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Delivering Biodiversity through Community Strategies

BEST PRACTICE

Case Study 6 - Kent

With thanks to Andrew Pollard, Kent BAP Co-ordinator at Kent County Council

Kent BAP Kent County and District Community Strategies

1. Background

LBAP

- County Biodiversity Partnership formed in 1996.
- Kent BAP Published in 1997
- Implementation by 14 partner organisations, supported by BAP Co-ordinator.

Community Strategy

- The County Community Strategy has been completed.
- Medway Unitary Authority has produced a draft.
- The 12 districts are developing strategies and are establishing Local Strategic Partnerships in groups of 3 or 4, on an area basis.

2. Timetable

- 'Vision for Kent', Kent's Community Strategy was completed in 2002.
- Various others across county are being / will be undertaken by districts. All are at different stages and none yet published.

3. The Process

- As timetable above.

4. Sustainability Appraisal

n/a

5. Involvement Generally

- The Vision for Kent is the result of wide consultation between District and Parish Councils, the County Council, key agencies - Health Authorities, Kent Fire Brigade, Kent County Constabulary, the Learning and Skills Council - and representatives of business, voluntary and community partners.
- There has been widespread public consultation on a draft version of the Vision. A mixture of techniques were used including written consultation, public meetings and questionnaires.

6. Involvement with LBAP

- Partners currently involved in discussions about a joint approach are Kent Wildlife Trust, English Nature, RSPB, Canterbury City Council and Kent County Council. They have prioritised issues and local authorities and apportioned engagement amongst themselves but are each pursuing their own approach, according to expertise and resources.
- Kent Wildlife Trust identified who is co-ordinating each community strategy and mechanisms for engaging with them, with the intention of setting up a network of local volunteers to sit on LSPs. Meetings with chairs of Trust local groups were held and a workshop run to brief them. A number of Trust members have become involved in consultation groups and LSP groups.
- English Nature is developing a leaflet that explores the themes of the EN document 'Revealing the Value of Nature', making this relevant at a district level.
- Kent County Council has produced a research document 'Making Biodiversity Relevant', which identifies opportunities for public engagement.
- Canterbury City Council is one of the most advanced district Community Strategies in the county and has well established mechanisms to incorporate biodiversity into the strategy.
- Community Strategies were discussed at a BAP Partnership meeting with the aim of bringing together these strands and to co-ordinate effort. Partners became aware of each others' activity but it is likely they will continue to pursue different aspects of involvement. Co-ordination of complementary effort will continue, however it is likely that the BAP Partnership stamp will not be used.

7. Contribution of LBAP

Not possible to answer for the up and coming district strategies as yet. 'Vision for Kent' includes a reference to the Kent BAP: "*To promote Kent's environment we will. . . implement Kent's Biodiversity Action*

Plan to enhance and increase wildlife habitats and to encourage people to be actively aware of how they can preserve the environment”.

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

Some broadly state this while others are more indirect. This theme will be picked up in the EN publications, and ‘Making Biodiversity Relevant’ (see section 6, above)

9. Anticipated benefits to biodiversity of involvement in Community Strategy

If community strategies are to replace local plans as a way of local authorities setting future agendas and agreements, then there may be little change. If however they really reflect community concerns and aspirations then a higher priority might be expected, stemming from local residents’ concerns, so that LBAP delivery would be given more status and resource.

10. Benefits to Social and economic agenda of LBAP input

Potentially significant, if the LBAP partnership gets the messages across and community consultation supports our concerns.

11. Benefits LBAP groups offer Community Strategy process

Local knowledge and expertise in partnerships, resources and funds.

12. Barriers Experienced to Involvement in Community Strategy

- Understanding of the term “biodiversity” by general public still poor.
- Complex level of engagement
- The long-term benefits are unclear
- No clear point of contact across a number of districts
- The way that partners’ contributions are valued is unclear. Is this another consultation process that will make little difference, no matter what the people say.... ?

13. Lessons Learnt

- ✓ Approaching the process from within the County Council, it involves (rightly so) a huge blending of agendas and multiple strands from within organisations, which may or may not reflect the body as a whole.

- ✓ The process has highlighted the importance of a fully functional LBAP Partnership. The Kent BAP partnership has worked very well in developing the BAP and now in implementing true partnership projects. One of our next challenges is to ensure the partnership approach can be applied to different situations (i.e. as a one-stop shop for Community Strategies and other wider plans, processes and issues).