



Terms of Reference

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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 and identifying and restoring local ecological networks at a landscape scale through a partnership approach.

The Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Partnership (hereafter referred to as the WSLNP) was set up following a number of stakeholder events and consultations during 2011-2012. Over 40 organisations and individuals attended meetings and workshops providing input and support towards the development of the WSLNP. After successfully completing an application process endorsed by DEFRA the WSLNP was formally recognised by Government on 28 September 2012.

2. Purpose

The WSLNP will be a strategic partnership, identifying and setting clear priorities to achieve practical and sustainable benefits for the natural environment. The WSLNP will achieve this by working with other sectors to recognise and promote the value of the natural world in social, economic and environmental terms.

The WSLNP will provide leadership and 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 the WSLNP will work together to achieve integrated outcomes that will provide a wide range of benefits to our natural environment, ecosystem services and functions.

3. Vision

“Through strong leadership and strategic direction, the WSLNP will support positive local action to protect, maintain and enhance Wiltshire and Swindon’s natural environment, and build resilient ecosystems that directly supports the health, wellbeing and livelihood of local people and contributes to regional and national environmental objectives”

4. Aims

The 2013 – 2018 WSLNP Strategic Plan sets out the aims for the next five years supported by detailed objectives that will be reviewed annually in line with support from the wider partnership. Our aims for the next 5 years are to:

1. Prioritise the environmental challenges facing Wiltshire and Swindon and identify opportunities that maximise the benefits for the environment, local communities and the economy.
2. Improve and build cross sector partnership working to secure direct benefits for the environment, local people and the economy through an ecosystems approach.
3. Increase and expand our environmental evidence base relating to the natural environment to enable informed decisions to be made through an ecosystems approach
4. Actively inform, encourage and influence decisions across all relevant sectors for the benefit of the environment.
5. Secure resources to drive positive outcomes for the local environment

5. Structure and Roles

An inclusive and independent structure has been agreed, with:

Wider Partnership and Forum:

The wider partnership of the WSLNP includes many organisations and individuals that have an influence or impact on the environment. The WSLNP Forum brings together these organisations to help ensure positive impacts for the environment are successfully delivered. The Forum will meet annually and will be open to the public, benefits of Forum membership will include the opportunity to influence the programme of work, contribute to partnership project working groups and benefit from the communication and intelligence sharing networks that the WSLNP will promote. Our Communications Strategy sets our proposals for engagement with the wider partnership including an independent website, e-newsletters, email updates, project meetings and events.

Working Groups:

These may be short lived task and finish groups, provide a technical input or have a long term advisory role to support the delivery of practical programmes and strategic initiatives supporting both the Forum and the Board. Working Groups can either be commissioned directly by the Board or through proposals from the Forum (as approved by the board); their focus will be to deliver a specific task (Objective) that has been identified through the Strategic Plan. Members of the wider partnership will have the opportunity to engage and influence the strategic direction of the WSLNP and pursue their particular interests through the Working Groups.

A Coordinator:

Whose role is to provide administrative and coordination support to the Forum, Board and Working Groups enabling them to function in the most effective manner.

An Executive Group:

This working group will support and advise the WSLNP Board on the delivery of the Strategic Plan and Work Programme. The Executive will comprise of a small group of partners that widely represent the cross sector interests of the Board and will usually meet in advance of the Board meetings or when the need arises.

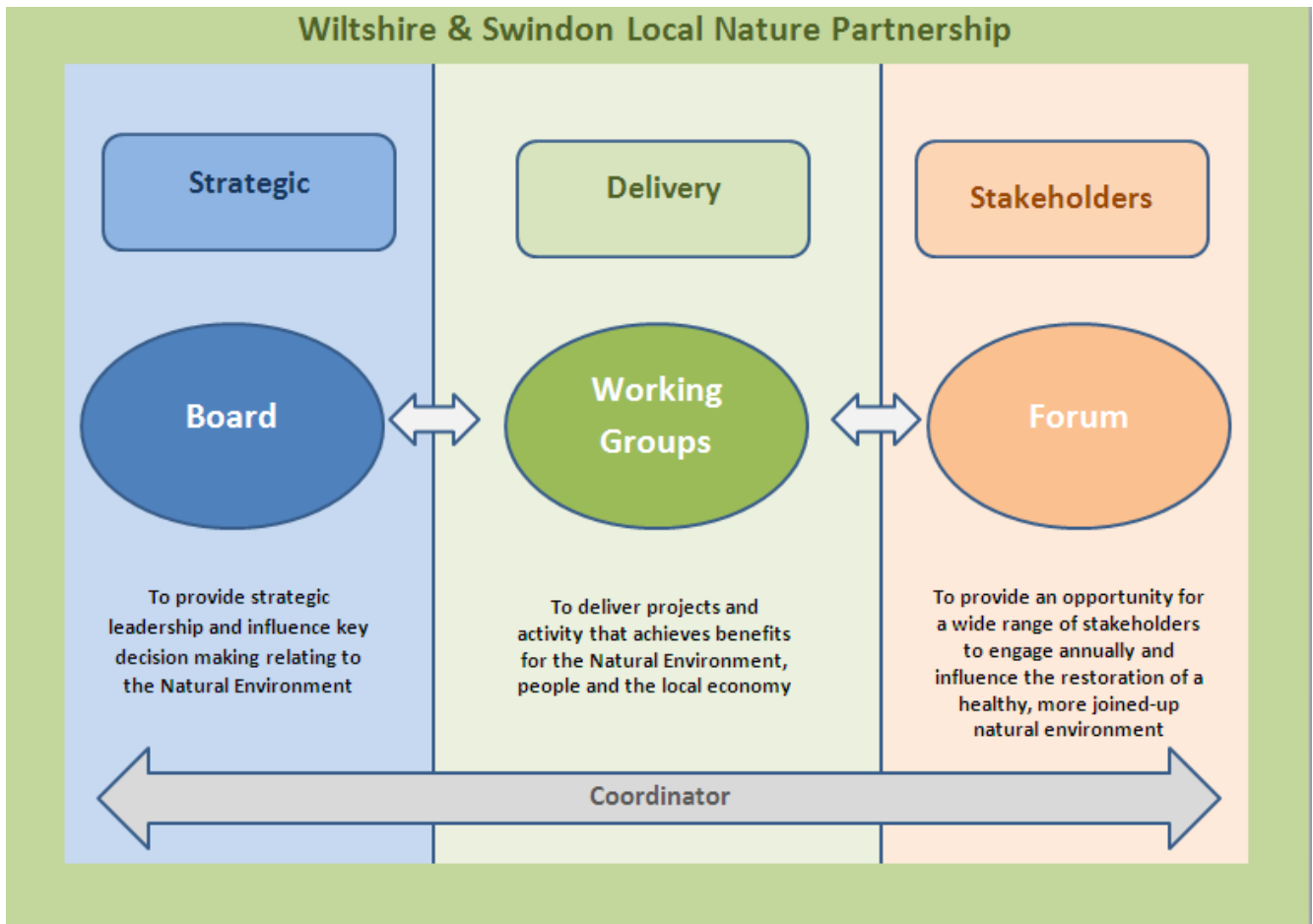
A Board:

Will provide strategic direction, influence and leadership for the local environment, define priorities and make decisions based on good quality data and evidence and recommendations from the Working Groups and the Forum. The Board will focus on “informing”, “influencing” and “advising” at a strategic level on matters relating to the environment and public policy, placing sustainability at the heart of their decision making.

The WSLNP Board aims to be representational of the sectors, activities and population of Wiltshire and Swindon. Membership of the Board will consist of representatives from the following sectors as a minimum, but will not be limited to:

- Two representatives from the nature conservation sector
- Two representatives from local government; one each from Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council
- One representative from the business sector drawn down from the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership / Chamber of Commerce
- One representative from the health sector
- One representative from the agricultural land management sector
- One representative from the community sector
- One representative from the energy sector
- One representative from the military sector
- One representative from the youth sector
- One representative from a DEFRA agency; Natural England/Forestry Commission/Environment Agency

The relationship between these elements is represented in the following governance structure, as agreed with our many stakeholders:



6. Functions and Protocols

6.1 Wider Partnership and Forum

- The WSLNP Forum will be an opportunity to suggest ideas and provide input to the strategic direction of the WSLNP and review progress of the partnership, share best practice and network to improve partnership working across sectors for the benefit of the local environment
- As a partnership the intention will be to get endorsement from all members of the partnership and where decisions are to be made a majority will suffice
- The WSLNP members will be invited to adopt the newly developed Landscape Biodiversity Framework for Wiltshire and Swindon. This Framework is one structure that the WSLNP can use to help coordinate and support decision making and guide the identification of conservation priorities across Wiltshire and Swindon. Adopting a shared Framework will also enable the work and delivery of the wider partnership to be aligned more accurately to the shared WSLNP priorities outlined in the agreed Strategic Plan.
- As part of the development of the Landscape Biodiversity Framework, a Projects Table was assembled. This Table compiles the on-going conservation projects being delivered Wiltshire and Swindon into one accessible place. The 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
- The Forum will support the improvement of the environmental evidence base by identifying, collating and submitting any relevant biodiversity data to the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre and making relevant data available to the Wiltshire Intelligence Network to inform annual revisions of the State of the Environment Report

6.1 Working Groups:

- The scope of each working group will be focussed on delivery of a specific output to a specified timescale; Working Groups may be disbanded once the output has been delivered
- Each Working Group will assign a lead who will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Group and providing regular reports that will be used to update a standing agenda item at Board meetings/Website
- The WSLNP may support emerging partnership groups to establish (e.g. Nature Improvement Areas) to support partnership working, skills sharing and encourage more efficient delivery and management
- Will provide updates to the WSLNP Forum and report upon completion of its specified task and where possible share best practice
- May provide technical advice where necessary, drawing together local expertise to inform the strategic direction of the WSLNP
- Will provide support to strengthen and coordinate the evidence base that underpins management of the natural environment.

6.2 Coordinator:

- Act as the central liaison point for the WSLNP Board, Executive Group, Working Groups and Forum
- Facilitate and coordinate WSLNP Board meetings and associated administration between partners and working groups
- Promote the WSLNP to potential partners and wider forums, encouraging engagement with the WSLNP objectives, building strong communication links with stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, in particular the Local Enterprise Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Collate and produce the LNP's annual review
- Support the development and update a website to aid communication and promote and engage a wider audience
- Act as a key contact point for DEFRA, Natural England and SWEN in relation to the WSLNP

6.3 Executive Group:

- Advise on the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan and Work Programme
- Support the effective operation and governance of the WSLNP Partnership
- Advise on the commissioning and de-commissioning of the Working Groups as required to deliver the Work Programme targets
- Lead on the development of the Strategic Plan
- Prepare and review proposals for consideration by the board, in advance of board meetings
- Monitor income and expenditure and support the Fundraising Working Group were necessary to secure resources for delivery of the Work Programme targets
- Report progress to WSLNP Board on the implementation of the Work Programme and on the work of the Executive Group

6.4 Board:

- Approve a Strategic Plan that will outline the priorities for the WSLNP and delivery of outcomes applying an ecosystem approach
- Approve Funding and Communications Strategies
- Coordinate the delivery of work across the partnership, to ensure opportunities are maximised to achieve the aims of the WSLNP
- Promote the opportunities for partnership working for the benefit of the local environment, engage with regional and national organisations where relevant to enhance the delivery of local and wider environmental objectives
- Influence local decision making relating to the natural environment, provide advice and guidance to the LEP and relevant partnerships promoting the economic and social benefits of the environment
- Work alongside Health and Wellbeing Boards, local authorities and the NHS to identify and deliver opportunities to improve public health through access to the natural environment
- Monitor the performance of the WSLNP and the delivery of its objectives, ensure that the WSLNP remains effective and relevant to local needs and is sustained in the longer term

- Act as a gateway for government initiatives, prioritising funding opportunities that align with the Strategic Plan
- Provide support to campaigns that individual partners may be developing if there is general consensus to do so and they are in line with the Strategic Plan

The functions of the Chair will be to:

- Champion the WSLNP and build support for the aims and priorities of the wider partnership
- Chair meetings of the WSLNP having regard to agreed procedures
- Act as a spokesperson and represent the WSLNP at appropriate events, meetings or functions
- Represent the WSLNP through the Wiltshire Assembly and One Swindon Partnership

6.4 Operational arrangements

The Terms of Reference and the Strategic Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. Board agendas, papers and minutes will be accessible via the WSLNP website in advance of the meetings to give the wider partnership an opportunity to comment on the strategic matters being discussed and debated. A current copy of the Terms of Reference, Annual Review, Strategic Plan and Work Programme will also be uploaded to the website.

The Government have stated their expectation that Local Nature Partnership and Local Enterprise Partnerships will work collectively on local strategic decisions and delivery of policies. The WSLNP will work with the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership to align priorities and add value to the sustainability aspects of bids for national and international growth and development funding.

A new Section (33A) has been inserted into The Localism Act (2011) outlining the 'Duty to Cooperate to relation to planning of sustainable development'. Local Planning Authorities now need to have regard to the activities and views of Local Nature Partnerships in relation to the planning of certain categories of sustainable development or uses of land.

To ensure the Board's time together is used for maximum impact and the Board is fully accountable to the Wider Partnership the following operational arrangements have been agreed:

- Each Board member will represent the views of their sector, not just a single organisation or charity
- Board members will champion the work of the WSLNP at public meetings, events and conferences as and when necessary.
- Decisions taken by the Board should be made in the interest of the WSLNP's agreed aims and the objectives of the Strategic Plan
- The Board will oversee working groups/ work programmes and receive and consider suggestions for developing initiatives
- Organisations or sectors represented on the Board must ensure that an appropriate representative attends board meetings; nominated representatives may attend meetings where this will be of value
- A quorum for Board meetings shall be six members; where a vote is required a simple majority will determine the outcome
- The Chair and Board Members will be appointed for a 3 year term and may be re-elected to serve for additional terms with the support of the Board, Forum and Wider Partnership
- Board members representing government agencies and funding organisations will attend meetings as non-voting observers, providing information, balance and perspective to local decisions
- Board members will have the right to abstain from supporting the WSLNP on specific matters that may be considered to represent a conflict of interests/where a business or public organisation may benefit by influencing a certain direction. Any confidential interests should be declared to the Chair prior to the discussion

6.5 Resources

6.5.1 The WSLNP is unincorporated and is not a legal entity. As such, the Partnership cannot hold or expend funds itself. Where projects and activities are recommended or supported by the WSLNP they will be led by other organisations from the partnership best placed to do so.

6.5.2 Grants or funding secured to resource a specific task or project that have been developed as part of the WSLNP's deliverable targets, will be held and expended by a nominated member of the partnership, this nominated member will be accountable to the WSLNP Board with regards to the budget spend and provide quarterly finance reports and forecasts.

6.5.3 The WSLNP Annual review will include a financial summary of the year incorporating all financial matters relating to the work of the WSLNP.

6.5.4 If an Accountable body is required to secure specific funding the WSLNP agrees that Wiltshire Council will provide relevant services and will act as an Accountable Body in such circumstances.

6.5.4.1 Prior to final application for any funding sought that requires an Accountable body the WSLNP will consult with the Accountable body to seek its approval to act as Accountable Body for the application.

6.5.4.2 Another nominated member of the partnership may act as an alternative Accountable Body on behalf of WSLNP's for individual projects or activities, where relevant and with approval of the WSLNP Board.

6.5.4.3 The Accountable Body will be accountable to the WSLNP Board with regards to the funds held on the WSLNP's behalf, expenditure on projects and activities, and provide quarterly finance reports and forecasts.

6.5.4.4 As an Accountable Body, Wiltshire Council has confirmed it has the capability to fulfil compliance and reporting obligations for projects and activities and can fulfil any requirement to provide cash-flow to projects and activities, and to bank-roll projects and activities, as need arises.

6.5.4.5 The Accountable Body will hold grants or funds receivable for the purpose of delivering a specific task. It will make expenditure and arrange for claims for reimbursement from funders. In doing so, it will work with whomever is charged with delivering projects and activities.

6.5.4.6 The responsibilities for the Accountable Body are:

6.5.4.6.1 Making contracts for funds, or other agreements of funding, for projects and activities on behalf of the WSLNP

6.5.4.6.2 Control of expenditure:

- 6.5.4.6.2.1 Compliance with Competition rules (procurement)
- 6.5.4.6.2.2 Making claims for reimbursement from funders
- 6.5.4.6.2.3 Oversight of progress and performance of projects and activities
- 6.5.4.6.2.4 State Aid considerations and notifications
- 6.5.4.6.2.5 Bank-rolling expenditure where necessary
- 6.5.4.6.2.6 Holding ring-fenced funds on behalf of WSLNP

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

Working in partnership with

