



Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Partnership Update (July-Aug 2013)

Board Members: Gary Mantle (Chair, Director Wiltshire Wildlife Trust); Steve Waygood (Head of Environment & Chemistry, RWE npower); Hugo Brooke (Trustee, Butterfly Conservation); Maggie Rae (Director of Public Health & Public Protection); Gerry Hammersley (Area Manager, Natural England); Cllr Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, Swindon Borough Council); Cllr Toby Sturgis (Cabinet Member for Waste, Property, Environment and Development Control Services, Wiltshire Council); Cllr Fleur de Rhe Philippe (Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Transport, Wiltshire Council); Phillippa Read (Chief Executive, Community First) and James Sheppard (Vice-Chair of Wiltshire NFU)

LNP Coordinator: Bill Blumsom

1. Launch of Small Grants Fund

This was launched at the beginning of August via the Link2Nature website and targeted e-mailing to organisations and community groups across the county and Swindon. The first application has been received and further enquiries have been made by a number of organisations which are likely to lead to additional applications.

2. Nature Improvement Areas

A workshop was held on the 1st August, with representatives from a number of organisations with an interest in the identification and development of potential additional NIAs for Wiltshire. A range of possibilities were identified using the established criteria and characteristics for NIAs published by Defra. The next steps will be to circulate the output and complete additional analysis prior to presenting suggestions to the LNP Board at their next meeting on the 1st October. If proposals agreed, a priority for the Autumn will be a much wider round of consultation with organisations and individuals in the proposed NIA areas.

3. Working with the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP to influence the economic growth strategies

Approaches have been made to the LEP in recent months culminating in a meeting with Lorelei Hunt, who is Project Managing for the LEP to develop their European Strategic Investment Strategy. The meeting was extremely productive and informative. A priority over the coming months will be to continue to build the relationship between the LEP and LNP and inform and influence on the environmental aspects of strategy development. Initially, this is likely to be through involvement in the five Task and Finish Groups the LEP will be organising shortly.

4. Preparing a "Environmental Investment Prospectus"

An initial outline of the key strategic investment opportunities has been drafted. It aims to clearly state what it believes the priorities for environmental investment are and is intended as a document that can be used to inform and influence key decision makers and partners and ensure the natural environment is at the centre of all decision making. It will be discussed with the Executive Board on the 27th August and next steps in terms of developing a full investment prospectus will be agreed.

5. Green Infrastructure

Meeting held with the Project Manager tasked with the development of the Wiltshire Council GI Strategy. The LNP and Wiltshire Council will continue to explore opportunities for the LNP to support the development of the strategy. The LNP has reviewed a tool that looks at identifying the value that GI provides and will report back on any future specific support requirements as they are identified.

6. State of the Environment 2013 Report

This is being prepared by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, on behalf of Link2Nature, for publication and launch in September. The LNP will work closely with Jenny Hawley, the author of the report, to support and promote the launch of this important publication for Wiltshire and Swindon.

7. 'Duty to Cooperate' and Memorandum of Understanding with Local Authorities

Revised versions of the above documents have been circulated within Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council respectively and it is planned to finalise and sign these off at the LNP Board Meeting on the 1st October.

8. Communications and Advocacy

The Link2Nature website <http://www.link2nature.org.uk> has been fully updated and will be kept up to date on an on-going basis. A communication was sent to all of the wider "partners" of the LNP advising of the appointment of the new Link2Nature coordinator Bill Blumsom. As well as the links made with various organisations outlined in the paragraphs above meetings have been held with representatives of the National Farmers Union and the New Forest National Park to discuss the work and role of the LNP and areas of common interest. It is intended to broaden networking between the LNP and other organisations considerably over the coming months. If you'd like to know more or get more involved please contact us via the above link2nature website.

Priorities for the future

- Sign off of suggested Nature Improvement Areas(s) and wider consultation prior to formalising creation of any new NIA(s)
- On-going support for LEP, development of working partnership between the LNP and LEP and participation in Task and Finish Groups
- Commission and complete a "Environmental Investment Prospectus for Wiltshire and Swindon"
- On-going support in development of Wiltshire Council Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Support the launch and promotion of State of the Environment 2013 report