

NORTH YORKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
WEDNESDAY 29th FEBRUARY 2012

A LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE & YORK

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines a proposal to create a Local Nature Partnership for North Yorkshire and York.
- 1.2 Attached to this short report is a discussion paper that has been circulated to external partners which provides further detail (Appendix 1).
- 1.3 The report seeks the views of the LAF on this approach.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In one of the key proposals made in the Natural Environment White Paper, government has set out its intention establish “*Local Nature Partnerships*” across England. Their overall purpose would be to “bring a diverse range of individuals, businesses and organisations together at a local level to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making.”
- 2.2 Government has suggested that they would like to see Local Nature Partnerships that will:
 - **demonstrate local leadership**, raising awareness about the vital services and benefits which a healthy natural environment brings for people, communities and the local economy;
 - use their knowledge and expertise to **develop a shared environmental vision** and **set of priorities for their area** (this could highlight how protection and enhancement of the natural environment can bring economic and social benefits);
 - **add value to a local area’s development** through contributing to local authority plans, and local development frameworks;
 - **help contribute to the Green Economy** by, for example, providing relevant information for Local Enterprise Partnerships in development of their plans;
 - **bring together a range of local stakeholders** ... who can align efforts and make best use of available resources;
 - **work at a large scale** to improve the range of benefits and services we get from a healthy natural environment.

- 2.3 This paper proposes that North Yorkshire County Council takes an active role in establishing a partnership covering all of North Yorkshire & York.

3.0 HOW WILL ACCESS FEATURE IN THE WORK OF THIS PARTNERSHIP?

- 3.1 The health and wellbeing benefits of access to nature have been known for sometime and much work has been done over recent years to demonstrate these benefits more clearly.
- 3.2 The partnership will consider all forms of access to nature such as outdoor learning, access to green space, volunteering and access for leisure and recreation purposes.
- 3.3 The Local Access forum will play a key role in helping to shape up the partnerships approach to improving access to nature through the strengthening of the rights of way network.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that members consider this report, and the attached discussion paper, and give there views on the proposed Local Nature Partnership and how the LAF would like to get involved in the process.

Contact:
Phillip Strand,
Projects & Partnerships Officer
Phillip.strand@northyorks.gov.uk

A Local Nature Partnership for North Yorkshire & York Discussion Paper – February 2012

1. Purpose of this Paper

- 1.1 North Yorkshire County Council has recently been successful in securing capacity building funds from DEFRA to explore with partners the possibility of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for North Yorkshire and York. The purpose of this paper is to set out some initial ideas about what the partnership could do and what its structure might be. These draft proposals are designed to aid discussion with a broad range of partners.

2. Background

- 2.1 In one of the key proposals made in the Natural Environment White Paper, government has set out its intention establish “*Local Nature Partnerships*” across England. Their overall purpose would be to “bring a diverse range of individuals, businesses and organisations together at a local level to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making.”

- 2.2 Government has suggested that they would like to see Local Nature Partnerships that will:

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- **bring together a range of local stakeholders** ... who can align efforts and make best use of available resources;
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- 2.3 This paper proposes that a Local Nature Partnership be established covering all of North Yorkshire & York.

3. The Landscapes of North Yorkshire & York

- 3.1 In terms of both need and geographical coverage North Yorkshire and York is an ideal match for the criteria set out by the Government for a Local Nature Partnership.

- 3.2 The sub-region covers a total area of 8310 sq km, it is made up of predominantly rural landscapes that stretch across eight administrative boundaries and two National Parks and it is widely acknowledged that its landscapes underpin the health and prosperity of the sub-region.
- 3.3 The designated landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks and the Nidderdale and Howardian Hills AONBs cover nearly half of the sub-region and are good examples of places where continued work with land owners and other partners can result in landscapes that are providing a wide range of services for the benefit of wildlife, people and the economy. At present the management of landscapes and ecological networks outside of these designated areas is largely un-coordinated with no overarching approach to conservation, enhancement or connectivity resulting in landscapes that are predominately farmed for the sole purpose of food production.
- 3.4 Work is also needed to better understand the relationship between natural and built infrastructure. When development occurs further consideration needs to be given to how that development integrates with the surrounding environment, or even how the development may add value to the environment through innovative landscape planning and building design. Some local authorities are exploring the enhancement of Green Infrastructure through the Local Development Framework process to varying degrees but much more could be done to develop a best practice approach for the sub-region that would include maximising the use of Community Infrastructure Levies to help deliver key parts of the GI network.

4. North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership

4.1 All organisations face unprecedented and increasing funding pressure. In the past organisations have worked with each other on initiatives and projects where we have a shared interest. Given the huge pressure on our resources, we now need to find a new way of working that goes beyond traditional partnership working. This proposal is for public sector, not for profit sector organisations and local communities, to collaborate in delivering a shared set of environmental priorities.

4.2 The partnership would

- **Develop and agree (spatial) priorities for environmental action** that will make the maximum contribution to key issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, tourism, land based enterprise and health & well being.
- **Agree ('commission') a programme of environmental action**, delivered by a range of partner organisations, aligning decisions about resource allocation against the locally-agreed priorities.
- Work with the **Local Enterprise Partnership** to work up **delivery projects** that will enhance the natural and cultural environment and contribute to the tourism and land based enterprise.
- **Monitor** and report on **delivery of the action programme** and progress in environmental outcomes (performance).

- Provide **strategic advice** on the natural environment across North Yorkshire & York, seeking to align (natural) environmental objectives with economic, health and social agendas.
 - Raise awareness and promote the **links between the economy, health and wellbeing and a healthy natural and cultural environment**
 - Provide **authoritative advice for development plans** and to local development decision making.
- 4.3 The partnership would also provide a spring board to develop innovative new programmes, for example supporting proposals also in the natural environment white paper for projects promoted through the planning system to deliver conservation benefits in one place to compensate for losses arising from development in another.
- 4.4 Because the aims of the partnership are more diverse than purely the delivery of nature improvements it may be that the title 'Local Nature Partnership' is not sufficient to explain the breadth of areas covered. Whilst we may seek endorsement from Government as the 'Local Nature Partnership', there is a question therefore as to whether it should carry that title instead of a more appropriate title such as *Landscape partnership* or *Green Infrastructure Partnership*.
- 4.5 To integrate the partnership with existing structures in North Yorkshire and York, it should be possible to look into a formal reporting mechanism to Local Government North Yorkshire & York.
- 4.6 **Partnership Board** - The role of the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership Board will be to provide overall leadership for the improvement of landscape diversity. It will set and agree overall priorities for the Partnership.
- 4.7 Its membership will be made up of senior representatives from a range of cross-sector organisations interested in enhancing the benefits that landscapes provide for wildlife, people and the economy. These individuals should hold the level of authority necessary to steer the resources of their own organisations towards agreed work areas and also be capable of influencing other key decision makers within partnerships that deal with social and economic issues, such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Health & Well-Being Board.
- 4.8 **Officers Group** - The role of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership Officers Group will be to provide support and advice to the Board and ensure that actions agreed by the board are delivered on the ground working alongside local groups, landowners and members of the local community. The group will also be responsible for ensuring that the ideas and suggestions of people at a local level are passed to the board to help inform decision making.
- 4.9 **Wider Partnership Network** - There are many organisations and individuals involved or interested in the conservation and enhancement of landscapes in the sub-region. A database of wider partners will need to be created for

communications as they are also part of this Local Nature Partnership and their help will be required to inform decision making, especially at a local level.

5. Who needs to be involved?

5.1 Defra's guidance says that Local Nature Partnerships should "bring together a range of local stakeholders, which may include people from local authorities, businesses, statutory authorities, civil society organisations, land managers, local record centres, local enterprise partnerships and people from communities themselves ..."

5.2 Suggested membership from among:

- Local Authorities (county and district)
- National Parks
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Arms Length Bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Marine
- Management Organisation, English Heritage, British Waterways etc.)
- Civil society organisations and Environmental Charities (e.g. Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, National Trust,
- Existing Partnerships (e.g. Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnerships, Total Environment Initiative,
- Rural and Farming Networks, Green Infrastructure Partnerships etc.)
- Land Owners
- Local Businesses
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Health and Wellbeing Reps
- Local Environmental Record Centres

5.3 We will need to work up a definitive list of partners that reflect the requirements for a North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership, decide the best way for this large and diverse list of partners to communicate with each other and what structure would best serve all our collective aims and ambitions for the sub-region.

6. Geographical Overlap

6.1 Two other proposals have received capacity building funds from DEFRA which overlap geographically with North Yorkshire & York. DEFRA has requested that we work collaboratively with these applicants as part of this capacity building funding with a view to minimising overlap at the LNP application stage.

6.2 **North Pennines Chain LNP** – The North Pennines AONB is proposing a partnership that looks at the management of upland habitats across the north Pennines which includes the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB.

6.3 **Yorkshire West LNP** – The West Yorkshire Joint Services and the White Rose Forest Partnership are proposing a partnership that could cover the whole of the Leeds City Region, including Craven, Harrogate, Selby and York.

Conversations regarding geographical overlap will take place during the working up of proposals to try and agree the most appropriate way forward, but it is possible that all three LNP proposals will seek formal adoption and it will be left to DEFRA to make the final decision on which partnership best fits the criteria they have set out.

7. LNP Endorsement Process

- 7.1 The capacity building programme that we are rolling out will be complete by the end of June.
- 7.2 The application process, to be formally recognised by Government as a Local Nature Partnership, is not entirely clear yet. Ministerial decisions are awaited but it is hoped that the application window will open during spring. Defra anticipate an 8-week window and would like to be able to announce the first LNPs by the summer.