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Delivering Biodiversity through Community Strategies

BEST PRACTICE

Case Study 4 - Cheshire

With thanks to Chris Mahon, Director of Cheshire Wildlife Trust

The Countdown Programme and Cheshire County Community Strategy

1. Background

BAP Process

- Countdown programme – Cheshire's BAP (covering Cheshire County, Wirral, Warrington and Halton] - established in 1995, facilitated by the Cheshire Nature Conservation Forum.
- Cheshire BAP published in 1997, known as Countdown.
- Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership comprising over 30 organisations with a Steering Group of 12, formed in 2000.
- Continuing implementation of Countdown Programme via Partnership and LBAP Action Groups, annual update of action plans produced on CD-ROM, 2 biennial Countdown Conferences have been held to date and the Countdown Website is regularly maintained.

Community Strategy

Cheshire County Council is leading the process and the Local Strategic Partnership has 70 partners.

2. Timetable

- Process initiated March 2001
- Community Strategy published Feb 2002
- LSP delivering towards seven cross-cutting themes

3. The Process

- With a good history of partnership working through the Sustainable Cheshire Forum implementing Local Agenda 21, the LSP has come into being, rather uncomfortably from some perspectives - though this has now been resolved - to fulfil a similar role.
- A multi-sector Steering Group of 20 now facilitates the direction of the wider Partnership of around 70 organisations which were selected to represent wider networks within the community.
- Cheshire County Council is operating a small budget with three staff to support the LSP process. The Chair (also Chair of National Federation of WI's) is supported by two Vice Chairs, one from the Carers Association and the Director of Cheshire Wildlife Trust (who is also chair of the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership and the Cheshire Sustainability Forum).
- The Partnership is now focusing on priorities to deliver within the seven cross-cutting themes that it has chosen.

4. Sustainability Appraisal

n/a

5. Involvement Generally

- The baseline of information for the compilation of the Community Strategy was provided by existing documents and consultation processes which were drawn together and analysed.
- The understanding that the Partnership members represent wider networks and have responsibility for cascading information (up and down) is implicit but in practice may be hard to demonstrate.

6. Involvement with LBAP

- The LBAP has been easy to absorb into the LSP as an established process which instantly delivers the biodiversity responsibility element, allowing that box to be ticked. This was promoted by the Vice Chair who comes from Cheshire Wildlife Trust, as there are only 3 environmental organisations on the Partnership of 70.
- There was, however, a genuine interest in including environmental issues in the themes of the LSP from the good history we have with Agenda 21.
- The LBAP interaction with the LSP will be monitored through the Sustainable Cheshire Forum (SCF) and the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership (CrBP).

7. Contribution of LBAP

- A package of action plans which have been adopted.

- The LBAP is seen as the delivery mechanism for biodiversity priorities and objectives.
- A working partnership which the LSP can use for consultation and implementation of the biodiversity objectives in the cross-cutting themes it has proposed.

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

It is implicit in the philosophy but is only recognised with reference to cross-cutting themes in the plan. Demonstration is required.

9. Anticipated benefits to biodiversity of involvement in Community Strategy

- Opportunities to deliver LBAP objectives with a range of different partners.
- Increased awareness of LBAP amongst different partners.

10. Benefits to Social and economic agenda of LBAP input

As previous

11. Benefits LBAP groups offer Community Strategy process

This is still emerging as the LSP process sorts out its priorities. However, it was able to provide a model for partnership and networking from the biodiversity conservation sector.

12. Barriers Experienced to Involvement in Community Strategy

- The perception that “environment” will take care of itself (or its protagonists will do so).
- The perception by LSP members that the “environment” (particularly “natural” environment) can be taken for granted and their assumption that this perception is shared by members of the public.
- The perception that human interests (health, jobs, prosperity etc) are much higher priorities than environmental ones, owing to short term thinking, political motivation, human self interest and an ignorance of the human connection to the natural world and ecosystem processes.

13. Lessons Learnt

- ✓ Get someone to represent your views strongly and vocally, if possible in a senior facilitator role within the partnership. The other interests have strong advocates that need to be equalled.

- ✓ Promote 3 pillars of sustainable development.
- ✓ Demonstrate the cross-cutting nature of LBAPs when it does not take you too far away from your LBAP delivery objectives and priorities.
- ✓ We still need to engage with other partners' agendas better but this takes time for uncertain benefits!