

Local Nature Partnerships

Eric Clark, Wiltshire and Swindon LAF

The aim of the workshop was to explore the possibilities of LAFs working with the newly created Local Nature Partnerships. Eric presented a powerpoint presentation and opened the floor up for debate and discussion as to how LAFs could work with the new bodies and have their influence felt.

Eric explained that Wiltshire and Swindon had been invited by NE to get involved with the local LNP as a trial of how LAFs could be involved so were further ahead in the game than other LAFs.

Clearly there was an overlap of responsibilities between LAFs and LNPs but LNPs had a broader scope.

Why should LAFs be involved? Access was a small element of LNP remit and it was down to LAFs to be proactive and raise the access profile. Left to the LNPs they would probably not approach the LAFs so LAFs need to get themselves at the table to influence the LNP as regards access issues. Others round the table were the “usual suspects” with an environmental background who would not put access on their agenda.

Need to ensure ROWIPs and other access plans are consistent with the objectives of the LNP.

There was no prescriptive agenda for LNPs so the agenda was open to LAF influence.

It was recognised that Wilts and Swindon LAF fits nicely within the LNP but it was recognised that in other parts of the country this might not be the case. There may be overlap with other LAF areas, or the LNP only covers part of a LAF territory therefore there would be a need to collaborate with neighbouring LAFs.

LNPs were new and finding their feet .Wilts and Swindon was developing a strong relationship with the LNP.

Economic Growth and Health were top of the agenda. Improved access brings a lot to the table for both items. Funding on access can improve health and cut NHS spending. More access to the countryside can improve the rural economy.

Clear lines of communication important. Work through the LNP to make contact with other bodies and build relationships. It is the intention of Government for LNPs to have a broader inclusiveness than the usual environmental organisations and LAFs were a part of that.

The LNP was not a statutory body and was meant to have a light touch influencing approach.

Q. Would it be good for LAFs to get together with NE to formulate a consistent and unified approach and include it in LAF guidance?

A. Good idea but any guidance must not be prescriptive LNPs were supposed to be driven by a local agenda.

Q. County Durham LAF was represented on the board of the LNP but what next, how does it move on? Part of the workshop should be around what is the next step. There is a key role for NE to disseminate to LAFs some sort of guidance.

A. It would be nice to have a clear policy but we don't, each LNP will be faced with different local situations.

Examples of what Wilts and Swindon is doing with LNP are;

1. Making sure ROWIP fits with Green Infrastructure plans.

2. Quantifying the benefits of access to the Natural Environment.

3. Involved in using MENE data as evidence of need for better access to the environment.

One way of developing a relationship with the LNP is the discussion over Eco Systems Services.

Suggestion; One thing NE could do to help LAFs would be to cascade MENE training to LAF members. Not all LAFs have the time or expertise to use the data base.

Suggestion; NE could possibly run a themed workshop for LAFs regarding LNP involvement with an emphasis on green infrastructure. Share expertise around the country.

Q. What are next steps. Can Regional Co-ordinators be involved? Can NE distribute LNP guidance to LAFs.

A. Issues are going to be different region to region and not universal to every LAF.

It was suggested that the role of Urban LAFs would be different to other LAFs.

It was suggested that if LAFs were to present themselves in a professional way to LNPs they needed funding for preparation of documents and evidence.

Andrew Mackintosh Access Specialist from NE agreed that there may be a role for NE to provide MENE training and to broker partnerships with other organisations.

A final point made was that LNPs were involved on a landscape scale and LAFs needed to think in the same strategic manner.