



Strategic Plan 2013- 2018

Photo: Barney Wilczak

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www.link2nature.org.uk

Front cover photo- Wildflowers at Clattinger Farm Nature Reserve, Barney Wilczak
Visit WilczakPhotography.co.uk to find out about Barney's beautiful book 'The Meadow: An English Meadow 'Through the Seasons'
illustrating the spectacular wildflowers of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Clattinger Farm nature reserve.

1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

The establishment of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) was proposed in the Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice' published in June 2011. The ambition for LNPs is that they will enable local areas to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value into local decision making. LNPs are expected to help address some of the many challenges ahead, such as adapting to climate change. This will be achieved through identifying, protecting and enhancing local ecological networks and our wider ecosystems at a landscape scale through a partnership approach.

LNPs have been established as part of a national reform to shift power and decision making back to a local level. There is an expectation from Government that LNPs will work closely with the recently formed Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) coordinated by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Health and Wellbeing Boards coordinated by the Department for Health (DH).

Link2Nature was launched on 6th March 2013, and is the formally adopted name of the Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Partnership (WSLNP). During 2011-2012 over 40 organisations and individuals attended meetings and workshops and provided input and support towards the development of Link2Nature. After successfully completing an application process endorsed by DEFRA, Link2Nature was formally recognised by Government on 28 September 2012.

For more information regarding the governance structure of Link2Nature, the mechanisms of how we function and what roles Link2Nature has adopted please refer to the Link2Nature Terms of Reference.

1.2 Vision

“Through strong leadership and strategic direction, Link2Nature will support positive local action to protect, maintain and enhance Wiltshire and Swindon’s natural environment and help to build resilient ecosystems that directly support the health, wellbeing and livelihood of local people”

1.3 Purpose

Link2Nature will be a strategic partnership, identifying and setting clear priorities to achieve practical and sustainable benefits for the natural environment at a local level. Link2Nature will achieve this by working across a range of different sectors to recognise and promote the value of the natural environment in social, economic and environmental terms.

Link2Nature will provide a local voice for the environment and help to identify Wiltshire and Swindon’s future environmental priorities and challenges. Link2Nature will facilitate coordinated decision making to improve communication and partnership working with other sectors, through established local networks such as the Wiltshire Assembly and One Swindon Partnership. Members of Link2Nature will work together to achieve integrated outcomes that will provide a wide range of benefits to our natural environment, ecosystem services and functions.

2. Shared Environmental Priorities

Background

Since January 2012 a wide range of individuals and organisations have been invited to provide feedback and contribute to the development of Link2Nature through a range of consultations, meetings and workshops. The feedback collected to date has provided a shared understanding of the environmental challenges and opportunities facing Wiltshire and Swindon. Link2Nature has used the feedback to guide the development of this shared Strategic Plan. Link2Nature recognises that the priorities summarised below may adapt and change as the environment continues to be affected by the multiple drivers of change, such as population growth, increased development and biodiversity loss.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Wider Forum and Board. The priorities outlined below have been summarised into 5 key priorities that have been repeatedly recognised as issues that the wider forum would like to see Link2Nature address within Wiltshire and Swindon. Link2Nature has used these priorities to identify and shape the main aims and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan.

A brief background is provided below that justifies why Link2Nature has used these 5 priorities to guide and shape the Work Plan that you will find in Section 4 of this document.

Over-arching priorities:

The overall challenge for Link2Nature over the next 5 years is to prioritise how Link2Nature can effectively support positive actions at a local level to safeguard our natural environment. One of the key purposes of this document is to provide the strategic direction required at a local level to support positive change for the local environment, people and economy working in a more integrated and holistic manner.

Link2Nature recognises that the priorities outlined below do not address all of the challenges facing our natural environment. There are many over-arching priorities facing the environment that Link2Nature recognises as being of great importance. Many of these issues are being addressed by other projects and partnerships or are beyond the scope of Link2Nature's influence. Link2Nature will aim to work in a more integrated manner to link up to the organisations and initiatives that are already addressing these priorities:

- **Biodiversity Loss**
- **Water Resource Management**
- **Impacts from Population Growth**
- **Energy conservation and renewable energy take up**
- **Invasive Species**

Link2Nature recognises that there are many environmental priorities that need addressing. The overall rate of development and consumption, and consequent greenhouse gas emissions are already beyond sustainable limits.¹ These pressures point to an uncertain future for biodiversity – the cornerstone of the natural environment – which has already suffered significant declines and is increasingly vulnerable in the context of climate change and unpredictable weather.

Link2Nature recognises that tackling the **loss of biodiversity** at a local level is of paramount importance. However, in order to effectively tackle this challenge, we will need to consider collectively how biodiversity can be protected and restored as a result of the objectives and actions outlined in the Work Plan. By increasing the awareness of biodiversity loss across a wide range of sectors and supporting the shift to sustainable development and land management practices, there is a greater chance of biodiversity being protected and enhanced on a landscape scale.

¹ See *State of the Environment, Wiltshire and Swindon 2012* report on ecological footprint (page 14)

1. Climate Change

Why is this a priority for Link2Nature?

This is the biggest challenge facing the natural environment, and one of the greatest threats to our local economy and society, with temperatures predicted to increase by 3.1-4.1⁰C in Wiltshire by the 2080s (based on medium emission scenarios). Our climate is already changing as a result of increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and further change is now unavoidable. Worryingly, Wiltshire's emissions are significantly higher than national and regional levels. Unusual and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent – as experienced in both the drought and flood events of 2012. Such extreme variability is likely to increase in the future, with significant impacts on our daily lives, our homes, farming and the economy.²

The natural environment is a huge carbon sink if managed appropriately, but can be a huge carbon source if managed inappropriately. It is estimated that 13 million tonnes of carbon is lost from UK soils annually, amounting to approximately 8% of UK carbon emissions in 1990.³

In the long term, our ecosystems are unlikely to be able to keep pace with the unprecedented rate of climate change. This will lead to irreversible and significant changes in our natural environment. Our understanding of the current and future impacts of climate change on our wildlife and ecosystems is limited and requires increased monitoring and research. Yet on the basis of current evidence, there is a clear need for immediate action to conserve wildlife, habitats and ecosystems, to make them more resilient and able to adapt to climate change.⁴

Link2Nature recognises that everybody can do something to help adapt or mitigate to the effects of climate change at a local level. The Work Plan concentrates on improving communications between sectors regarding the challenges that climate change poses. The Work Plan also concentrates on improving our evidence base so that we are better prepared for the changes and are able to make more informed decisions about the best ways to adapt and mitigate to the impacts at a local level. Link2Nature will respond to all of the objectives outlined in the work plan with a consideration as to how we can better adapt and mitigate to climate change.

2. Enhancing Public Health through Access to Nature

Why is this a priority for Link2Nature?

There is a national and local expectation that Local Nature Partnerships will work more collaboratively with the Public Health sector to help address the rising health problems that the UK is facing. Some of the key health issues identified for Wiltshire are currently:

- Obesity- including in children and young people
- Cancer and cardiovascular disease – incidents of CVD are on the increase
- Lifestyle choices - including physical activity and obesity
- Health inequalities – pockets of multiple deprivation with lower life expectancy
- Ageing population – higher incidences of disease in the over 65 age group.⁵

Research has shown that access to green space can help to address all of the issues mentioned above. Link2Nature has used this research to guide the specific objectives outlined in the Work Plan and develop shared objectives with the newly forming Health and Wellbeing Boards in Wiltshire and Swindon. Improving the communication between these sectors will help to provide comparatively cheap and cost effective ways of promoting healthier lifestyles and treating existing conditions. Increased contact with nature also gives people opportunities to learn about and appreciate our natural environment, increasing their motivation to

² Topic paper 1: Climate change, Wiltshire Core Strategy Consultation January 2012, Wiltshire Council (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-core-strategy-topic-paper-1-climate-change-2012-january.pdf>)

³ Bellamy et al, *Nature* 437, 245–248, 2005 (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16148931>)

⁴ England Biodiversity Strategy Climate Change Adaptation Principles, Defra 2008 (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13168-eps-ccap-081203.pdf>)

⁵ Joint Strategic Assessment Wiltshire 2012/13 (www.intelligentenetwork.org.uk/health/jsa-health-and-wellbeing/)

protect and enhance it.⁶ There is also clear evidence that children in particular are suffering through a decline in contact with the natural world⁷, which has profound impacts on their health and wellbeing. Again, this is why Link2Nature has prioritised working with the youth as an important objective in our Work Plan.

Link2Nature aims to work with Health and Wellbeing Boards to develop a Wiltshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, this Strategy has identified green gym schemes and conservation volunteering as important projects to support healthy living in Wiltshire. These actions also support the NHS Public Health Outcomes Indicator 1.16: 'Use of green space for exercise / health reasons'. Link2Nature will work collectively to help and encourage local people to take more physical exercise in the natural environment and increase the number of local people engaging and connecting to their local environment; a 2009-2012 survey by Natural England found that 5.6% of people in Swindon and 26.9% in Wiltshire had used outdoor places for exercise or health reasons in the previous seven days; the average for England is 14%.

3. Sustainable Economic Growth and Development

Why is this a priority for Link2Nature?

Population growth and new development are two of the main drivers of change affecting our natural environment. Wiltshire Council and the South West Local Enterprise Partnership launched the Business Perception Survey in November 2011. The results highlighted that high quality of life and the rural environment were important reasons to relocate to Wiltshire. Without concerted efforts to ensure sustainable development, there will be increasing pressure on local supplies of water, energy, food and building materials, and on the capacity of our land to produce food and manage waste.

Since the UK entered the recession Wiltshire's GVA (Gross Value Added) has declined by around 5% as a result of the downturn. Overall, the Wiltshire workplace economy appears to have been slightly worse affected by the economic downturn than Great Britain and significantly worse than the South West as a whole. The rural workplaces of the former districts of North and West Wiltshire also continue to be affected by the downturn.⁸

Link2Nature advocates that there is a strong case for boosting local economic growth in sustainable and innovative ways; the challenge will be to identify and unlock these opportunities. This will only be feasible with a stronger working relationship between the environment, business, energy and agricultural sectors at a local level. For example, there is great potential to develop a strong sustainable tourism trade in Wiltshire and Swindon. Wiltshire's tourism economy generates some £1billion per annum to an industry that supports over 21,000 jobs in the county and represents 7% of employment. Although Wiltshire welcomed over 12.7 million visitors and saw both day visits and overseas staying visits markets perform well, overall, the loss of market share in the domestic market resulted in total visitor spend for Wiltshire shrinking by 6%⁹.

Link2Nature also recognises that there are many opportunities for sustainable development through the growth of the green economy and the more holistic solutions that Green Infrastructure offers; this is why the objectives outlined in the Work Plan focus on implementing Green Infrastructure as part of new developments. Link2Nature is keen to support the shift to a low carbon economy and as highlighted in the Work Plan will aim to communicate more consistently with local communities, especially as part of new developments, to help to achieve this shift and bolster the development of more renewable energy sources.

⁶ Health and wellbeing benefits of access to nature, Wiltshire JSA for Health and Wellbeing, (<http://www.intelligencenetwork.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=52805&servicetype=Attachment?>)

⁷ Moss, Stephen (2012) 'Natural Childhood' National Trust. (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/document-1355766991839/>)

⁸ Economic Impact of the Economic Downturn in Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council, May 2011 Update (<http://www.intelligencenetwork.org.uk/economy/>)

⁹ Visit Wiltshire Business Plan 2012-2015 (<http://www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/dbimsgs/VisitWiltshire%20Business%20Plan%202012-15%20Final%2024.09.12.pdf>)

4. Engaging Local People with their Natural Environment

Why is this a priority for Link2Nature?

The introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 has been a significant driver for encouraging decision making at a local community level. To ensure that the environment is valued and protected at a local level and incorporated into neighbourhood plans Link2Nature is keen to engage more actively with local residents and encourage local people to take ownership and responsibility for their actions and their impact on the environment. The Work Plan recognises this opportunity and is keen to support local community groups to understand and manage their local green space for the benefit of wildlife, people and the economy.

In Wiltshire's 2011 'What matters to you survey'¹⁰, local residents responded that:

- Access to nature (45%) and parks, green spaces and countryside (42%) are important in making somewhere an important place to live, second only to health services (56%);
- The natural environment is important to people, predominately for wildlife (78%), large open spaces (73%) and passive recreation (70%).

A large proportion of community and parish plans include objectives relating to protection and enhancement of the natural environment. With a growing disconnect emerging between people and the natural environment, one of the challenges for Link2Nature will be to help enable communities to realise and understand the importance of a sustainable environment in their own 'neighbourhood' plans. Link2Nature will aim to encourage more local people to get actively involved in environmental issues through Local Action Groups and help to strengthen the existing networks to support more resilient and sustainable lifestyles.

Link2Nature will also aim to improve and build a greater connection with local communities and the farming environment. As outlined in Work Plan, a greater understanding of the farming and agricultural sector is necessary within all local communities. This connection will help children to understand where their food comes from and build more local connections between much of the good work that farmers are doing locally for the environment.

5. Food & Farming

Why is this a priority for Link2Nature?

Link2Nature recognises that the farming sector plays a central role in tackling both the challenges and the opportunities that affect our natural environment at a local level. Farming is by far the dominant land use in Wiltshire and Swindon due to the suitability of the soils and open landscapes, and accounts for more than 80% of land use.¹¹ The way that our farmland is managed has a direct impact on wildlife and the health of our natural environment. Our food and farming industries can also contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimising food waste and managing land to adapt to climate change.

More than 77% of agricultural land in Wiltshire and Swindon is covered by around 1245 Agri-Environment agreements (as of July 2012).¹² These agreements encourage and support farmers to implement more environmentally friendly farming practices that help to protect and enhance local wildlife. These schemes have become increasingly popular in recent years, but are subject to change, in particular through the current reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

One of the greatest challenges for farming is in producing food in ways that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable – meeting the demand for food, running viable businesses and maintaining a healthy natural environment. Link2Nature identifies the need to support the farming sector in developing

¹⁰ Wiltshire Council, (2012) 'What matters to you Survey' <http://www.intelligencenetwork.org.uk/consultation/?locale=en>

¹¹ State of the Environment Wiltshire and Swindon 2012, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
(www.intelligencenetwork.org.uk/environment)

¹² Natural England 2013

more effective supply chains and enabling sustainable agricultural practices across Wiltshire and Swindon; as a part of this, Link2Nature supports the development of local food networks.

Link2Nature are very keen to help build stronger relationships between the farming community and the other sectors to help raise awareness and address the many shared issues. By working together we have a much better chance of halting the ongoing declines of biodiversity and developing agreed plans that allow us to work on a landscape scale to enhance the natural environment for the benefit of all.

3. Aims

Link2Nature has outlined the following 5 Aims; these summarise what Link2Nature collectively aims to achieve for the benefit of Wiltshire and Swindon's natural environment over the next 5 years. Link2Nature will:

- 1. Identify Opportunities**
Identify and promote opportunities to maximise the benefits for the environment, local communities and the economy in Wiltshire and Swindon
- 2. Support Partnership Working**
Help to improve and build cross sector partnership working to secure direct benefits for the environment, local people and the economy based on an understanding of an ecosystems approach
- 3. Enhance the Evidence Base**
Increase and expand our evidence base relating to the natural environment to enable informed decisions to be made based on an understanding of an ecosystems approach.
- 4. Influence Decision Making**
Actively inform, encourage and influence decisions across all relevant sectors for the benefit of the environment
- 5. Increase Resources**
Increase resources to help achieve positive outcomes for the local environment

4. Work Plan

The Work Plan is divided into three sections (immediate, short and long term goals). It proposes key objectives to be achieved and relates these to each of the five core Aims. These prioritised objectives will help Link2Nature to deliver positive outcomes for the environment. The prioritised objectives offer positive opportunities to enhance the wider environment.

It is important to recognise that many of these objectives can only be achieved through better partnership working and more effective utilisation of local resources.

The Work Plan will be reviewed annually at the Forum to ensure that Link2Nature is focussing on agreed priorities and achieving positive outcomes for the natural environment of Wiltshire and Swindon.

Year 1 (2013)

Immediate actions already underway:

Objective	Key Action(s)	Lead	Resources	Related Aim (s)
1.1 Continue to develop and keep under review a Strategic Plan to safeguard Wiltshire & Swindon's environment, based on a sound evidence base	Coordinate consultation workshops. Identify key environmental challenges. Develop a Strategic Plan. Coordinate consultation period before signing off	Executive Group/ Coordinator	In kind contributions from partner organisations/ Link2Nature Coordinator	1, 2, 4
1.2 Deliver an initial Events Programme to raise awareness of Link2Nature	Launch Link2Nature & hold the Annual Forum. Establish independent website. Deliver introductory Community Workshops. Deliver a Business Breakfast	Coordinator/ Communications Working Group	Funding from Natural England In-kind support from Cranborne Chase AONB and WWT	1, 4
1.3 Develop shared objectives with the Health and Wellbeing Boards	Provide comments during the consultation of Wiltshire's Draft Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Develop shared objectives in the work programme of Link2Nature and Health & Wellbeing Boards in Wiltshire and Swindon	Executive Group/ Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	Public Health- Wiltshire and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust/ Environmental Intelligence Officer	1, 2, 4
1.4 Support the development and implementation of an effective Biodiversity Delivery Framework	Coordinate the Biodiversity Working Group to prioritise the key challenges for tackling biodiversity loss at a landscape scale. Coordinate conservation actions and reporting by the wider partnership and update the 'Projects Table' annually	Biodiversity Working Group/ Coordinator	Partner organisations	1, 2, 3
1.5 Produce a State of the Environment Report demonstrating the need for an Ecosystems Services Assessment	Collate and analyse data to enable the drafting of a new report for 2013. Send Report out for consultation and identify gaps in our understanding to inform the development of a Ecosystems Assessment	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	Public Health Wiltshire. Natural England, Wiltshire Council, Swindon Borough Council	4, 5
1.6 Secure funding to support the core running costs of Link2Nature	Identify funding sources to support the full time position of a Coordinator and core running costs of Link2Nature	Executive Group/ Fundraising Working Group	Funding required for Coordinator Position, Website	1, 2

Year 1-2 (2013-2014)

Short term goals; actions to start delivering in 2013

Objective	Key Action(s)	Lead	Resources	Related Aim(s)
2.1 Develop a Funding Strategy to support the delivery of the objectives identified in Link2Nature's Work Plan	Identify and invite skilled individuals to form a Fundraising Working Group. Provide the Group with agreed Project Proposals; task the group to help secure funding to deliver Link2Nature Projects.	Executive/ Fundraising Working Group	In kind contributions of staff time from partner organisations	4, 5
2.2 Develop a Communications Strategy for Link2Nature	Maintain the Link2Nature website and develop a strategy that will provide regular and accessible updates/events regarding local environmental issues to a wide range of sectors. e.g. Work with Community Area Boards/Partnerships and Parish Councils	Coordinator / Communications Working Group	Funding required to support a Communications Officer/Event Schedule	1, 2, 3
2.3 Review opportunities to secure net biodiversity gain from new developments being proposed across the county	Identify gaps and opportunities to improve the sustainability of new developments. Work with Planners and Developers to influence Site Development Plans. Work with Local Planning Authorities to involve communities within process	Planning Working Group	In kind contributions from partner organisations	4, 5
2.4 Develop a proposal to support the progression of a Green Infrastructure Strategy in Wiltshire.	Coordinate 'Local Green Space Engagement'; encourage more local groups to map local green audits of their areas to feed into GI and Neighbourhood Planning	Wiltshire Council and GI Working Group	Natural England, Wiltshire Council	1, 2, 3
2.5 Support the creation of an Action Plan to implement GI within Swindon	Coordinate a partnership approach to identify what specific GI measures need to be implemented and how they can be delivered within Swindon	Swindon Borough Council and GI Working Group	Natural England, Swindon Borough Council-	2, 3
2.6 Encourage local communities and youth groups to get actively involved with their local green space	Coordinate a Small Grants Fund & provide recording equipment. Encourage local groups to monitor what they are doing in their local area. Follow up pledges- 6 months later	Executive Group/ Public Health Wiltshire	Small Grant Fund from Public Health Wiltshire.	1, 2, 3
2.7 Identify the best opportunities for restoring and enhancing ecological networks on a	Support the development of Nature Improvement Areas. Develop shared SMART proposals and identify the most effective ways to connect biodiversity	Biodiversity Working Group/ Fundraising Working Group	To be developed	2, 3, 4, 5

landscape scale.	working with all stakeholders within a landscape area			
2.8 Improve and build a greater connection with local communities/youth groups and the farmed environment	Work with existing farming groups/networks and local schools/community groups to identify the key hooks for improving active engagement. Raise awareness and build support for the development of sustainable local food networks	Farmer Led Group/ AONBs/Education Working Group	Work with AONBs and SWLEP to help secure resources	1, 2, 5
2.9 Establish a Small Grants Fund for the local restoration and protection of natural areas	Enable local communities to apply for funding to carry out local conservation or restoration work to improve their natural environment. Encourage local groups to take ownership of their environment	Board/ Executive Group	Small Grants Fund? Support from local businesses?	3, 4

Year 3-5 (2015 or later)

Longer term goals; to start from 2015 or later

Objective	Key Action(s)	Lead	Resources	Related Aim (s)
3.1 Identify ways to ensure health/wellbeing benefits are achieved through wider engagement with the local environment	Involve and engage more young people with local environmental issues- work directly with local schools to transform awareness into action	Board/ Working Group	To be developed	1, 4
3.2 Secure and improve connectivity of local biodiversity at a landscape scale	Utilise existing habitat mapping methodologies and produce an agreed Proposal to map the ecological networks within one of the 11 Landscape Biodiversity Areas in Wiltshire & Swindon.	Biodiversity Working Group/ Fundraising Working Group	Funding required for habitat mapping project	1, 2, 3
3.3 Identify and demonstrate the economic value of the natural environment.	Identify the potential for establishing a Payment for Ecosystems Services scheme to support local sustainable farming practices. Work with local water based partnerships and local businesses to identify local issues and build shared solutions	Fundraising Working Group/Local Farming Community	Require Government funding/backing	4, 5
3.4 Investigate the most effective way to produce a county wide Ecosystem Assessment	Use the State of the Environment Reports to demonstrate a need and commission a wider Ecosystems Assessment on a landscape scale	Board/ Fundraising Working Group	Work with SWLEP to build a Proposal and Joint bid	3, 5

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

5.1 Monitoring

There are different ways of measuring and demonstrating success. Link2Nature will monitor both the strategic outcomes and the measurable targets. It is important to evaluate the outcomes as well as reporting on the activities. Link2Nature will ensure that existing methodologies and practices are adopted to encourage Link2Nature to utilise the existing knowledge and work already in place.

It is important that the outcomes of Link2Nature's Work Plan are accountable and each objective has a quantifiable measure and target date for completion. As part of the delivery process the Executive Group will require bi-annual updates from the Working Groups and lead partners.

The Board will also monitor the performance of Link2Nature and the delivery of its objectives, ensuring that Link2Nature remains effective and relevant to local needs.

An Annual Report will be produced by the Coordinator; this will help to summarise and review the overall progress of Link2Nature's Work Plan and will be available on the Link2Nature Website.

5.1.1 Landscape Conservation Framework for Wiltshire and Swindon

In order to link the work and delivery of the wider partnership to Link2Nature objectives, the Link2Nature members will be invited to adopt the newly developed Landscape Conservation Framework for Wiltshire and Swindon. This will help to coordinate action through an agreed framework and will inform decision making, guiding the identification of conservation priorities across Wiltshire and Swindon through the 11 newly identified **Landscape Biodiversity Areas**.

The Landscape Conservation Framework has been developed to build on the Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), last updated in 2008 and 2010. It is designed to aid the process of identifying landscape scale conservation opportunities and for providing a framework within which to coordinate conservation efforts. It highlights where the best opportunities exist to enhance our priority habitats and create viable, interconnected landscape scale units of these habitats. It also highlights where priority habitats are not receiving the focus which they require and can hopefully guide future efforts in such areas.

As part of the development of the Landscape Conservation Framework, a Projects Table has been assembled. This Table provides a list of on-going conservation projects being delivered in Wiltshire and Swindon into one accessible place on the Link2Nature website. The Link2Nature Forum will be invited to update the 'Projects Table' annually to help avoid duplication of work and identify the most effective areas for coordinating partnership working for the future.

5.1.2 Designation of Nature Improvement Areas

In September 2012 DEFRA released guidance recognising that LNPs, amongst others, will play a leading role in supporting and designating Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) in their local area, as part of the shift to delivering environmental benefits at a landscape scale. The Marlborough Downs NIA began work in 2012 and is a one of the 12 pilots currently being delivered nationally. Link2Nature will aim to support the Marlborough Downs NIA where appropriate and also support the identification and development of new NIAs in the future.

5.2 Outputs Table

The table below details the key strategic outcomes together with the measurable targets in relation to the Objectives outlined in the Year 1 (2013) Work Plan. This Table will be reviewed and updated at the end of 2013 and any new objectives initiated during this period will be incorporated in the Table.

Objective	Strategic Outcomes	Measurable Targets
<p>1.1 Continue to develop and keep under review a Strategic Plan to safeguard Wiltshire & Swindon's environment, based on a sound evidence base</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared vision that safeguards the local environment ▪ Identification of links to promote better partnership working across sectors ▪ Raise the profile and importance of the environmental challenges ahead ▪ Provide strong strategic steer for the environment and drive positive change for the benefit of the local environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link2Nature Strategic Plan signed off after a consultation with the wider forum and approval by the Board ▪ Strategic Plan identifies shared objectives that are based on sound evidence and information ▪ Utilisation of the Landscape Conservation Framework
<p>1.2 Deliver an initial Events Programme to raise awareness of Link2Nature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise awareness of the value of the natural environment ▪ Provide an independent and central location/web space for general access to information regarding the local environment and the on-going projects and initiatives of the wider partnership ▪ Raise awareness of the environmental issues challenging local communities and inspire and enable them to actively respond and build more resilient and sustainable local plans that incorporate the environmental challenges ahead ▪ Promote the opportunities for investments in the green economy and raise awareness of the direct links between a healthy environment and prosperous local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link2Nature Launch Event delivered, over 60 people attended the event from a range of sectors. The Annual Forum was also held at the same time as the Launch and feedback was collected from a range of partners in relation to the Strategic Plan ▪ Link2Nature Website launched, including the addition of the newly developed Landscape Conservation Framework including interactive map ▪ Two Community Workshops are organised for the 16th and 23rd April 2013 - will focus on encouraging and enabling local people to get active with their local green space ▪ A Business Breakfast has been organised for 14th May 2013, will be held as a joint event with WWT Sustainability Forum - up to 100 local businesses expected to attend
<p>1.3 Develop shared objectives with the Health and Wellbeing Boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise awareness of the value of the direct links between a healthy environment and healthy people ▪ Develop shared sustainable objectives with the Health and Wellbeing Board ▪ Align work programmes and assess how projects can be delivered more effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link2Nature's comments have been incorporated into Wiltshire's Joint Health & Wellbeing Draft Strategy; confirming the health benefits derived through engagement with the local environment ▪ The Chair of Wiltshire's Health & Wellbeing Board is also a member of the Link2Nature Board ▪ Public Health Wiltshire has provided a small grant for the WSLNP to distribute to local community groups who are actively engaging with environmental projects in their local area
<p>1.4 Support the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a shared framework for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Landscape Conservation Framework

development and implementation of an effective Biodiversity Delivery Framework	<p>identifying the conservation priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a Reporting system for partners to provide annual updates on their progress 	<p>which builds on the work of the previous BAPs has been uploaded to the Link2Nature website and is now available for use by a wide range of people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Projects Table that was compiled during the development of the Conservation Framework has also been uploaded to the website ▪ Existing BAP members have joined the Link2Nature Biodiversity Working Group; an initial consultative workshop to discuss the conservation priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon was held- with a strong request for Link2Nature to support the development of more ecological habitat mapping at a landscape scale within the county
1.5 Produce a State of the Environment Report demonstrating the need for an Ecosystems Services Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate the most effective way to produce an Ecosystems Assessments on a landscape scale in Wiltshire and Swindon ▪ Identify the gaps in our understanding of Ecosystems Services at a local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The second State of the Environment Report for Wiltshire and Swindon is due to be published in 2013. The Report introduces the shift to an Ecosystems Approach

5.3 Evaluation

The wider partnership will be invited to review and evaluate progress against the objectives of the Work Plan at the Annual Forum. This will be an important shared task and Link2Nature will encourage as many members of the forum to attend and help prioritise the objectives based on sound information and evidence base.

The Board will also continue to evaluate the progress of the Work Plan and subsequent Working Groups on a quarterly basis. An annual summary shall be presented to the Board and made available via the Link2Nature website.

The Executive Group will provide on-going support to the Board and Wider Forum, and monitor and evaluate the delivery of the Work Plan and provide support to the Coordinator.

Link2Nature will focus on celebrating the successful steps taken and encourage best practice to be adopted in all of the work that it supports.

6. Glossary

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – A designation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) with the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape, with two secondary aims: meeting the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and having regard for the interests of those who live and work there.

Biodiversity- Biodiversity is the variety of life around us, including all species of plants and animals, the generic variation among them and the complex ecosystems of which they are part.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) - an internationally recognized program addressing threatened species and habitat and is designed to protect and restore biological systems. The original impetus for these plans derives from the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (see below). In the UK plans apply to habitats and individual species, generally identifying threats, actions, targets and delivery partners.

Core Strategy – the key compulsory element of a Local Development Framework required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and PPS12. The Core Strategy sets the principles upon which other Local Development Documents should build.

Department for Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - the government department responsible for environmental protection, food production and standards, agriculture, fisheries, and rural communities in the UK. It is responsible for the arms-length organisations Natural England and the Environment Agency (see below).

Ecological Network- is a representation of the biotic interactions in an Ecosystem, in which species (plants and animals) are connected and interact. Ecological networks are used to describe and compare the structures of real ecosystems, while network models are used to investigate the effects of network structure on properties such as ecosystem stability.

Ecosystem- An ecosystem is a community of living organisms (plants, animals and microbes) that exist in conjunction with the non-living components of their environment (things like air, water and mineral soil), and all interact as a system.

Ecosystem Services - The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as spiritual, recreational, and cultural benefits; and supporting services such as nutrient cycling that maintain the conditions for life on Earth.

Landscape Scale- Landscape scale conservation is a concept that has arisen, primarily in the UK since the mid-1990s, in response to both the challenges of climate change and a perceived excessive focus on site based conservation. It aims to take a holistic approach, looking not just at biodiversity issues, but also issues such as local economies and agriculture, geo-diversity and the health and social benefits of the environment.

Natural England – the government’s advisor on the natural environment within DEFRA. It is responsible for agri-environment schemes, statutory designations including SSSIs / SACs / SPAs / Ramsar / AONBs and is a statutory consultee for planning in respect of such sites.

Payment for Ecosystem Services- also known as **payments for environmental services (or benefits)**, are incentives offered to farmers or landowners in exchange for managing their land to provide some sort of ecological/environmental service. These programmes promote the conservation of natural resources in the marketplace.

Link2Nature would like to thank the following organisations for their support and provision of resources:

Working in partnership with

