

WENP Board Meeting

Teleconference // 15 June 2021 // 14:00 – 17:00

Items

IB introduced himself as the interim WENP Chair and welcomed attendees to the meeting. It was explained that IB would act as Chair for the rest of 2021 to oversee the development of an updated WENP vision and strategy, with a permanent Chair being appointed in 2022.

The minutes from the previous Board meeting and the WENP Work Programme 2021 were approved and are both available on the [WENP website](#).

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

1. WENP's Focus

IB requested that attendees each provide their views on what WENP should focus on as a partnership. After hearing from attendees, the following themes were identified:

- Nature's recovery should be the main focus;
- Having developed a number of strategies for the region, there should be more of a focus on supporting delivery and implementation through partnership;
- In order to achieve the above WENP should also facilitate strategic investment;
- A landscape scale approach should be taken, connecting activities across the region;
- WENP could focus on doing fewer things, in order to ensure they are completed and done to high quality;
- WENP needs to provide a coordinating role for nature-based activities in the region to ensure there is a coordinated approach;
- The current focus on 'three systems' (spatial planning, public health and economic development) needs updating, and the role of nature and health needs clarifying.

It was recognised that WENP has done some really good work, which needs to be communicated more regularly. We have all the ingredients in the area to get the funding where it needs to be but haven't yet pulled it together into a coherent narrative.

2. First breakout session

Attendees were invited to go into breakout sessions and map existing activity related to the natural environment in the West of England. The results of the mapping can be viewed at the following link: <https://bnhc.padlet.org/info12825/udm17lvpag7ql8u5>.



The results of this mapping will be used to create a single activity map, which will identify relevant activities within our area and begin to map how they relate to each other as a first step to developing a coherent narrative and plan.

ActionJun21/01: IB and SGa to create a single version of activity mapping and circulate to Board members.

3. Second Breakout Session

IB explained that the session would build on the discussions around WENP's focus and narrative, asking:

- What are the main things we want to achieve by 2030?
- What are our priorities for the next 2-3 years?

Attendees were again requested to go into breakout sessions to collect thoughts relating to the above questions, as well as any potential contradictions and barriers, and strengthening the partnership. The results of the activity can be viewed at the following link: <https://bnhc.padlet.org/info12825/i2vci8o1dpzoyug2>.

RE noted that WENP will struggle to deliver on the ground, but that it has an important strategic role, and as a mouthpiece for the natural environment in the region. RB added that while WENP could not deliver on the ground, it can enable and facilitate delivery and help to remove barriers.

IB asked attendees whether WENP should focus on strategising or enabling delivery. LA responded that WENP could fulfil an element of both, including addressing the region's capacity for delivery and how we make our prospectus/pipelines investible propositions.

RC noted that WENP needs to be a facilitator of partnership projects, using its influence to persuade organisations to take a lead.

IB summarised that connecting up financing and projects by putting in place the necessary architecture, thereby enabling delivery of environmental projects, was a key part of WENP's vision.

4. WENP Support and Workshops

IB and SW proposed that the Natural History Consortium (NHC) could provide support for:

- Developing a vision and strategy paper for WENP; and
- Sharing information between each Local Authority area in the West of England regarding action to address the declared ecological emergencies, in the form of a Working Group.

This support would be in the form of NHC staff time.

The Board was in agreement with this proposal, as long as the necessary finance was available through the WENP budget. It was therefore agreed that costings for the support would be taken to the WENP Executive Group for approval.

Regarding the proposal for an Ecological Emergency Working Group, it was explained that this would be for sharing learning between Local Authorities and would be set up for a year initially, with a potential extension based on its usefulness for Local Authorities.

ActionJun21/02: IB, SW and SGa to work up a costed proposal of NHC support to send to WENP Executive Group for approval.



5. Partner Updates

5.1 Tree and Woodland Strategy

SG explained that The Forest of Avon Plan: A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England had been launched on 9th June, with West of England Metro Mayor Dan Norris in attendance. The Plan is available to view online [here](#), and any WENP Board members who would like to receive a physical copy can request one from SG or the Forest of Avon Trust.

It was added that the Plan would be approved at the West of England Planning and Housing Board shortly.

The Forest of Avon Trust will be responsible for coordinating implementation of the Plan, with support from WENP and other partners.

5.2 Environmental data systems review

LA provided an update on the West of England Environmental Data Systems Review:

- Phase 1 of the Review, looking at data requirements, has been completed, with the paper well received and the recommendations supported;
- It has been acknowledged that there is a resource issue to solve with regards to environmental data;
- The Environment bill brings additional requirements regarding environmental data. Additionally, how we collect environmental data and monitor the environment could change significantly over coming years through technological developments such as remote sensing.

5.3 Environment Officers Steering Group

As well as the Environmental Data Systems Review, the EOSG also discussed the annual review of Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS) Action Plan, noting an opportunity for using this Action Plan for visibility and awareness raising regarding the work done under the umbrella of the JGIS.

5.4 Other partner updates

The following updates were provided by partners:

- The **Avon Wildlife Trust's** bid for setting up a Bristol Avon Catchment Market has progressed to the second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and should be going to panel in July. If the bid were successful, a market would be set up in September 2021.
- The **Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership** has been revising its Catchment Plan and Action Plan, and has been progressing its Fish Recovery Plan for the catchment.
- **Bristol City Council** has been working on mapping overlaying the NRN onto parks and green spaces. Recommendations will come out of this, as well as an engagement piece. BCC is also in the process of beginning its Tree and Woodland Strategy, building on the West of England Strategy. The Bristol Ecological Emergency Action Plan is in the system, and a Flood innovation project is going in to full bid.
- The **Environment Agency** is continuing to support number of projects in the region. There will be a public hearing on acoustic fish deterrent on the end of pipes in Severn Estuary
- The **National Trust** is continuing to work on progressing the Bath Riverline project, including Bathampton meadows.



West of England Nature Partnership
Joining up the dots for nature

- **Wessex Water** is continuing work to deliver Somer Valley Rediscovered and the Nailsea Wetland Project. AT Salford Sewage treatment, Wessex Water is constructing a bridge over the River Avon where there are good opportunities for wetland/riparian improvements. All water companies are starting their next business planning process; OFWAT have provided initial expectations, which includes recognition of nature's recovery, catchment-based approaches and long-term projects. Wessex Water are keen to focus on outcomes including biodiversity, water quality improvements, carbon capture etc. Mapping in Bristol Avon is being undertaken to understand opportunities to deliver e.g. zero phosphate in rivers; progress on this can be shared in the future.
- **South Gloucestershire Council's [Greener Places GI Strategy](#)** is out for public consultation. River Frome Reconnected is preparing for the next phase of funding bid. The Council's Tree planting strategy is to be developed, building on the West of England Strategy. A Green investment scheme bid for a South Gloucestershire Council Carbon Fund bid has been submitted. Local nature action plan toolkits have been launched, with Commons Connection used as an example for the toolkit.
- The **Natural History Consortium's [Festival of Nature 2021](#)** has finished. Content from the event is to be put in a catalogue.

6. Any Other Business

It was proposed that the Forest of Avon Trust was invited to join the WENP Board, given the importance of their role in coordinating the Forest of Avon Plan. This proposal was agreed to by the Board.

Post-meeting note: the Forest of Avon Trust has been invited to join the WENP Board, with Executive Director Jon Clark being the representative.

SGa explained that the updated layers for the water component of the Nature Recovery Network would be sent to Board members when finalised.

[ActionJun21/03: SGa to circulate updated wetland NRN layers to WENP Board when finalised.](#)

Attendance

Attendees

Ian Barrett (Chair) – IB	West of England Nature Partnership
Amy Coulthard – AC	Avon Wildlife Trust
Karen Renshaw – KR	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Richard Cresswell – RC	Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Richard Ennion – RE	Bristol City Council
Natasha Clarke – NC	Bristol Water
Rebecca Kirk – RK	Environment Agency
Tom Boden – TB	National Trust
Savita Wilmott – SW	Natural History Consortium
John Flannigan – JF	North Somerset Council
Matthew Lipton – ML	South Gloucestershire Council
Ruth Barden - RB	Wessex Water
Laura Ambler – LA	West of England Combined Authority / LEP
Rosie Walker – RW	Woodland Trust
Stuart Gardner – SGa	West of England Nature Partnership

Apologies

Mark Minkley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Sally Hogg	Bristol City Council (representing Directors of Public Health)
Nigel Riglar	Environment Officer Steering Group
Marion Steiner	GP
Paul Cottington	National Farmers Union
Alex Raeder	National Trust
Rachel Williams	Natural England
Simon Stonehouse	Natural England
Brian Glasson	South Gloucestershire Council (representing Heads of Planning)
Ross Kennerley	Woodland Trust

Actions

Action	Description	Lead(s)	Status
Action Jun21/01	IB and SGa to create a single version of activity mapping and circulate to Board members	IB	Open
Action Jun21/02	IB, SW and SGa to work up a costed proposal of NHC support to send to WENP Executive Group for approval	IB/SW	Open
Action Jun21/03	SGa to circulate updated wetland NRN layers to WENP Board when finalised	SGa	Open
ActionMar21/03	SGa to explore additional representation on the Nature and Health Strategy Group to improve links with other workstreams, and send email requesting volunteers	SGa	Open
ActionMar21/05	MM to explore funding options for Forest of Avon Trust coordination role for trees and woodland in the West of England	MM	Open
ActionMar21/06	LA and SGa to discuss engagement with Western Gateway initiative	LA/SGa	Open
ActionMar21/07	SGa to look into WENP Away Day once Covid restrictions are lifted and a new Chair nominated	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/09	SGa to explore who the best representative would be on the WENP Board for the Severn Estuary	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/02	PC to send SGa list of ELMs trials so that it can be circulated to Board Members	PC	Open