

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****Decision Report**

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member – Environment and Transport
<b>Date:</b>	6 September 2011
<b>Title:</b>	Formation of a Local Nature Partnership for Hampshire
<b>Reference:</b>	3245
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to secure agreement of the Executive Member for Environment and Transport to the County Council taking part in discussions on the formation of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Hampshire and, if the arrangements, remit and membership are aligned to its own priorities, the County Council becomes a member of the LNP.
- 1.2 This paper seeks to explain the role of the Natural Environment White Paper in proposing Local Nature Partnerships, the current situation in Hampshire in relation to that proposal, the benefits to the County Council that may derive from involvement in a LNP and the expectations that the County Council would have of the LNP.

## **2. Contextual information**

- 2.1 The Natural Environment White Paper was published in June 2011, with the aim of securing a healthy natural environment that delivers a range of benefits, or services, for the environment, society and the economy. A corporate response to the pre-White Paper consultation expressed a number of concerns about the direction that the Government was taking. Whilst the White Paper has acknowledged and addressed some of these issues there are proposals contained in it that remain a concern, either because of the demands that would be made on staff resources or because their focus is too narrow. For example, large-scale 'Nature Improvement Areas' are proposed which would be the focus for expanding and buffering existing ecologically rich sites. In Hampshire, excluding the unitary authorities, there are 49,000 hectares of statutorily protected wildlife sites (over 32,000 hectares of which are in the New Forest) and 35,000 hectares of local wildlife sites jointly covering about 22% of the County. A focus on these sites could lead to an imbalance in environmental management activity across Hampshire and

constrain future development in rural areas in need of social and economic regeneration. There is, therefore, a cautious response to the White Paper as a whole, with a 'watching brief' being the approach to many of the proposals, in line with our comments in the corporate response to the White Paper consultation.

- 2.2 Amongst the proposals in the White Paper is the formation of 'Local Nature Partnerships' to strengthen local action, enable local leadership and operate across administrative boundaries. LNPs are intended to raise awareness about the services and benefits of a healthy natural environment, contribute to the green economy and to complement Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- 2.3 In response to this proposal the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HWT) has written to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment inviting him to discussions on the formation of an LNP for Hampshire. There are potential LNPs being discussed on the Isle of Wight, in the PUSH area and in the Greater New Forest area. It is understood that West and East Sussex, Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire and Surrey are all likely to form county based LNPs.
- 2.4 HWT has described the potential role of a LNP as follows:
- (i) to raise awareness of the services and benefits which a healthy natural environment brings for communities and the local economy;
  - (ii) to develop a shared environmental vision and set of priorities for their area;
  - (iii) to add value to a local area's development through contributing to local authority plans;
  - (iv) to help contribute to the Green Economy by working with the LEPs;
  - (v) to bring together a range of local stakeholders across a range of sectors;
  - (vi) to co-operate with other partnerships where this results in more efficient use of resources and better outcomes;
  - (vii) to work at a landscape scale to improve the range of benefits and services we get from a healthy natural environment;
  - (viii) to form at a strategic level to deliver integrated outcomes with a wide range of benefits.
- (wording as taken from the Natural Environment White Paper published June 2011).
- 2.5 A Hampshire LNP could, for the first time, provide a forum and partnership for the planning and delivery of environmental management across the whole of Hampshire, embracing a wide range of interests. In the past, partnerships have tended to be sectoral, relating to, for example, biodiversity, health, community or access, except in the protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) where cross-disciplinary planning and delivery has characterised their activities.

- 2.6 The commitment of the County Council to integrated collaborative working and building capacity in the public sector has been demonstrated recently through its Total Environment initiative, which is one of a number of pilots across the country, and which reflects many of the aspirations of a LNP as set out by HWT. Achieving efficiencies in the use of financial and staff resources, adding value to other organisations' and our own activities and building capacity in local communities and the not-for-profit sector are all benefits that could derive from a LNP.
- 2.7 The participation of the County Council would be dependent on a number of factors. It would be essential that the LNP replaces the existing Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership rather than creating a new partnership, and the HWT proposal recommends that this is the case. A new LNP could also provide the framework for delivery of Hampshire's corporate interests in biodiversity, replacing the internal partnership formed to develop the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan. It would be essential that the partnership covers the whole of Hampshire, as the formation of three LNPs in the County, with many of the same members, would be unsustainable. The proposal for LNPs in the PUSH area and the New Forest would have to be withdrawn, given the pressures on staff and financial resources across all sectors. Finally, the key purpose of the LNP would need to be the delivery on the ground of programmes, projects and activities that benefit the environment, communities and economy of the whole of Hampshire, unconstrained by the boundaries of any future Nature Improvement Areas.

### **3. Finance**

- 3.1 It is envisaged that the recommendations will not increase the scale of engagement of officer time from the present level.

### **4. Performance**

- 4.1 In the event of a LNP being established, effective monitoring measures would need to be put in place to determine its effectiveness.

### **5. Other key issues**

- 5.1 Participation in the LNP would be non-statutory and would not be legally binding.

**6. Recommendations**

- 6.1. That the County Council takes part in discussions on the formation of a Local Nature Partnership for Hampshire, as proposed in the Government's Natural Environment White Paper.
- 6.2. That the County Council joins the Local Nature Partnership if the arrangements, remit and membership are aligned to the County Council's own priorities.
- 6.3. That this decision is conditional on the Local Nature Partnership being formed from a reshaped Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership, and on there being a single Local Nature Partnership for Hampshire.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

- 1.1. The Local Nature Partnership provides the potential to plan and deliver environmental benefits across the whole of Hampshire in an integrated and inclusive way and would have a positive impact .

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

- 2.1. Delivery of environmental improvements in an integrated way will take into consideration crime and disorder issues and potentially could have a positive impact.

### **3. Climate Change:**

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? -The potential for improved environmental management will have positive benefits in the reduction of Hampshire's carbon footprint.
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? -The natural environment will have improved management and be more resilient to adapt to climate change impacts in the longer term. The shared ownership of the issues and the management responsibilities Hampshire wide, will ensure a sustainable longer term approach to environmental management.