

Abridged Minute
Local and Regional Strategy Implementation Group
Local Government Association, London
11am, 17 September 2003

Item 1 Present:

David Miller – Chair L&RSIG	Ian Smith –EN
Paul Whittlesea - ODPM	Chris Mahon – L&RSIG (TWT)
Lawrence Jones-Walters – Chair Y&HBF (EN)	Wendy Brookes – EA
Amy Coyte – Bat Conservation Trust	Alison Miller - LGA
Paul Cobbing – GOWM	Hilary Neal – Defra
David Pape – ALGE, Hampshire CC	Charlotte Gault – L&RSIG (TWT)
Nigel Bourn – Butterfly Conservation	Alison Barnes – Defra (Secretariat)
Anne Brenchley – EN	

The Chair welcomed Amy Coyte (Chief Executive BCT) and Nigel Bourn (Butterfly Conservation) as representatives of Wildlife and Countryside Link to the group.

Apologies: Valerie Hastie – I&DeA

Item 2 Minutes and Matters Arising

England Biodiversity Group (EBG)

There has been a step change in the status of EBS within Defra – it is now one of Defra’s key programmes. The work of the L&RSIG is one of the ‘projects’ within this programme and is therefore subject to quarterly reporting on status against objectives (Red, Amber, Green system). L&RSIG has a mostly green assessment against its work programme and is doing well in comparison to other areas of strategy delivery.

EBS Indicators

The indicators will be published in the autumn, although the Local and Regional ones cannot be completed fully by then.

ACTION: Working Group (AC, IS, DP, ABa) to meet in October to progress indicator development. Secretariat to organise meeting.

Scale of Biodiversity Delivery

CG’s paper ‘*Towards Guidance on Scale for Biodiversity Delivery – The LBAP Partnership*’ was circulated.

ACTION: All to forward comments to CG by Friday 14 Nov and L&RSIG to discuss at December meeting

Communications Strategy

First draft is complete. Group agreed to test format through community strategies work. The group discussed making links across the strategy groups/policy areas. Group members agreed to scope out ‘contact roles’ for the various parts of the strategy.

ACTION: All contacts to scope out potential relationship (allocation below) in consultation with relevant group/contacts. Secretariat to facilitate.

Item 3 (taken after Item 4) Report from Regional Chairs Group 10 Sept:

LJ-W summarised discussions as below

- Group supports concept of 'Ecosystem Approach' and agreed to act as focus for its development, as requested by EBG. This can be based on practical experience within the regions
- A publication explaining role/legitimacy of the regional partnerships will be produced by group
- Capacity building is a real issue – need resources and to work as teams rather than as individual organisations to combat this
- Culture change – need to engage on other's terms (to foster change from within), without loss of fundamental biodiversity principles
- A lot is going on in the regions with much common ground – all looking at links to influence policy and capacity building. Spatial delivery also coming through strongly as a theme across the country
- Need to concentrate efforts, use experience from regions and not open up on too many fronts (risk failure)

Item 4: Community Strategies Guidance

Discussed the Government Circular on Plan Rationalisation as sent to all Chief Execs in July. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are now recognised to be 'subsumed' into community strategies. For each plan 'subsumed' into the Community Strategy:

1. Authorities will need to demonstrate that each planning regime has been considered within the main plan, but will have discretion over how to do so unless otherwise noted
2. Community Strategies as a whole should be informed by the purposes for which the individual strategies were previously prepared

In this climate of plan rationalisation there is a need to refer to the work of local biodiversity partnerships rather than focussing on plan writing. The group raised concerns about this highlighting that a local biodiversity planning can be complex and technical that cannot be removed from local biodiversity activities, rationalisation could not happen 'over night'. The group agreed that a strategic 'front end' using the community strategies vehicle is desirable, making links between biodiversity priorities and the main themes operating in local areas. A degree of biodiversity action planning will always be needed to underpin this strategic approach. The forthcoming guidance should seek to clarify the position.

A number of presentations were given in order to hone the content of the publication:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Living and Working
- Healthy Environment
- Education for Life

- Community Action

(notes available)

The group noted a number of other plug-in points and drivers/levers:

- Liveability agenda - Draft Bill – Local Environment Quality
- Sustainable Communities/Communities Plan
- Egan review of skills
- Review of CPA
- Audit Commission – Area Profiles
- Community Leadership through LSPs – ODPM research
- Countryside Agency – Stepping Stones Report

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit have produced a guide on how environmental equity can be taken into account in community strategies '*achieving environmental equity through Neighbourhood Renewal: policy and practice guide*'

www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/formatteddoc.asp?id=474

The group emphasised the importance of dissemination and need to avoid the danger of the publication 'falling on deaf ears', need to prepare ground and be aware of drivers. A PowerPoint version should be prepared to facilitate this. A large proportion of success will be bought by 'being there', need to assess resources available to achieve this.

Action Points

ACTION Drafting (CM, DM, ABa, LJW) group to meet on 16 October at Durham County Council. All to forward further ideas for drafting by 15 October at the latest

ACTION LJW to forward templates/Venn diagrams on biodiversity from book illustrating Ecosystem Approach in Canada

ACTION Secretariat to prepare distribution list in liaison with group members

ACTION Group Members to inform secretariat of actions needed to ensure buy-in and co-badging from their organisation

ACTION AM to pass through LGA committee structure and inform secretariat of timing for this

Item 5 Progress Report (to be submitted to the EBG in October)

Secretariat circulated the paper. Comments requested.

Item 6 Date and agenda for next meeting

Next meeting 16 December, priority to finalise Community Strategies guidance