



Kent Nature Partnership Strategic Priorities

Revised and agreed 28th January 2014

Background

1. During the development of the Kent Nature Partnership, a review of strategies and similar documents was undertaken (for Kent and nationally, where they apply locally). This review included assessing the potential for that strategy to help in the delivery of the Partnership's vision. It identified that some, such as the AONB Management Plans, were already directly contributing, with their aspirations for the natural environment much aligned. Others, such as the Kent Health & Wellbeing Strategy, were starting to realise the natural environment's potential contribution and would welcome input to help realise this. However some, such as the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, had not yet considered the role the natural environment played in supporting the local economy and were therefore not yet taking it into account within their plans for growth.
2. This work helped to inform the strategic priorities for the Partnership, which focus around three areas of action: advocacy, support and influence.

Advocacy

3. There is already much good work undertaken in Kent for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and the contribution this makes to the social wellbeing and economy of the county. The Partnership should not seek to duplicate this. Instead the Partnership will be an advocate for this work and the principles upon which they are founded. The targets currently being developed (see paragraph 5) will be done so in consultation with the relevant bodies to ensure they support and strengthen the current aspirations within the county.
4. The strategic policy framework for Kent's natural environment, to be developed for summer 2014, will form the basis of the Partnership's input to local plans and other strategic planning matters (the National Planning Policy Framework requires consultation with the LNP). This document will set out how the Partnership's LNP vision and targets should be delivered. Where relevant it will also advocate and promote the other principles already in place, such as those set out in the AONB Management Plans.
5. The Partnership will also seek to advocate, and in turn see local delivery of, national targets set by Biodiversity 2020 and the Government's Natural Environment White Paper vision. Local targets for Kent's natural environment, that also consider social and economic services, are currently in development and a draft set of targets will be published in February 2014.

Support

6. The health and wellbeing sector is already very much aware of the benefits the natural environment can bring and the supporting role it can play in delivering this agenda. However implementing and realising these benefits requires some further input from the Partnership.
7. The Partnership has been working with Kent Public Health to undertake a gap analysis to understand the provision of health care opportunities in the outdoors across the county and the barriers which may exist. In understanding this, we can then better develop the role the Partnership should be taking in supporting this agenda. This report will be made available to Board members in early February with recommendations for ongoing work for their consideration.
8. Similarly, there is also ongoing work and initiatives coming from the farming and land management/business community, who do understand the value of the natural environment in supporting this economy. And, as with health and wellbeing, the Partnership needs to better understand how it can support this community in helping to achieve the Partnership's vision.
9. The Partnership has recently commissioned work to look at innovative land management uses in Kent, to assess the scope and scale and in turn new areas of land use which may trigger investment. An interim report will be circulated to Board members in early February and recommendations for further work will be made to the Board in due course.
10. This support role will be applied wherever the Partnership considers it can offer beneficial input, enabling best use of available resources, directing action to priority areas and achieving greater benefits for the natural environment and the social and economic services it provides.

Influence

11. As previously mentioned the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) has paid little consideration to the natural environment and the role it plays in supporting economic growth of the region. This is therefore a key focus for the Partnership's efforts in influencing.
12. To date there has been limited success in securing meaningful engagement with the SELEP with any significant outcome. The three LNPs (Thames, Sussex and Kent) operating in the SELEP area joined together in August 2013 to approach the SELEP to discuss opportunities to input into the development of the LEP's growth plans. This led to a "think piece" on green infrastructure opportunities and an associated workshop. Despite this engagement there have been limited opportunities to embed the natural environment within the LEP strategies produced to date. However, the opportunity to engage through 2014 will be simpler following the implementation of the federated model and the creation of the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP). Work is already underway to identify how the Partnership may support KMEP in the integration of natural environment within its plans for growth.
13. In addition there are a number of strategic issues that the Partnership will need to proactively engage with as they are tackled by the county. These include:
 - Fracking
 - Water storage
 - Transport links
 - Development pressures/house numbers
 - Population growth

- Energy
- Food production

14. Further additional priorities for influence will be identified over the coming year.