

WENP Board Meeting

Teleconference // 24 June 2020 // 14:00 – 17:00

Items

SGr welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was held via teleconference. SGr requested any comments on the draft minutes from the March Board meeting. As no comments were received, the minutes were approved and are now available on the WENP website ([click here](#) to view).

SGa provided an overview of the actions from the previous meeting – a list of open actions can be found at the end of the document.

1. NRN Implementation WG and Agriculture WG Update

1.1 NRN Implementation WG update

IB provided an update on the work of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) Implementation Working Group, which was set up after the WENP Board meeting in March to work on how the NRN is being and could be translated into action on the ground to recovery nature. This is partly in response to messages from government requesting shovel-ready schemes that could be funded as part of a ‘green Covid recovery’.

The focus of the WG thus far has been on developing a prospectus (pipeline) of projects that would make a strategic contribution to the NRN, building on the work previously done through WENP to identify a list of ecological priorities for the NRN. A draft version of the prospectus was circulated to the Board ahead of the meeting.

The WG is also developing an Implementation Strategy for the NRN, which details the ongoing and planned work to translate the NRN into action on the ground to deliver nature’s recovery. Once the WG has agreed on a version of this, it will be sent around to Board members. Additionally, the WG is developing project criteria for both strategic NRN projects and Green Infrastructure (GI) projects, which are intended to act as a tool to consider the full potential benefits from a project.

The work is being coordinated with that stemming from the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and specifically the work to develop strategic GI projects.

1.2 Agriculture WG update

SGa explained that, following the March meeting of the WENP Board, it was agreed to set up a Working Group looking at agriculture in the context of the Nature Recovery Network. As the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership was also looking to set up a WG for agriculture, it was decided that combining the two into a single WG for agriculture in the WoE would help to avoid any potential duplication. The first meeting of the West of England Agriculture Group will be held on 21 July.



SS noted that there was some slowing of the work around the Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill due to the impacts of Covid-19.

ActionJune20/01: SS to provide an update on ELM Schemes to the September meeting of the WENP Board.

2. Delivery Mechanisms

IB (Avon Wildlife Trust) provided a presentation on 'A Nature Based Solutions Platform for the West of England'. The slides from the presentation were sent to Board members ahead of the meeting and are included in the post-meeting distribution. The Wildlife Trusts, including Avon Wildlife Trust, are developing a nature-based solutions platform that could meet demand for, among other ecosystem services, carbon sequestration through creating or restoring habitats. There is also the potential to create a mechanism for aggregating demand for habitat creation (from e.g. carbon sequestration, net gain, natural flood management etc.) through WENP.

The Board were asked if such a delivery mechanism was something that WENP is interested in exploring, and whether there is appetite for pooling demand for habitat creation more generally. It was agreed that there is a desire to see such an approach, building from a pipeline of investable projects and looking at how these could be delivered.

RE noted that BCC was keen to be involved in this and take up the offer in the context of the Future Parks project, which is looking at how to leverage investment to improve parks in the city. RK added that he was interested in collaborating in a WENP-wide approach and asked how the work could cut through the environmental offers that fail to achieve their aims. IB replied that working on areas of mutual interest between partners could enable sufficient momentum to be achieved.

LA observed that it was important to pool resources in this work and ensure join up to avoid duplication, and suggested that this would be something the West of England Environment Officer Group would want to be sighted on.

RB noted that there are tried and tested platforms that exist for this purpose, including EnTrade and NatureBid, and that it was important to explore the potential of these as well. SGa reminded the Board that a paper was sent ahead of the meeting looking at the roles of demand aggregation, Environmental Trading Platform and the Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) approach in strategic habitat delivery, which is also included in the post-meeting distribution.

SGa added that the LENs approach is being trialled in the Bristol Frome Catchment and could provide a mechanism to achieve a 'place-based' approach to strategic habitat delivery.

It was agreed that SGa would provide resource to explore in more depth what the areas of demand and mechanisms that partners would be interested in trialling are. Additionally, the idea will be taken to the Environment Officer Group.

IB added that The Wildlife Trusts have published a report 'Let Nature Help' on nature's contribution to the climate crisis, which can be found [here](#).

ActionJune20/02: SGa to explore with partners what are the areas of demand and mechanisms that they would be interested in trialling.

ActionJune20/03: LA to take the idea of a strategic habitat delivery mechanism to the WoE Environment Officer Group.



3. Spatial Planning

3.1 West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy update

LA thanked Board members for their contribution to developing the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS), which was approved at WECA Joint Committee on the 19th June. At the same meeting, the Joint Committee also approved £300k for the development of business cases for green infrastructure projects that could be taken to the WECA investment fund.

The meeting approved the creation of an WoE Environment Officer Group that would work on responding to the statutory requirements from the Environment Bill. In addition to Local Authority and WECA officers, external organisations including WENP will be represented on the Group, and LA will provide representation from the Environment Officer Group on the WENP Board. There will be a number of sub-groups sitting under this group, broadly categorised into the five themes of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

An informal agenda-setting meeting for the group will take place soon, to which representatives of WENP and BACP have been invited.

3.2 Landscape classification

SGr explained that a paper on landscape classification (distributed to the Board pre-meeting) had been written up based on GIS mapping done by Nick Tew, a PhD placement student with WENP earlier this year. The mapping utilises an approach pioneered in the Greater Manchester area by Dennis et al. (2018) to characterise census reporting units across the West of England into seven landscape types, based upon their composition of land use and land cover, and investigate the distribution of different land use types across the region.

The meeting agreed that the paper should be published on the WENP website, making clear that it is a background paper rather than informing planning. Additionally, 'landscape classification' should be renamed, potentially to 'greenspace' classification.

[ActionJune20/04: SGa to redraft and publish the Landscape Classification Report on the WENP website.](#)

4. Nature, Health and Wellbeing Update

SGr and SGa provided members with a brief update on WENP's work on nature and health, led by the Nature and Health Strategy Group:

- The Nature and Health Strategy Group most recently met in May, with minutes of the meeting circulated to Board members as part of the pre-meeting distribution.
- A webinar on nature and health was held on the 11 June by WENP, Natural Academy and Ecowild. More information on the webinar, including a recording and presentations, can be found on the WENP website (<https://www.wenp.org.uk/2020/nature-and-health-webinar/>).
- The Practitioner Network for Nature and Health met most recently on the morning of 11 June. Notes from the meeting can be found [here](#).

It was explained that a more formal arrangement would be put in place to formalise the funding arrangements for the West of England Practitioner Network for Nature and Health, which has been funded through the Academic Health and Science Network (AHSN) and the West of England Directors of Public Health



thus far. The energy and momentum of the Network needs to be harnessed to move towards the sector being recognised as a mainstream provider of health services.

The meeting noted that the sector is currently lacking funding at scale; work is ongoing to plug the sector in to health and wellbeing, through an upcoming meeting with Social Prescribing Link Workers and a presentation to Bristol Health Partners on WENP's nature and health work. There is potentially an opportunity to work more closely with Health and Wellbeing Board within the West of England.

RB explained that a sub-project of the Somer Valley Rediscovered scheme was looking at the use of nature-based social prescribing to encourage more sustainable prescribing practices for chronic conditions, thereby reducing the use of pharmaceuticals. This is being funded by Wessex Water as it is seen as potentially more cost-effective way of reducing the presence of pharmaceuticals in the water supply, which are otherwise costly to remove. However, nature-based social prescribing does require access to good-quality, accessible and local green spaces.

[ActionJune20/05: SGa to draft a letter of agreement with Natural Academy regarding funding for the Practitioner Network.](#)

5. Tree & Woodland Strategy update

Jon Clark provided an update on the development of a Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England, which is being led by the Forest of Avon (FoA) Trust under commission from WENP. The Strategy is intended to provide an agreed vision for trees and woodlands in the West of England, and is one of the strategic actions included in the JGIS.

It was explained that a first version of the Strategy has been drafted and is currently out for consultation, alongside an outline of a detailed appendix that uses the framework of the JGIS' GI Areas and LAs' Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) to set out detailed tree & woodland priorities for each LCA. The main document is intended to be a concise outward-facing document, backed up by details in appendices.

The Board welcomed the production of the Strategy and noted its significance. MM observed that there is a need to be ambitious and build in deliverable projects where possible, and to also use the Strategy as a vehicle to support the production of non-woodland habitat. IB added that some of the priority areas for woodland creation could be built into project proposals, and that there was a need to think about mechanisms for delivery.

JC informed attendees that there was a need for support for graphics and mapping. It was agreed that it was crucial to get the presentation of the document right and to communicate it effectively, and so JC was asked to scope out costs for graphics and communications.

RK noted that the Nature for Climate fund highlights community forests, which could be a significant source of central funding. The Strategy therefore also needs to act as a refreshed Forest of Avon Plan as well as a Tree and Woodland Strategy.

It was also noted that DEFRA's [England Tree Strategy](#) is [out for consultation](#) and noted the importance of informed and empowered partnerships. The England Tree Strategy is positive about natural solutions, and it would be good to emphasise this in any response.

[ActionJune20/06: JC, with support from the Tree and Woodland Strategy Group, to scope out costs for graphics and communications for the WoE Tree and Woodland Strategy.](#)

[ActionJune20/07: RK and SGa to produce a consultation response to the England Tree Strategy.](#)



6. Partner updates

SGr requested any updated from partners.

- **Bristol City Council** are progressing the Future Parks Programme. The prospectus will now be released in February, which does provide more time to do the baseline work, including the nature element. The health-based work of Future Parks should be linked to the WENP nature and health work.
- **Natural England** are reorganising around the mission of nature recovery, with more resource being made available this work (including in the West of England).

MM gave a brief presentation on the **Bath River Line** project, which is one of the projects within B&NES' Water Space programme. The project aims to create a continuous 5km walking and cycling connection between Bath City Centre and the Western City Limits, together with a series of improved public access hard landscaped and green spaces. One strand of the project is ecology/environment, including improvements in riverside habitat, bat habitat, and fish passes. Work is now underway to support the development of the Bath River Line through a multi-disciplinary working group, and a full business case is being produced for WECA.

More generally, the Water Space project has been well-received, and B&NES are working with BCC to extend the project to Portishead in the form of an 'Avon Strategic Corridor'.

- **South Gloucestershire Council** are in the process of 'pond banking' as part of the District Level Licensing Scheme for great crested newts. A first draft of the Biodiversity Net Gain SPD has been produced. Work is ongoing on the Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area flood defence improvement scheme. Work on the first phase of this between Aust and Severn Beach, which forms part of the String of Pearls, is starting later this year. The project board is considering fast-tracking the Hallen Marshes element of the scheme.
- Phase 1 priority habitat surveys are being rolled out as part of an environmental data update being undertaken by BRERC and WSP, commissioned by WECA.
- **BACP** are mirroring the activity of WENP and the JGIS, and are leading on the wetland element of the NRN, including an update of the wetland layer of the mapping.
- Coronavirus is having a significant impact on the **Avon Wildlife Trust**. Conversations are ongoing with local authorities on addressing the ecological emergency. An ecological emergency action plan is being developed for Bristol, which is aiming to be finalised by the Autumn. The plan is built around a nature recovery network for Bristol.
- RK noted that the Community Forests, of which there are ten included the Forest of Avon, have submitted a £100m bid to DEFRA. The West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy will help to put us in the right place for this with a focus on biodiversity. The SW Forest Advisory Group, on which Jon Clark sits, will take an interest in local strategies, and so is a good opportunity for the WoE Strategy to get recognition.

7. Any Other Business

SGr noted the importance of the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement and the need to address a lack of diversity in the environmental sector. IB replied that this was being reflected in the Bristol Ecological Emergency Action Plan, and how WENP incorporates this issue is interesting. SGa noted that the Nature and



Health Practitioner Network were also discussing this matter, and RC added it was being discussed through River Frome reconnected. It was suggested that this could be a topic addressed at a WENP conference.

As it is not currently feasible to hold a WENP Conference in person, it was suggested that a virtual event could be held in the Autumn.

[ActionJune20/08: SGa to look into holding a virtual WENP Conference in the Autumn.](#)

Attendance

Attendees

Selena Gray (Chair) – SGr	West of England Nature Partnership
Ian Barrett – IB	Avon Wildlife Trust
Richard Cresswell – RC	Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Richard Ennion – RE	Bristol City Council
Mark Minkley – MM	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Simon Stonehouse – SS	Natural England
John Flannigan	North Somerset Council
David Villis – DV	South Gloucestershire Council
Ruth Barden – RB	Wessex Water
Laura Ambler – LA	West of England Combined Authority / LEP
Ross Kennerley – RK	Woodland Trust
Stuart Gardner – SGa	West of England Nature Partnership

Observers

Jon Clark – JC	Forest of Avon Trust
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Apologies

Sally Hogg	Bristol City Council (representing Directors of Public Health)
Marion Steiner	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
Natasha Clarke	Bristol Water
Andy Hicklin	Environment Agency
Paul Cottingham	National Farmers Union
Russell Ashfield	National Trust
Tom Boden	National Trust
Savita Wilmott	Natural History Consortium
Brian Glasson	South Gloucestershire Council (representing Heads of Planning)

Actions

Action	Description	Lead(s)	Status
ActionMar20/02	PC to send SGa list of ELMs trials so that it can be circulated to Board Members	PC	Open
ActionJun20/01	SS to provide an update on ELM Schemes to the September meeting of the WENP Board	SS	Open
ActionJun20/02	SGa to explore with partners what are the areas of demand and mechanisms that they would be interested in trialling	SGa	Open
ActionJun20/03	LA to take the idea of a strategic habitat delivery mechanism to the WoE Environment Officer Group	LA	Open
ActionJun20/04	SGa to redraft and publish the Landscape Classification Report on the WENP website	SGa	Open
ActionJun20/05	SGa to draft a letter of agreement with Natural Academy regarding funding for the Practitioner Network	SGa	Open
ActionJun20/06	JC, with support from the Tree and Woodland Strategy Group, to scope out costs for graphics and communications for the WoE Tree and Woodland Strategy	JC/SGa	Open
ActionJun20/07	RK and SGa to produce a consultation response to the England Tree Strategy	RK/SGa	Open
ActionJun20/08	SGa to look into holding a virtual WENP Conference in the Autumn	SGa	Open