downs NIA, lunch will be taken jointly.</p> <p><b>7.2</b> GM invited thoughts from the board about what we might want to do for the Minister on his visit to show what the LNP was doing to achieve its objectives.</p> <p><b>7.3</b> One suggestion was that we might wish to combine the next Board meeting with the visit to minimise time out of Board members diaries, however it was also suggested that we might want to meet some weeks before the meeting to discuss and plan the event.</p> <p><b>7.4</b> In terms of what we might want to do on the day, one suggestion was that we might wish to do something that illustrates the views expressed in the Environmental Investment Prospectus. One example would be a combined visit to Jones Mill reserve and the Kennet and Avon canal to illustrate how wildlife and the economy were closely linked.</p> <p><b>7.5</b> Board members were actioned to give the meeting further thought and pass suggestions onto GM or BB in early January.</p> <p><b>7.6</b> GM, BB &amp; SD would discuss and seek to generate further ideas for the visit.</p> <p><b>ACTION: All to consider ideas for Ministers visit and pass to GM or BB in early January.</b></p>	<p><b>All</b> <b>BB/GM/SD</b></p>
<p><b>8. Funding of the LNP</b></p> <p><b>8.1</b> Not all the budget holders who had contributed in the past were present. A draft budget for funding for 2014 was given to Board Members.</p> <p><b>8.2</b> A bid had been made to previous funders and a decision was awaited as to what funding would be available. No commitment had been made yet but early indicators were that SBC did not foresee any difficulty. Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire would be looking at the proposal shortly.</p> <p><b>8.3</b> It was suggested that the SWLEP might be willing to provide some funding for the on-going operation of the LNP. FdeRP took an action to raise this possibility at the next LEP Board Meeting and it was agreed that this could be linked with the presentation of the Environmental Investment prospectus.</p> <p><b>Action: FdeRP to take funding proposal to the LEP. GM to make available any information required in support of request.</b></p>	<p><b>FdeRP/GM</b></p>

<p><b>9. Re-structuring of the environmental sector</b></p> <p>9.1 For Wiltshire Council FdRP gave a brief update about the on-going changes. The re-structure is not finalised yet and it still remains to see who is going to be responsible for what. It is not decided for example where Rights of Way will go or who will gain the canals and country parks. FdRP will update the board as the situation becomes clearer.</p> <p>9.2 GH gave an update for the DEFRA family. Overall staff numbers in the Environment Agency will be reducing from 11500 to 9500. It seems that the EA structure is developing as a “three hub” organisation rather than the existing 8 Regions. However, it is envisaged that under each of the hubs there will still be area teams. The changes will take effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 and will include a budget cut. However, there will be no budget cut for flood risk.</p> <p>9.3 GH also advised that Natural England changes back to a “spatial structure” from the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2014. They are currently recruiting Area Managers for 16 Areas. 12 Directors have been appointed (down from 18). Areas will return to a more devolved decision making process. Areas are not finalised or signed off yet but Wiltshire will probably be combined with Somerset and the West of England (Avon).</p> <p>9.4 GM enquired where the hub would be based and GH felt this would be linked to the DEFRA Estate Strategy which would include one base per Area, probably Bristol for Wiltshire.</p> <p>9.5 GH also explained that the Tri-ennial review may result in the development of shared services for all areas such as the HR function. 350 people are being outsourced to the Rural Payments Agency. These are the personnel who administer the HLS scheme. Front-line advisors will remain in place. Overall about 300 people will be lost however there will continue to be a single local point of contact – the Area Manager. Once Area Managers are appointed they will be asked to put there teams together. Teams will be shared across boundaries and team formation will take place from the 1<sup>st</sup> March.</p> <p>9.6 The newly appointed chair of Natural England is Andrew Sells, a north Wiltshire resident (and farmer, amongst a diversity of roles). It was suggested that he might want to join us for the ministerial visit in March was discussed. BB to discuss the possibility of this with GH</p> <p><b>Action: GH to provide note to the board on proposed changes in Defra agencies and also to send the board the Sustainable Development directorate.</b></p>	<p><b>BB</b></p> <p><b>GH</b></p>
<p><b>10. Brief Updates</b></p> <p><b>10.1</b> Small Grants Fund. BB has attended a number of promotional events and spoken to a number of organisations about the fund. Closing date for the next round of applications is the 31<sup>st</sup> December. BB will then pass on applications to the Executive Group and Frances Chinemana for decisions. The fund currently has £2375 remaining.</p> <p><b>10.2</b> Wiltshire Council Green infrastructure Strategy. BB had spoken to Jay Gascoigne who will be finalising the draft GI Strategy in early January. The question of who is responsible for signing off the GI Strategy was discussed as this remains unclear. Elsewhere the LNP has been involved in the sign off process.</p>	

<p>10.3 SD gave a brief update on the Executive Group. All items they have discussed were covered in the above agenda.</p> <p><b>Actions. BB to discuss GI sign-off process with Jon Taylor and Jay Gascoigne and clarify the position.</b></p>	<b>BB</b>
<p><b>Dates of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The dates of the meetings for 2014 need to be agreed as soon as possible. The possibility of holding later meetings was discussed. BB to poll preferences for dates and times via doodle-poll early in New Year.</p> <p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>GH raised the matter of the Natural England LEED Toolkit and confirmed that Craig Lester is pursuing its possible use by the SWLEP.</p> <p><b>Summary of action points</b></p> <p><b>All Board members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider suitable additional Board members</li> <li>• Consider funding options for 2014 and communicate to GM/BB</li> <li>• To pass any comments on the Environmental Investment Prospectus to BB by the 21<sup>st</sup> January</li> <li>• Consider options for Minister's visit on 18<sup>th</sup> March and pass to GM/BB</li> </ul> <p><b>Gary Mantle:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider with BB &amp; SD options for Ministers visit in March.</li> </ul> <p><b>Fleur de Rhe-Philipe :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To speak to Isabelle Brown about requesting the LNP is given sight of the draft Economic Strategy.</li> <li>• To put the LNP Environmental Investment Prospectus on the next LEP Board meeting Agenda and advise if a speaker is required to talk to the LEP Board.</li> <li>• To pass on the EIP to LEP Board and the Strategic Economic Plan Team.</li> <li>• To discuss potential funding for LNP from LEP.</li> </ul> <p><b>Gerry Hammersley:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide note to the Board on proposed changes and the Sustainable Development directorate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Bill Blumsom:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain engagement with LEP and optimise opportunities to influence the ESIF.</li> <li>• Circulate via Doodle Poll and confirm dates of 2014 meetings.</li> <li>• Book venues for next meeting</li> <li>• Contact Sue Harper and confirm that she will join the board in 2014.</li> <li>• Complete Board Membership matrix.</li> </ul>	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree final version of WC MoU and pass onto GM for signature.</li><li>• Collate absent board members feedback on EIP.</li><li>• Revise NIA vision document in line with board comments and plan next steps for NIAs.</li><li>• Clarify GI Strategy sign-off process with JT/JG.</li></ul> |  |
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