

Abridged Minutes
Local and Regional Strategy Implementation Group
Defra London Page Street, 1030 Wednesday 19 March 2003

Present David Miller (Chair) - Durham County Council Alison Miller - LGA David Pape - ALGE and Hampshire County Council Ian Smith - EN (Regional rep) Chris Mahon - Wildlife Trusts Hilary Neal (Vice Chair) - Defra Alison Barnes (Secretariat) – Defra Paul Whittlesea – ODPM, Local Government Legislation	Apologies Charlotte Gault - Wildlife Trusts (England Local Biodiversity Action Facilitator) Wendy Brooks - EA Anne Brenchley - EN (Local rep)
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Item 2 Remit, Terms of Reference and Mode of operation

Discussion of role of the group and its relationship with the England Biodiversity Group (EBG) and delivery of the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS) with reference to Terms of Reference. A Regional Biodiversity Partnership Chairs group (suggested at the 7 March workshop *Biodiversity Delivery in the English Regions*) needed to be set up urgently to input directly into the tasks of the L&RSIG.

Item 3 Membership of the Strategy Implementation Group

Representatives from the following are needed:

- Regional Biodiversity Partnership Chairs Group (see above)
- Improvement and Development Agency (Local Sustainability Team)
- Government Office

The following would be useful ‘correspondents’ with the group:

- Elected Members representative
- Sustainable Development Unit, Defra

Item 4 Biodiversity delivery in the Regions – Paper 1

Action points arising from the workshop *Biodiversity Delivery in the English Regions* held on 7 March discussed. Underlined the need for the roles of regional and local biodiversity partnerships to be clarified. Regions need to add value to the local processes and work is needed to secure the legitimacy of the regional partnerships. There is a need to pool experience from around the regions and to set out the common elements that can be expected from all regional partnerships. The group also endorsed the idea of developing landscape-scale projects in each region to demonstrate integration.

Action Points:

Secretariat to arrange Regional Biodiversity Partnership Chairs meeting in early May as ongoing sub-group to advise on strategic direction and implementation of local and regional work.

Item 5 Community Strategies – Paper 2

Government is committed to Community Strategies as overarching vision for well-being of an area. Statutory guidance clearly links biodiversity into this and this is further reinforced by the plan rationalisation announcement ‘subsuming’ biodiversity plans into Community Strategies. Within this framework local biodiversity partnerships should have real legitimacy on the Local Strategic Partnerships and in CS. Importantly, CS should be seen as ongoing and to be constantly updated – therefore the opportunity to get better inclusion of biodiversity is ongoing. Several factors could be limiting this on the ground, e.g. capacity to input, emphasis of CS/LSP (e.g. may be dominated by social and economic players).

Two tasks were identified:

1. Draft a simple checklist needed to explain relationship between LBAP and CS following ‘subsuming’ – an important early output from group.
2. Commission a more detailed study to examine how far biodiversity is being embedded in CS

Item 6 Development of performance indicators – Paper 3

A lot of work is underway in this area. It was felt that some kind of digest/advice on the subject of indicators would be a helpful output from the group. It would be useful to ensure a regional dimension to indicators to enable distinctiveness to be shown.

The group reflected that weighting of environmental aspects of Comprehensive Performance Assessment were very low in comparison to education and social measures. Crosscutting themes such as biodiversity and sustainable development were not adequately addressed in CPA and there were concerns that the good work undertaken by local government in these areas would go un-rewarded in the current CPA structure.

Action Points:

Secretariat to scope digest/advice for next meeting

Item 7 Communication and Networking – Paper 4

Action Points:

- **Secretariat to circulate short digest of the meeting to local and regional partners**

Dates

Programme for the Year:

8 May	First Regional Biodiversity Partnership Chairs meeting
4 June	L&RSIG meeting (Birmingham, 11am)
June	Presentation of work programme to EBG
17 September	L&RSIG meeting (London, 11am)
October	Delivery of a written progress report to the EBG