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Delivering Biodiversity through Community Strategies

BEST PRACTICE

Case Study 1 – Cardiff

With thanks to Melissa Moore, Biodiversity Assistant, Cardiff County Council

Local Biodiversity Action Plan 'Wild About Cardiff' & Cardiff County Council Community Strategy

1. Background

BAP Process

- Partnerships formed - 1999
- Published – November 2001
- First tranche H/SAPs – 8
- Partnership – up to 50 individuals and organisations

Community Strategies

Cardiff Council has utilised its community leadership role to develop an inclusive community planning partnership that involves 300 partners organisations. There are strong links between the Community Strategy and the Local Sustainability Strategy, and both Strategies contain 3 Biodiversity Indicators.

2. Timetable

- Public survey and workshops in 1999 to decide on Biodiversity Indicators for the Local Sustainability Strategy (now incorporated into the Community Strategy).

- Cardiff Community planning partnership established in autumn 2000.
- First draft Community Strategy published in March 2001.
- Second draft Community Strategy published March 2002.
- Small Community Planning Implementation Group of key partners established in May 2002 to co-ordinate and oversee at a strategic level Cardiff's community planning partnership.
- Trialling methodology for measuring Biodiversity Indicators started in 2002, for completion in 2003.
- Action Plan for Community Strategy to be developed between January and October 2003 (to include targets and actions for the 3 Biodiversity Indicators).
- Final Community Strategy due for publication in December 2003.

3. The process

The Cardiff Community Strategy will continue to be shaped, implemented and reviewed by the local community planning process, which will include the following elements:

- Capital Congress – an annual event involving the Council and partner organisations to ratify and monitor the Cardiff Community Strategy, and chart progress towards achieving the City's long-term vision and goals. The ratified plan will have a major influence on the Council's budget setting process;
- Capital Forum – these are held on a quarterly basis and allow partners to discuss cross cutting issues. Early meetings have focused on developing indicators/targets for the Community Strategy. Independent reporters and partner organisation presentations have played a key role in these events that are typically attended by over 100 different organisations.
- Economic, Social and Environmental Commissions – 'sectoral' events that enable the Council's partners to engage in a detailed debate and express views on key issues.
- Public consultation – the partnership is supported by ongoing and varied public consultation mechanisms including Capital Times opinion surveys, telephone surveys, public meetings, targeted research, and the Internet.
- Cardiff Council were a pilot for the Audit Commission Quality of Life Indicators (National targets)

- 59 indicators set for the Community Strategy; the above Quality of Life Indicators merged with indicators from the Cardiff Sustainability Strategy and Policy Agreement Indicators. Targets and actions for all indicators will be set during 2003.
- Annual meeting (Capital Congress) brings together all organisations to reassess priorities.

4. Sustainability Appraisal

Toolkit is an appraisal matrix. It promotes biodiversity through its section on habitats and species. A sustainability appraisal of the Community Strategy is planned.

5. Involvement generally

Through the Environment Commission and Capital Congress:

- Invitation
- Public meetings
- Questionnaires
- Audit of previous consultation
- Written Consultation
- Local Sustainability Partnership

6. Involvement with LBAP

- The LBAP Forum members contributed to the Audit Commission and Capital Congress, as individuals rather than as a forum.
- The LBAP Forum was consulted on which Biodiversity Indicators were best for Cardiff for the Sustainability Strategy, which then contributed to the indicators in the Community Strategy.
- A Biodiversity Ballot asked the general public to vote for their favourite plants and animals. The information gathered was presented at a workshop, which also looked at targets and indicators used in Europe for biodiversity. A series of workshops were held to develop the Sustainability Strategy in 1999. Attendees were given a range of indicators and asked to prioritise 5, these were then cut down to 3 (from consultation with CCW and EA). These 3 indicators went into both the Sustainability Strategy and LBAP (dove-tailed approach).

7. Contribution of LBAP to Community Strategy

Indicators through public ballot and consultation with Biodiversity Forum members (initially developed for the Sustainability Strategy). Biodiversity is not mentioned in the text of the Community Strategy until the indicators (to be rectified by Action Plans).

8. Recognition by Community Strategy of social and economic benefits of biodiversity

Only through the Biodiversity Indicators (not in the text):

1. Area of change in annual survey sample of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs).
2. Number of key indicator species & change (garden birds and frogs/toads/newts).
3. Area of change in woodlands with natural wildflower carpets (possibly subject to change following trialling of methodology).

9. Anticipated benefits to biodiversity of involvement in Community Strategy

Raising awareness of group/organisations not previously involved. Biodiversity Indicators will give resources and political backing (eg development threatening SNCI sites - these are in the Community Strategy).

10. Benefits to social and economic agenda of LBAP input

Presents message that environmental issues are important and worthy of monitoring too.

11. Benefits LBAP groups offer Community Strategy process

- Biodiversity Ballot
- Instrumental in developing indicators

12. Barriers experienced to involvement in Community Strategy

- National Project – Quality of Life Indicators were for SSSIs, which didn't lend itself to Cardiff, so a local indicator for SNCI sites was adopted.
- No formal consultation with the Forum as an entity (only as individuals).

13. Lessons learnt

- ✓ Biodiversity Ballot went for resonance with people, but the choice of indicators needs to be balanced with measurability.
- ✓ The status of biodiversity as an important issue needs to be raised.
- ✓ More emphasis needs to be put on environmental targets and issues, not just economic and social ones. There is a need for better guidance to the Biodiversity, Sustainability and Community Strategy Officers on these issues.
- ✓ Because it is a people-focused document, it contains socio-economic commitments, which have negative impacts on biodiversity and are therefore contradictory.
- ✓ The sustainability appraisal due for 2003 should flag up the conflicting targets.
- ✓ A strength of the approach was to have indicators and targets; a weakness is no mention of biodiversity in the text. This should be addressed to some extent during the development of the Action Plan that will set out how the overarching objectives and indicators will be delivered.