

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation and Design Advisory Group
Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Conservation and Design Manager

SUPPORT FOR THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP CO-ORDINATOR

Purpose

1. To advise members of the Conservation and Design Advisory Group on the role and success of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Co-ordinator and seek support for the continued development of the partnership into 2007/08.

A presentation will be made on the work of the Partnership by Ms Fabiola Blum, the Co-ordinator for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Biodiversity Co-ordinator supports the natural heritage conservation objectives of the Council by working with the Ecology Officer to develop and promote biodiversity enhancement initiatives. In addition she is available to advise and respond to enquiries relating to biodiversity issues raised from the public.
Village Life	The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity directly contributes to the quality of life within the villages. The rural feel of many villages is primarily created by the surrounding biodiversity.
Sustainability	The maintenance of biodiversity is a fundamental component of sustainable development.
Partnership	The county wide Biodiversity Partnership is an example of an effective and established environmental project which has helped enhance the work of the Council in promoting biodiversity enhancement.

Background

3. The role of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Co-ordinator was created in 1996 when the countywide Biodiversity Partnership came into being.
4. The 45 local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP), including 26 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and 19 Species Action Plans (SAPs) were subsequently produced and launched in 2000 to focus attention on local habitats and species requiring particular actions. South Cambridgeshire District Council has been an active partner in the BAP process since its inception. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership represents the local delivery of a national commitment to biodiversity, stemming from the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

5. The Partnership's mission statement is to further biodiversity within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with a strategic and coordinated approach through the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans.
6. Core Services covered by the partnership are implementing, monitoring and reviewing the BAPs, securing funds for co-ordination and projects and promoting biodiversity within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.
7. The Biodiversity Co-ordinator's role is to facilitate and support the work of the Biodiversity Partnership. In particular, the Biodiversity Co-ordinator will:
 - a. Maintain an overview of the implementation of the BAP by liaising with partner organisations;
 - b. Support the organisations involved in the delivery of the Species and Habitat Action Plans;
 - c. Publicise the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough BAP and the activities of the Partnership;
 - d. Engage new individuals, groups and organisations in the implementation of the BAP and be a first point of contact for enquiries regarding the countywide BAP process;
 - e. Maintain appropriate links with regional and national biodiversity initiatives, in particular, the East of England Biodiversity Forum;
 - f. Undertake periodic progress reviews and prepare status reports, using the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS), in liaison with BARS champions;
 - g. Demonstrate the value of BAP engagement to potential funders and promote their involvement in the biodiversity process.
8. For its successes, the partnership was awarded with three Green Apple awards during the last ten years, for the *Biodiversity Checklist*, the *Farmers Biodiversity Pack* and the *50 year Biodiversity Vision Map*. The Vision Map has been incorporated into the Structure Plan and now into the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy.
9. Recent successes of the partnership during the last year include:
 - a. Establishment of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (at the Wildlife Trust, Cambourne).
 - b. Mapping of water vole populations through the Water Vole Recovery Project
 - c. Completion of the Cam Valley Sustainable Farming Project.
 - d. Delivering a training workshop, for planning officers, about LDF and biodiversity.
 - e. Re-surveys of County Wildlife Sites in all districts, either funded by the districts through planning delivery grants or through the Biodiversity Partnership.
 - f. Input of all BAP actions and targets into BARS (Biological Action Reporting System), which forms the basis for the ongoing reporting.

Considerations

10. The Biodiversity Partnership is an established steering group comprised of local authorities and environmental organisations which steer and fund the work of the group and coordinator.

11. Partner's contributions to the Biodiversity Partnership post and projects in 2006/2007 are outlined below.

Partner Organisation.	
Cambridgeshire County Council	7,500
Huntingdon District Council	5,390
South Cambridgeshire District Council	5,520
East Cambridgeshire District Council	0
Cambridge City Council	0
Fenland District Council	3,000
Peterborough City Council	3,000
Forestry Commission	500
Environment Agency	6,000
English Nature	15400
Total	46,310

12. The Biodiversity Partnership plans to hold a 10 year celebration event on September 26th 2006 to showcase its successes, to secure the continued support and raise the profile of the partnership.
13. The Biodiversity Partnership sets out to write a 10 year strategy, including a Funding, Communication and Monitoring strategy, in consultation with the partner organisations. A vision for the next 10 years will be communicated at the 10 year celebration and will form the basis of the 10 year strategy.
14. The Biodiversity Partnership will review targets and actions in the BAPs and will also devise a reporting structure for the BAP actions through a system of designated champions.
15. A more structured approach to grant aid via the partnership's project fund has recently been established to focus on BAP targets and priority actions and to ensure that a range of different project types is funded, across different SAPs and HAPs. The Council is eligible to apply to this grant fund.
16. The Orchard Phase 1 survey which took place during the last year has highlighted the decline in traditional Orchards in the county. South Cambridgeshire District has several traditional orchard sites, e.g. in Cottenham, Over, Melbourn, Meldreth, Rampton and Girton. The second phase of the survey, taking place over the next two summers will assess the biodiversity value of the remnants of traditional orchards.
17. Nature In Your Neighbourhood, a community involvement project during 2002-2004 that was initiated by the Biodiversity Partnership supported local groups at Lolworth, Litlington Pit and Little Shelford. These groups are still active today, looking after Lolworth Wildflower Meadow, Litlington Chalkpit and surrounding grassland and Little Shelford Recreation Ground and Village Pond.

Options

18. The Conservation & Design Advisory Group are requested to either:
- a) Express support for the continued development of the partnership and recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio holder continues to support, where possible, the current level of funding allocation into 2007/08 for the Biodiversity Partnership as an effective and value-for-money partnership initiative.

or

- b) Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio holder further reviews the level of funding for the Biodiversity Group in the light of the forthcoming budget proposals.

Financial Implications

19. The Council support for the Biodiversity Partnership (which funds the Co-ordinator's post) is taken from the annual revenue allocation for *Biodiversity Partnership*, within the Conservation & Design budget. Current financial allowance of £5,520 provides for the continued support of the post in 2006/07, with the expectation that similar support would continue into 2007/08.

Legal Implications

20. None specific. Support for the Biodiversity Partnership is discretionary.

Staffing Implications

21. None specific.

Risk Management Implications

22. The Council has identified the need to strengthen biodiversity conservation through its own Biodiversity Strategy. The support of the Co-ordinator is still needed in order to ensure a consistent approach with the County plan.

Consultations

23. None specific.

Conclusions/Summary

24. Members will be aware of the increasing need for biodiversity conservation, to deliver an enhanced quality of village life. The Biodiversity Partnership and the Co-ordinator continue to provide an effective lead in the conservation of the county's biodiversity. The Biodiversity Co-ordinator's role is considered to provide an invaluable strategic service disseminating both national and regional information and supporting the implementation of district level initiatives.
25. PPS9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* makes reference to local biodiversity partnerships and the how they can be effective in deciding county BAP priorities and objectives that the planning system can contribute towards. Furthermore, within the supporting document to PPS9, *A Guide to Good Practice*, the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Partnership receives a specific mention for the *Biodiversity Checklist* that it produced in 2001 as an innovative and effective contribution to development control and the enhancement of biodiversity.

Recommendation.

26. That the Conservation & Design Advisory Group expresses support for the continued development of the Biodiversity Partnership and recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio holder maintains, where possible, the current funding allocation into 2007/08 for the Biodiversity Partnership as an effective and value-for-money initiative.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Planning Policy Statement 9: *A Guide to Good Practice*. ODPM, 2006

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