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Delivering Biodiversity through Community Strategies

BEST PRACTICE

Case Study 3 – Nottinghamshire

With thanks to Beth Gardner, Biodiversity Officer, Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group.

Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council Unitary Authority Community Strategies Plus Community Strategies for 7 districts: (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Rushcliffe)

1. Background

BAP

Partnership formed in 1995

BAP published in 1998

Implementation by over 50 organisations (not all BAG partners), supported by a co-ordinator.

Community Strategy

Most of the LSPs have a separate Issue Group focusing on environmental matters. Sub groups are generally writing their own action plans. On the LSP hub the chairs of the sub groups are represented e.g. police, health authority and education – usually at Chief Executive /senior manager level.

2. Timetable

Varies from plan to plan

3. The process

Ashfield –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSP set up in 1999 • Community Strategy produced 2001 with annual delivery plan • Each sub group meets regularly and has produced delivery plan • Environmental subgroup chaired by Groundwork • Membership largely made up of councillors and LA officers • Few community groups represented
Bassetlaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSP set up in 2001 • Environmental subgroup chaired by Wildlife Trust • Membership mainly community organisations • Draft strategy produced autumn 2002 • Full Community Strategy spring 2003
Broxtowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSP set up 2000 • Environmental subgroup chaired by the Wildlife Trust with support from community development team within LA • Membership includes schools, community groups and businesses • Working towards current action/ new plans • Strategy developed • Annual action plan developed
Gedling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergoing LSP community consultation
Mansfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Strategy produced 2000 • Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership (MASP) set up • Environment group chaired by Environmental Technology Centre representative from the University of Nottingham • No action plan but very active in organising events such as citizenship events for schools, global warming debates etc
Newark and Sherwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation event 2000 • Subgroups set up 2002 • Working to produce action plan • Environment subgroup chaired by Groundwork • Little representation from public • Bi-monthly meetings include presentations and discussion on environmental topics
Rushcliffe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 consultation evenings in 2002 • Community Strategy written based on these
Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up 2002 • Initial consultation event
Nottinghamshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No direct action from the Biodiversity Officer to see if she can get involved so far

4. Sustainability Appraisal

Many areas have used the SOLACE (Society of Local Gov Chief Execs) sustainability checklist across the whole cross section of actions, e.g. Bassetlaw will use it once action plans have been received from all groups, Broxtowe, and Ashfield, who tailored this document for internal use within the partnership, simplifying language, etc.

5. Involvement generally

Mixed – some have good community public involvement, others are dominated by local authorities

6. Involvement with LBAP

Again varied. Most groups have set up environmental subgroups on which the LBAP is represented through the Biodiversity Officer.

Ashfield -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA21 officer involved from the beginning (1999) • Biodiversity Officer invited self to LSP meeting, difficult securing further invites • Attends all environment sub group meetings although to date contributions to annual delivery plan have not been included. Working on inserting them via other means.
Bassetlaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in environmental subgroup from start in previous post as LA21 Officer • Whole group supportive of LBAP which has gone in the plan as top priority • Biodiversity Officer deputised for Environment Group Chair, who attends hub meetings, for 1 meeting and was able to influence at highest level
Broxtowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invited to join Environment sub group at start of post (Dec 2001) • Actively involved in Environment Sub Group • Reviewing past actions and adding LBAP actions to new plan.
Gedling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promised an invite when process starts
Mansfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invited to join Environmental Subgroup when started in post • MASP group take every opportunity to link biodiversity into other issues e.g. ran biodiversity workshop 'A Sense of Place' and 'Environment, citizenship and biodiversity' • No chance to input to Strategy as already published – very general • No ongoing action plans.
Newark and Sherwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved from the start when subgroups set up • Draft Community Strategy out to consultation with an (incomplete) environment group action plan. There was very limited response however draft now accepted
Rushcliffe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commented on Community Strategy • Contributed actions to action plan • Wildlife Trust asked if they could sit on hub group. No subgroups set up to date. Will be in involved when it is!
Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottingham County Voluntary Service ran environmental consultation sessions for local voluntary organisations to identify issues and comment on environmental part of Strategy, LBAP Officer involved. • Document directed by management to be brief so details lost although feedback showed that this approach was not favoured.

7. Contribution of LBAP to Community Strategy

Biodiversity Officer tries to attend all Community Strategy meetings across Nottinghamshire representing LBAP partners, but concentrates on the LBAP and wildlife actions. Other partners attend district meetings and reinforce biodiversity messages. A joint approach can be especially useful if a group is not convinced that biodiversity is an important local issue.

Ashfield –	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggested actions for development plan
Bassetlaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actions• Specific species projects – lots of support
Broxtowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added to action plan this year
Gedling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None to date
Mansfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involvement through MASP group activities (see above)
Newark and Sherwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actions
Rushcliffe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comments on action plan• actions (biodiversity already part of plan)
Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate LBAP will be in final version

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

Yes - At various stages in the different plans. The best is Bassetlaw (see 9/10 below).

9. Anticipated benefits to biodiversity of involvement in Community Strategy

It is hoped that an action phrased to the effect “Work towards Bassetlaw related actions within the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)” is put into each action plan for each district. This will reinforce the importance of the LBAP for biodiversity work. Benefits of synergy and joint working, particularly with projects in Bassetlaw, have been apparent and have raised awareness of biodiversity and the LBAP with other LSP partners, which will have knock-on impacts down the line. It has been amazingly useful networking with other professionals. Also, by having the LBAP actions in the community strategy will hopefully mean more are achieved!

10. Anticipated benefits to social and economic situation of biodiversity input to the Community Strategy

The best links have been made in the Bassetlaw Environmental Subgroup action plan e.g. the chapter heading 'protect and enhance wildlife' includes 'work towards Bassetlaw related actions within the Nottinghamshire LBAP', which states links to the Economic Regeneration subgroup (tourism), the Health subgroup (access to green space encouraging fitness, mental health), the Social subgroup (encouraging volunteering) and the Education subgroup (access to green space for fieldwork etc). There are other actions relating to the LBAP that flag up similar cross cutting benefits.

A copy of this action plan is available, please contact Charlotte Gault or Julia Korn if you would like to see a copy. It shows the linkages with economic and social issues.

11. Benefits LBAP groups offer Community Strategy process

- Contacts
- Partnership with ready made projects
- A whole strategy on biodiversity (the LBAP)
- Professional expertise
- Monitoring and reporting
- Commitment to the process
- Access to information
- Enthusiasm

12. Barriers Experienced to Involvement in Community Strategies

- Personalities and hidden agendas
- Meetings dominated by either local authority officers or elected members, who use the meeting as an opportunity to update themselves on what is happening within the council.
- Missing a meeting and then falling off the circulation list
- Time (not a major problem for Nottinghamshire as the Biodiversity Action Group has prioritised this, and the Biodiversity Officer started just as the CS process was starting so was able to fit this in to her work plan very easily – could be a problem for other people).

13. Lessons learnt

- ✓ Drip . . . drip . . . drip!!!! What more can I say!
- ✓ Find allies
- ✓ Plan in advance of meetings to get around tricky chairing
- ✓ Contact the district council person responsible for co-ordinating things if you can't get in via other methods (usually based in policy team)
- ✓ Chat to everyone and use networking contacts to get involved
- ✓ Just turn up to meetings and gatecrash!
- ✓ Volunteer for as much as possible – very useful for getting things in the actual community strategy document!