

## WENP Board Meeting

Teleconference // 09 December 2020 // 14:00 – 16:30

### Items

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SGr welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was held via teleconference. SGr requested any comments on the draft minutes from the September 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.

MC provided an overview of the work undertaken thus far as part of her WENP internship – the slides from this presentation are contained within the meeting slides sent to the Board.

#### 1. WENP Work Programme Review and Update

SGr explained that the WENP Work Programme would need to be updated for 2021, and that a draft of the 2021 Work Programme had been sent to the Board pre-meeting. Attendees were invited to participate in breakout rooms to feed back on the proposed changes.

The comments received from the discussions will be incorporated into an updated version of the 2021 Work Programme, which will be sent to the Board for approval.

[ActionDec20/01: SGa to update the 2021 Work Programme based on feedback received at the meeting and send to WENP Board for approval.](#)

#### 2. Trees and Woodland

##### 2.1 Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England

SGa provided an update on the Forest of Avon Plan: A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England, noting that:

- A draft had been sent for Board approval pre-meeting, which would only change slightly to incorporate minor comments and correct any outstanding errors.
- A note would be sent to WECA and Local Authority Directors in December suggesting that the document should be endorsed at West of England Joint Committee.
- The document will be designed by the same company as for the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy.

SGa noted that the communications for the document and its use post-publication would need to be agreed in the New Year, and proposed to bring together WENP Tree and Woodland Strategy Group to discuss this.



LA added that the WECA communications team could help to deliver the key messages of the Strategy, and that the option of a joint foreword from West of England leaders was being explored.

The meeting noted that it would be useful to have a high-level, visual overview of the document aimed at landowners. SGa observed that this could be something the Forest of Avon Trust and/or Woodland Trust could lead on.

HE explained that the Woodland Trust were developing woodland creation guidance, from which visual elements could be lifted. HE also highlighted the [Exmoor National Park Nature Recovery Vision](#) (page 8) as a good example of a visual communication.

*ActionDec20/02: SGa to organise a meeting of the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy in the New Year.*

*ActionDec20/03: SGa and HE to explore creating a shorter version of the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy for landowners.*

## 2.2 Trees for Climate Fund

SGa informed the meeting that £12.1m in funding had been awarded through the Trees for Climate Fund to plant 500ha across ten Community Forests in the next five months and to build a pipeline of projects for community planting in future years. The Forest of Avon Trust was one of the recipients of this funding, and there may be further funding available for the coming years.

More information on the Trees for Climate Fund in the West of England context can be found at: <https://forestofavontrust.org/trees-for-climate/>.

## 3. Green Recovery Challenge Fund

SGa informed the meeting that the Mendip Hills AONB's bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), which was submitted jointly with the Blackdown and Quantock Hills AONBs, was successful. More information on the bid can be found [here](#). The other bids from the region were not successful; however, another round of funding will be made available in early 2021.

SGr asked how WENP could facilitate funding of these bids going forwards, given the work that has gone into them, and whether they could be added to the JGIS pipeline of projects. On the latter point, LA replied that it would need to be considered how well the projects fit into the pipeline and added that the projects may also be relevant for developing funding solutions in the region, which WENP could help broker.

IB explained that the partners involved in the Bristol Avon Catchment Market (BACM) proposal were committed to its implementation, and were exploring other funding options including the second round of the GRCF and the DEFRA Investment Readiness Fund. For the next round of the GRCF, it would be considered how to have better join-up between the BACM bid and other projects in the region that are looking for funding, so that the West of England has a more coherent ask for funding.

## 4. Spatial Development Strategy

Celia Davis and Phil Anderson (WECA) presented on the West of England Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The presentation slides have been sent with the meeting minutes.



PA noted that continued engagement through the WENP Board will be crucial, including the need to integrate the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) into planning. BG emphasised the importance of engagement in informal consultation processes such as the SDS survey, as there would only be one round of formal consultation.

In response to questions from the Board, it was explained that:

- The analysis to determine the housing allocation will begin in early 2021.
- The survey can and should be promoted as widely as possible.
- Whether food production and the wider regional context could be looked at in the SDS depends on the overarching principles for the plan, one of which is the need to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. This will come out through the optioneering processes. There is more of a focus on the use of environmental-based spatial strategies, but this will need to be tested. HE noted that there were pilots through the Food, Farming and Countryside Network on planning the whole landscape (considering what is the best use of land for nature, food production, housing, carbon storage etc), and that the Cornwall Climate Change DPD has interesting policies to influence agricultural land use.
- The geographical scope of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy that will be required through the Environment Bill has not been confirmed, but the NRN will be integral to it in any case.

## 5. Partner updates

The following updates were provided by partners:

- The Chew Valley Recreational Trail project (from the JGIS pipeline) went to Joint Committee last week, where funding was approved for the northern section of the lake; future funding will be sought for the southern section. WECA is recruiting for a GI Programme Manager to work up GI projects to full business case. **B&NES Council** is developing a vision for the natural environment as a response to the recently declared ecological emergency.
- **Bristol City Council** has been working on its Ecological Emergency Action Plan, following the four themes of the Ecological Emergency Strategy. The Action Plan will be going to cabinet in March. The immediate priorities being addressed are developing a Bristol Wildlife Index, looking at how BCC's land can contribute to action, and the Council's pesticide use. The Future Parks project is looking to put mapping on parks and ecological networks into action.
- **South Gloucestershire's Local Plan** is out for consultation. The Council is looking to build on NRN mapping for local level analysis. Nine ecological corridors have been identified in South Gloucestershire; the health of these corridors and the extent to which they provide ecological connectivity will be analysed. SGC is also thinking about how growth relates to these corridors, and, if it happens in these corridors, how it can support their functioning. The Common Connections project is moving ahead in the New Year and will be going to full business case. SGC is trialling techniques on Council property to enhance the built environment for nature, and also want to engage other organisations through this. Nature-based projects are being developed for Year 2 of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, which will be going to Council.
- Russell Ashfield will be leaving the **National Trust** in December and will, therefore, be stepping down from the WENP Board. Alex Raeder, Landscape Partnership Manager for NT, will join the Board. After a difficult year for the Trust, they are now looking ahead to project planning.



- The **Woodland Trust** is having to address Ash dieback proactively. The work of the Woodland Trust in the West of England will be aligned with the Tree and Woodland Strategy.
- **North Somerset Council's** GI Strategy will be out for consultation in March and will help translate the ecological emergency declaration into action. The Council is bidding for the DEFRA flood and coastal resilience innovation programme, which will provide opportunities for biodiversity. The NSC rewilding scheme is continuing with the planting of 20,000 trees, and an Ash dieback action plan is being put together. An environment stakeholder meeting for the Banwell Bypass will soon be held.
- **Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT)** is continuing to work on its Wilder Carbon platform (habitat creation for carbon sequestration). AWT is also looking at what it can offer for biodiversity net gain, for which the biggest barrier is access to land. The Trust is working on a vision for the North Somerset Levels and Moors, which is due in the New Year, and on the Cotswold-Mendip Hills AONB Link.
- **Natural England** is recruiting to bring in extra resource.
- The **Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership** has appointed a support officer. A grant has been given to the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust for eDNA analysis on the River Chew, which should be able to determine which species of fish and invertebrates are present in a river; this could be rolled out throughout the catchment if it works. The data from the EA's Natural Capital Accounting Tool will be sent to Local Authorities and WECA to analyse.
- The **Natural History Consortium** is looking at innovative approaches to communicating and engaging with people, including a lot of work around self-directed activity, hybrid and digital events, etc. It would be useful to explore how NHC could help to engage people with the work of WENP and other partners. There is also a strand of work supporting AWT and other partners on the parts of the Ecological Emergency Strategy that are not directly related to Bristol City Council.
- The **Environment Officer Steering Group** met on 8th December, where it was agreed to put the Tree and Woodland Strategy into the WECA process for endorsement and to commission an initial scoping piece on environmental data. There is an ongoing discussion around markets for Green Infrastructure.

## 6. Any Other Business

SGa informed the Board that the survey results from the Conference, which are available to view [here](#), demonstrated generally positive feedback but that there were lessons to be learnt for future conferences.

SGa updated the meeting on the bid to the Government's Green Social Prescribing Fund submitted by Healthier Together, the Sustainability Transformation Partnership (STP) hosted by Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (BNSSG CCG). WENP provided support to the bid, ensuring it built on pre-existing work on nature and health in the region. If successful, the bid would fund a 'test and learn' site for green social prescribing, which would facilitate the embedding of green social prescribing within the healthcare system. The result of the bid is expected on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

*Post-meeting note: The [WENP Annual Review 2020](#) has been published and can be viewed [here](#).*

*Post-meeting note: A joint letter from WENP and Gloucestershire LNP was sent to the Western Gateway Chair requesting engagement with LNPs, as sent to the WENP Board.*

## Attendance

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### Attendees

Selena Gray (Chair) – SGr	West of England Nature Partnership
Ian Barrett – IB	Avon Wildlife Trust
Mark Minkley – MM	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Richard Cresswell – RC	Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Richard Ennion – RE	Bristol City Council
Rebecca Kirk – RK	Environment Agency
Nigel Riglar – NR	Environment Officer Steering Group
Jo Lewis – JL	Natural England
Tom Boden – TB	National Trust
Savita Wilmott – SW	Natural History Consortium
John Flannigan – JF	North Somerset Council
Brian Glasson – BG	South Gloucestershire Council (representing Heads of Planning)
Matthew Lipton – ML	South Gloucestershire Council
Laura Ambler – LA	West of England Combined Authority / LEP
Heather Elgar – HE	Woodland Trust
Mia Croft – MC	West of England Nature Partnership
Stuart Gardner – SGa	West of England Nature Partnership

### Observers

Celia Davis	West of England Combined Authority
Phil Anderson	West of England Combined Authority

### Apologies

Sally Hogg	Bristol City Council (representing Directors of Public Health)
Marion Steiner	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
Natasha Clarke	Bristol Water
Paul Cottingham	National Farmers Union
Rachel Williams	Natural England
Ruth Barden	Wessex Water
Ross Kennerley	Woodland Trust

## Actions

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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
ActionSep20/05	SGa to write a formal note of thanks to the Forest of Avon Trust for their work on the Tree and Woodland Strategy	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/07	SGa to share the information on Bathscape with the WENP Board	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/09	SGa to explore who the best representative would be on the WENP Board for the Severn Estuary	SGa	Open
ActionDec20/01	SGa to update the 2021 Work Programme based on feedback received at the meeting and send to WENP Board for approval	SGa	Open
ActionDec20/02	SGa to organise a meeting of the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy in the New Year	SGa	Open
ActionDec20/03	SGa and HE to explore creating a shorter version of the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy for landowners	SGa/HE	Open