

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager

26th January 2005

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To update Members on progress for the preparation of the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy and the preparation of a Consultation Draft, and to seek authorisation to undertake a wider consultation exercise.

Rob Mungovan, the Ecology Officer will make an illustrated presentation on the Biodiversity Strategy at the meeting.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Biodiversity Strategy will be fundamental to the enhancement of the delivery of high quality planning services.
Village Life	The Strategy will have a significant impact upon the enhancement of village life by ensuring that new development seeks to conserve and further enhance biodiversity.
Sustainability	The Strategy will be fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development by seeking the conservation of priority species and habitats.
Partnership	The Strategy outlines the current extent of external and internal partnerships. Hopefully the Strategy will act as a catalyst for the forging of further partnerships.

Background

3. In May 2003 the Conservation Advisory Group considered a report entitled "Developing Effective Biodiversity Policies" that set out the general contents of the then entitled "Local Biodiversity Policy". The contents of the Local Biodiversity Policy were recommended for further development with the aim of working towards a consultation exercise. Since that report the contents of the document have broadened to make it a more all-encompassing document with respect to the biodiversity activities of the Council as a whole. Thus the document has been renamed as the, "South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy".
4. A First Draft is now nearing completion. The next stage shall be to prepare a Consultation Draft, this will involve adding the necessary illustrations and proposals maps together with the integration of biodiversity data where it is known. Collaborative working with the Graphics Team shall also be required to ensure the document is in accordance with the corporate style adopted by SCDC. Consultation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy will then be undertaken in Spring 2005.
5. The intention is that the Biodiversity Strategy will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of a family of SPDs prepared in support of the new

Local Development Framework (LDF) and submitted to GO-East as part of the "Local Development Scheme". The aim is to adopt the document by November 2006. The Biodiversity Strategy cannot be formally adopted as an SPD in advance of the LDF.

6. However, the Biodiversity Strategy is an integral part of the LDF and will establish the Council's philosophy with respect to biodiversity conservation and development control. This will include the new town and city fringe developments. Consequently it is essential that the Biodiversity Strategy is available for use by Members, officers and developers by the summer of 2005. Hence the need for Member's guidance at this stage.

Considerations

7. The overall structure of the Biodiversity Strategy has been significantly changed and broadened from the document presented to Members in May 2003. The Biodiversity Strategy aims to reflect national and regional policy, to take into account the Council's Corporate Objectives and to build upon current changes within the planning system. The outline contents of the Biodiversity Strategy is now as follows.

8. Foreword

- 1.0 Primary Objectives
- 2.0 Biodiversity Conservation – The Need
- 3.0 Policy Context.
- 4.0 South Cambs. Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 5.0 Biodiversity Strategy.
- 6.0 Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity.
- 7.0 Useful Contacts and Further Information.

Options

9. The Conservation Advisory Group are asked to either :
 - a) Consider the presented draft Biodiversity Strategy and agree to its preparation as a Consultation Draft and recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorises the commencement of a public consultation exercise, the findings of which are to be reported back to the Conservation Advisory Group in due course for further consideration.

Or

 - b) To identify areas of the Biodiversity Strategy that are of concern and direct officers to undertake appropriate revisions so that it can be returned to the Conservation Advisory Group for further consideration prior to recommending the undertaking of the consultation exercise,

Financial Implications

10. The production of the Biodiversity Strategy will be funded from the existing departmental resources.

Legal Implications

11. The Biodiversity Strategy is to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in support of the Local Development Framework and the statutory Local Plan.

Staffing Implications

12. None specific.

Risk Management Implications

13. The Council has identified the need to strengthen biodiversity conservation and to produce a suite of biodiversity policies to guide the development control process. Failure to complete the publication and adoption of the Biodiversity Strategy may result a lack of clear guidance and missed opportunities for biodiversity conservation.

Consultations

14. The Planning Policy team has been consulted on the general content of the Local Biodiversity Policies section of the Biodiversity Strategy. The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Partnership has been consulted on the South Cambs BAP.
15. The following bodies are proposed for future consultation: all Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, Go East, Cambridge Horizons, Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Partnership, the Wildlife Trust and relevant amenity groups.

Conclusions/Summary

16. Members will be aware of the increasing need to ensure greater level of conservation and further enhancement of biodiversity in order to ensure sustainable development in the context of an increasing need for development in South Cambridgeshire. Fundamental to the achievement of biodiversity conservation is the establishment of appropriate guidance and planning policies. The Biodiversity Strategy will be fundamental to the necessary policy framework and will consequently have a major role to play in both conserving biodiversity and guiding the management and creation of new habitats inline with biodiversity action plan targets.

Recommendations

17. The Conservation Advisory Group are requested to recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder :
 - a) Agrees to the structure and proposed format of the draft Biodiversity Strategy.
 - b) Agrees to the preparation of a Consultation Draft and the undertaking of a consultation exercise.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: "Developing Effective Biodiversity Policies" presented to the Conservation Advisory Group 23rd May 2003

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