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Delivering Biodiversity through Community Strategies

BEST PRACTICE

Case Study 2 – Herefordshire

With thanks to Sarah Ayling, Chief Executive, Herefordshire Nature Trust

1. Background

BAP Process

Herefordshire Biodiversity Forum formed in 1996

BAP published in 2000

Implementation by over 70 partners

Community Strategy

Developed through the Local Government Association's 'New Commitment to Regeneration' initiative, backed by DETR.

Herefordshire is one of 3 rural authorities amongst 22 pathfinder areas, working to develop a co-ordinated approach to economic, social and environmental planning.

The Herefordshire Plan is a single integrated plan for Herefordshire, intended to improve the quality of life for local people, a process rather than a document and a clear framework for deciding priorities.

The LSP, the Herefordshire Partnership, was established by Herefordshire Council but operates as an independent organisation, with staff seconded from other organisations.

2. Timetable

- Consultation process undertaken during 1999
- A document presenting the results of consultation 'Herefordshire; Our Place, Our Future' published in 1999.
- The Herefordshire Partnership formed in 1999
- Herefordshire Plan published 2000

3. The process

- A series of public participation activities, including consultation events in each of 6 market towns.
- Audit of current strategies and plans
- Brainstorming within existing networks
- Participation events for staff of public and voluntary agencies
- Formal consultation with local organisations
- Publication of 'Herefordshire Plan' with:
 - Key indicators and targets for each ambition - long term goals
 - Ambitions and priorities reviewed after 5 years
 - Annual action plan setting priorities and targets - short-term goals
 - Fast-tracking important issues
- **LSP established with 'Guiding Principles':**
 - Building an equal & inclusive society
 - Promoting sustainability
 - Realising the potential of people and communities
 - Encouraging participation and partnership working
 - Seeking continual improvement
 - Recognising and make the most of what we've got

and 'Golden Threads' (cross-cutting themes):

- Geographic Communities e.g. towns, villages, housing estates
- Communities of Interest e.g. young people, families, farming
- Tools and Mechanisms e.g. information & communications technology, funding and other resources.

4. Sustainability Appraisal

n/a

5. Involvement Generally

- The small Partnership Board is supported by a larger Management Group
- 10 'Ambition' Groups include representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations, regional partners, local networks and local people.
- Facilitators and Link people provide support, equally to all partners.
- Support Structures are provide via Partnership staff
- Continuing Community Involvement is planned to occur directly through a five year review of the Plan and through the Voluntary Sector Assembly

6. Involvement with LBAP

The LBAP was in development at the same time as the Herefordshire Plan and is identified in the environment section as an existing plan and partnership.

7. Contribution of LBAP

One of the ten 'ambitions' in the Herefordshire Plan is to 'Protect and improve Herefordshire's distinctive environment'. The LBAP is one of the key mechanisms for delivering this, as well as contributing towards fulfilment of many of the other ambitions.

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

The Plans vision and guiding principles acknowledge both the importance of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The more detailed Environment Strategy that underpins the Plan fully identifies the contribution that biodiversity can make to social and economic well being

9. Anticipated benefits to biodiversity of involvement in Community Strategy

- Better communication within the sector
- New partnerships with other sectors
- Agreed priorities
- Early pooling of local resources
- Easier access to Regional and European funding (through 'packages')
- Higher profile for the environment

10. Benefits to Social and economic agenda of LBAP input

- Herefordshire's countryside and biodiversity underpin the county's economy, people's work and leisure activities and their sense of local identity. Delivery of widely agreed, targeted biodiversity gain therefore has an essential and significant contribution to make to social inclusion and sustainable economic development.
- BAP implementation involves packaging actions into projects, many delivering wider benefits and that offer roles and benefits for other LSP partners. For example (a commons project, developed to deliver BAP actions, is being developed through the LSP to deliver also social and economic benefits, with lottery, regional development agency and European funding being sought through the Herefordshire Partnership.)

11. Benefits LBAP groups offer Community Strategy process

- An existing partnership of over seventy organisations, which can provide co-ordinated delivery towards agreed objectives and input to further development of the strategy, via representatives on the environment ambition group.
- Continuing process of implementation and review allows BAP implementation to respond to new opportunities and revised BAP priorities and actions to inform Strategy objectives.

12. Barriers Experienced to Involvement in Community Strategy

- Time consuming
- Wider agendas
- Thinking big
- Perceptions of exclusivity

13. Lessons Learnt

None identified.