

**Devon Local Nature Partnership – Green Connections
Meeting minutes 20/07/2015**

Attendees:

Jonny Miller, GI Officer, Teignbridge District Council
 Alexis Huggins, GI Coordinator, Torbay & South Hams Councils
 Simon Bates, GI Project Manager, Exeter & East Devon Growth Point
 Andrew Jones, Landscape and Countryside Officer, North Devon District Council
 Bruce Macfarlane, Tree and Landscape Officer, Torrridge District Council
 Hilary Winter, Forum Officer, Devon Countryside Access Forum
 Helen Clayton, Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Devon County Council
 Trevor Cronin, Catchment Coordinator, Environment Agency
 Sarah Jennings, Ecologist, Devon County Council and LNP Coordinator
 Gavin Bloomfield, Senior Conservation Officer, RSPB
 Tracy Brooks, Strategic Planner, Torbay Council
 Martin White, Public Health Specialist, Public Health Devon

Apologies:

Rob Sekula, Countryside and Community Projects Officer, South Hams & West Devon Councils
 Stuart Langer, Senior Planning Officer, Devon County Council
 Emily Stallworthy, Conservation Officer, Devon Wildlife Trust
 Tom Lowry, Urban Designer Natural Infrastructure Team, Plymouth City Council
 Julien Sclater, Land Use Advisor, Natural England
 Melanie Croll, Landscape Officer, Devon County Council
 Andrew Bell, Reserve Coordinator, North Devon Biosphere Reserve
 Hannah Colston, Senior Development Manager, Active Devon

ACTIONS

Item	Action	Who
1	Chase up EA collation of good practice SUDS case studies	TC
1	Send case studies on SUDS and comments on DCC draft guidance to SB for collation	All
1	Collate SUDS case studies and comments on draft DCC guidance for final circulation to Green Connections Group and then to Martin Fox at DCC	SB
1	DCC schemes prepared by NPS not delivering a high standard of GI – Raise with Peter Chamberlain'	SB
2	Coordinate production of a paper regarding barriers/issues and potential solutions (including case studies) to delivering high quality green infrastructure across Devon. To be used to highlight problems and potential solutions to decision makers. See e-mail from SJ (21/07).	SJ
2	Discuss design guides for Teignbridge and Exeter. Find out more about Exeter Design Guide (is it being updated to make it a Devon wide document?)	SJ/JM
2	Send any case studies of successful use of biodiversity offsetting to SJ/JM	All
2	Send AH NE guidance which states that s106 pooling restrictions don't apply for mitigation carried out on European sites	SB
2	Circulate South Hams GI Framework once formatting finalised	AH
2	Talk to local EA planning liaison officers and in-house drainage teams to ask them to promote multiple benefits of SUDS in their consultation responses	All
2	Talk to David Hinde at Highways Agency about Highways England money for GI related projects	SJ/SB
2	Organise a meeting with LPAs with cirl buntings to discuss guidance note and moving towards adoption	GB
2	Arrange meeting with TC/others to see how the Catchment Partnership work fits in with the	SJ

	LNP work.	
3	Ask Andrew Ardley at DCC who we should be talking to about projects coming under Devon Trails Network for LNP Pipeline.	SJ
3	Consider whether any additional projects could be added to the project pipeline list – either strategic projects or specific projects which could come under one of the wider umbrella projects	All
3	Consider whether a simple advocacy paper covering reconnecting people and nature is required	SJ
3	AH and TB to meet to discuss opportunity to extend Sustainable Travel Packs to cover information on green spaces and recreation opportunities in Torbay	AH/TB
3	Circulate new home owner questionnaires – Cranbrook and Teignbridge	SB/JM
5	Circulate monitoring framework which might be able to be adapted to help develop GI indicators in line with NPPF	SB
8	Carry out search to find out what guidance is already available regarding Neighbourhood Plans and circulate thoughts on need for GI guidance from LNP.	AH

MINUTES

Item 1: Introductions, apologies and actions from last meeting

Apologies

- See above

Introductions:

- JM – GI Officer working in planning department at Teignbridge District Council
- AH – GI Coordinator across Torbay and South Hams Councils. Employed by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust on behalf of a partnership including the councils, TCCT, NE, National Trust and South Devon AONB.
- SB – GI Project Manager for Exeter & East Devon Growth Point. Employed by East Devon but working across Exeter too. Based at Cranbrook. Has produced leaflet explaining some of key projects.
- AJ – Landscape and Countryside Officer at North Devon. Background is arboriculture, short on landscape and ecology expertise at the council. GI Study is a PPG17 type document and Andrew is keen to ensure that it considers GI networks and PROW too.
- BM – Tree and Landscape Officer at Torridge. Here to learn more about GI.
- HW – Forum Officer for Devon Countryside Access Forum (statutory forum under CROW Act). Role of forum is to improve public access to land for the purposes of recreation and enjoyment.
- HC – Senior PROW Officer at Devon in legal and development team. Interested in developing closer working relationships with other authorities.
- TC – Catchment Coordinator for Tamar and South Devon Catchment Partnerships. Interested in opportunities for collaboration, achievement of multiple benefits etc.
- SJ – Ecologist at Devon and LNP Coordinator. Looking at links between Green Connections and other LNP themes.
- GB – Senior Conservation Officer at RSPB. Interested in how GI can deliver for biodiversity, including through provision of 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (SANG).
- TB – Strategic Planning at Torbay Council and involved in LNP. Role recently extended to include transport.

- MW - Public Health Specialist at Devon. Part of portfolio is planning. In the role approx 4 months, previously part of Environmental Health team at Teignbridge. SB expressed disappointment that there was no representation from Plymouth City Council. JM explained that TL had sent apologies as he was off sick but would send an update for the minutes.

Actions from last meeting

- 'EA collating good practice examples of Devon SUDS. JM/SJ to discuss site visit and SAB presentation with EA/DCC' – TC to chase up case studies. SJ explained that Martin Fox at DCC is developing SUDS Guidance and case studies could be linked. TB said that Torbay is now requesting FRA on all planning applications and due to Combined Sewer Overflow issues on the marine SAC, SUDS were becoming increasingly important in Torbay. Drainage Engineer at Torbay also writing SUDS guidance. Following the meeting SB undertook to collate case studies – All to send relevant examples to SB.

AJ requested that we talk about SUDS in more detail later and how multiple benefits can be achieved.

- 'SL to circulate Devon GI Strategy to group' – The Strategy which is web based can be found here <https://new.devon.gov.uk/greeninfrastructure/strategy>
- 'SB noted DCC prepared by NPS not delivering a high standard of GI – SB to raise with Peter Chamberlain' – carry over action.

Item 2 – Quick catch up from GI Partnership areas (key projects/key issues/Local Plan update/things to share)

JM

- Shared guidance about planting on the public highway, allowing developers to plant within 2m of the highway (Section 142 of the Highways Act 1980 empowers the Highway Authority to grant a licence permitting the owner/occupier of any premises adjoining the highway to plant and maintain or to retain and maintain trees, shrubs, plants or grass in the highway). Further details attached.
- Teignbridge Local Plan has GI, biodiversity, sustainable transport policies. Masterplans are being developed for some sites with consideration to GI (ecology/drainage/access etc).

There was a discussion around the fact that there can be a disconnect between planning policy and what is actually delivered through planning applications. SJ suggested that we need to highlight this to Nicola Bulbeck (Board Lead for Green Connections Theme) to take forward. JM explained that in Teignbridge this was often due to viability issues and crossover between old and new Local Plans. SJ suggested that we produce a paper to take this forward detailing barriers/issues and potential solutions. TB felt it was important to have strong policies, validation and s106/CIL procedures in place. HC mentioned that DCC were adding access to their validation list. Example of Teignbridge and South Hams validation, which include GI requirements, can be found at the links below:

Teignbridge - <http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36551&p=0>

South Hams - <http://www.southhams.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10830&p=0>

- Design Guide for Teignbridge being developed, looking at Exeter Design Guide and Sherford Town Code as good examples. The guide will look at play, parks, wildlife corridors etc. JM is leading on 'green' elements working with an urban designer.

There was a discussion about the Exeter Design Guide. It is understood that it's being updated and could potentially become a Devon wide document. SJ and JM to discuss this further outside the meeting.

- Working on Cirl Bunting Strategy with RSPB and DCC and trying to use biodiversity offsetting on planning applications.

SJ explained that she's commissioned some work by Jo Treweek to try to take the approaches from the offsetting pilots to develop an overall Devon approach. It would be useful to have any case studies of using biodiversity offsetting.

AH

- Key projects at Torbay Council include developing plans for the Great Parks Community Park on western edge of Paignton. The need for the park is identified in the emerging Local Plan and GI Plan and is in an area which has future housing allocation and is fairly deprived. An initial masterplan and costs have been developed. Although full extent of development not yet forthcoming have got two planning permissions (one with signed s106 and one currently being agreed) which will provide GI contributions towards the park (greenspace and recreation, ecology, drainage). Current focus is on obtaining community views on initial plans and talking to others about how we might be able to resolve existing anti-social behaviour issues (talking to community safety team, street wardens, Devon Wildlife Trust, National Trust etc). Article in community newsletter and discussion at Community Partnership meeting in the Autumn.
- Working up approach to secure developer contributions to fund mitigation in the Berry Head to Sharkham Point component of the South Hams SAC. Mitigation required in respect of increased recreational pressure on the limestone grassland habitat from the increase in visitors linked to increased housing numbers in the Local Plan. Understand S106 pooling restrictions won't apply to mitigation on European sites – SB to send AH details.
- Looking to commission consultants to identify potential land for off-site ecological mitigation/compensation (and other GI benefits). Got several development sites which require this (particularly with regard to cirl buntings) and recognise need to have a strategic plan rather than current piecemeal approach).
- South Hams Our Plan at early stage of development; earliest Regulation 19 consultation is at end of year.
- GI Framework developed and contains specific projects. Project tables intended to be updated on an annual basis to ensure document remains 'current'. Draft on website but final version currently being formatted. AH to circulate in due course.
- Kingswear Peninsula Access Project – Looking to provide network of recreational paths across Brixham – Kingswear peninsula linking NT properties, Berry Head NNR and Lupton House. Focus currently on Lupton House to improve signage and better promote existing permissive paths.
- Now framework is finalised, moving into delivery stage and looking at s106 funds and how they might be used to help fund some of the projects identified in the framework

SB

- Local Plan inspection on proposed changes two weeks ago – some issues still to be resolved.
- Neil Harris has been employed as the Habitats Regulations Delivery Officer across

Teignbridge/Exeter and East Devon and will be focussing on delivering on and off site mitigation for the Natura 2000 sites.

- SUDS – SB met with EA planning liaison officers to ask if they could highlight the multiple benefits of SUDS in their responses. This has been successful and helps give greater weight to GI comments on applications. JM wondered if this could be applied more generally and HC said that we need to also consider access i.e. don't want footpath running through a SUDS feature which could be underwater at certain times. All to talk to local EA planning liaison officers and in-house drainage teams to ask them to promote multiple benefits of SUDS in their consultation responses.
- Howard Grey from Green/Blue Urban (consultancy focussing on urban tree planting/tree pit design) offered to take councillors on site visit to talk about importance of street trees – they were willing to do this free of charge.
- Tree and Design Action Group have good guides on trees in hard landscaping and urban environment - <http://www.tdag.org.uk/>

AJ

- Local Plan likely to be inspected in September.
- GI Strategy is currently very PPG17 focussed and doesn't look at wider connectivity.
- GI is considered on a case by case basis on applications.
- There have been protracted discussions with NE regarding Natura 2000 sites (particularly impacts from road traffic emission) but further evidence has concluded that there will be no 'Likely Significant Effects'.

DCC (SJ/HC)

- Organising internal meeting to agree who will lead on GI.
- Minerals Plan currently being updated including a Bovey Basin Strategy (worth noting thousands of great crested newts found at Grey Lane).
- Large road schemes at Newton Abbot/Exmouth/Exeter A38. Highways England may have some money for GI related projects e.g. planting for noise abatement, drainage etc. SJ to approach David Hinde at Highways Agency to find out more.
- New quarry at Straight Gate, Whitecleaves Quarry proposals.
- Stopped cutting some verges and trying to get communities involved. HLF bid with North Devon Biosphere Reserve and South Devon AONB to help provide guidance to communities.

GB

- Developing a guidance note about Cirl Buntings and Development in conjunction with Teignbridge and Devon to formalise the approach used with Teignbridge over last decade.
- Proposing use of Grampian conditions to avoid pooling restrictions of the CIL regs. in order to deliver strategic nature reserves. This has been successfully applied for offsets in Northumberland.
- Looking to also work with Torbay and South Hams on this.
- Working towards formal adoption of the guidance note. Likely to hold a meeting with LPAs with cirl buntings to move towards adoption.

TC

- Working on Catchment Based Approach (CBA) in Tamar and South Devon; South Devon area is new. CBA website available here <http://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/south-west>

- Currently working up an action plan covering everything that the Catchment Partnerships want to achieve.
- There is an EA Plan and a separate Partnership Plan and the idea is to marry the two together to see where work is being done and identify any gaps.
- Seapath Project (Catchment Partnership Action Fund) has £42,000 being spent in South Devon area looking at Kingsbridge – Salcombe estuary and red tide issue and also at Slapton Ley. Most work is around identifying misconceptions, engaging schools and boat owners etc. This money has to be spent before the end of the financial year and is a big part of the Catchment Partnership work at the moment.
- May be links between Catchment Partnership work and other projects e.g. other AONB projects, Highways England money etc

SJ asked if the Catchment Partnership were purely focussed on the Water Framework Directive objectives or whether they covered a wider remit. TC explained that it was wider. SJ to arrange meeting with TC/others to see how the Catchment Partnership work fits in with the LNP work.

TL, Plymouth City Council, was unable to attend but circulated the update below following the meeting.

Natural Infrastructure Team now has 10 FTE staff. Main areas of responsibility are; planning advice and delivery for local greenspaces, strategic greenspaces, playing pitches, allotments, play, coastal and marine, nature conservation, landscape etc.

Key issues are:

- Continued pressure for development in Plymouth
- Staff capacity to deliver improvements
- We spend a lot of time defending against inappropriate development
 - Radford Quarry (50 homes in a CWS – appeal dismissed on biodiversity, trees and landscape/coastal impacts)
 - Drakes Island
- Constantly changing environment of legislation, planning guidance, funding, politics etc.
- Low market value in Plymouth which affects viability and results in reduced planning contributions.
- Pressure on designated sites from increased development – bathing water quality, recreational impacts on EMS
- Reduced funding to support Partnerships who deliver management and improvements.

Something to share:

- Derriford Community Park is a good example of how a long term aspiration for a significant asset can be delivered through the local plan process.
- Cycle route improvements on NCN route 27 at marsh mills is a good example of how having an 'oven ready' project can secure unexpected funding (Granite and Gears).
- [Radford appeal decision](#) is a strong endorsement of the status and importance of local wildlife sites. Useful reference for DM.
- Not just about policy and strategic projects – simple on the ground improvements are really important - communication
 - wildflower projects
 - ham woods

Key projects that the NI team is leading/responsible for:

Plymouth Plan Evidence Base/ Policy

- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Greenspace Assessment
- Landscape & Seascape Character Assessment
- Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
- Biodiversity Network
- Natural Environment policies for Plymouth Plan

Sherford

- NI team is working with South Hams to staff the GI officer role in the Sherford Delivery Team.
- RM for 600 units, sports pitches, play area, skate park, artificial grass pitch and first phase of 200ha community park.

Plymstock Quarry

- 1700 homes – will deliver 19 ha of public open space.

Green Estate Management

- The Green Estate Management (GEM)
- Investigation of new models of management with a view to finding cost savings
- All options are being considered – Trust model etc.
- 18 month project, part of the Council's Transformation Programme and led by NI Team.

Derriford Community Park

- PCC have 999 year lease on 40ha Farm. Vacant possession of farm house and buildings.
- £1.4m secured funding (S106)
- Interviewing for 2 higher level apprentices – Countryside Manager and Farm and Animal Manager – to be hosted by PCC – learning provider Duchy College. Apprentices will be based on site in the farm house.
- Initial biodiversity improvements have begun. Fencing/grazing etc.
- Working group established.

Saltram Countryside

- Phase 1 projects complete – improvements to walking and cycling routes into Saltram. Including way marking project, sculptural benches and new play area.
- The ride – walking, cycling and biodiversity improvements. £300k capital value.
- Marsh Mills - granite and gears funding to improve NCN27 route between Saltram and the Plym valley: £242k capital value.

Central Park

- Sports Plateau – working on design options for the new pitches and associated drainage.
- Wooded Valley –Woodland Management Plan working in conjunction with the Friends of Central Park, Plymouth Tree Partnership and other local stakeholders. The proposal is to run a series of volunteering events, supported by Street Cleansing and Grounds, over the coming autumn/winter.

Allotments

- 2 projects to create 70 new allotment plots. Both sites are previous allotments that were abandoned during the 1980's.
- Swarthmore Allotments – 50 plots.

- Channel Park – 20 plots

Sports Pitches

- There are 4 major playing pitch projects in our capital programme with total value of >£2m. Funded through S106 and capital grants.
- Refurbishment of 10 senior football pitches at Staddiscombe is currently being delivered. Project value £650,000.

Natural Connections

- Supporting schools to deliver learning in the natural environment
- Phase 1 complete – 34 schools involved
- Phase 2 underway – continuation of programme

Local Nature Reserves

- Designated 77ha of new LNR in 2014
- We are now 1ha short of the national NE target of 1ha per 1000 population!
- Expect to exceed this target in the next year.

Item 3 – Devon LNP Project Pipeline

LNP theme leads and others (e.g. AONBs, South West Coast Path etc) have submitted projects/ideas for projects. A priority list will be promoted to funders including Local Enterprise Partnership. See paper and spreadsheet circulated in advance of the meeting.

LEP will be developing their pipeline in early September. We need to identify whether there are any gaps in the list circulated for GI prior to this. The LNP board will be developing criteria to assess projects.

The idea is that all projects will be listed on the LNP website so that people can identify whether projects can be linked together/scaled up.

JM took us through most relevant projects for Green Connections theme (see p11 of report) and asked if anything was missing:

- Devon GI Fund
- Biodiversity mitigation and compensation
- Sustainable flood management through catchment based approaches
- Devon trails network
- Securing investment through flood alleviation in the Clyst upper catchment

AH asked whether some specific projects could be added under the Devon Trails Network e.g.

- National Cycle Network extensions from Newton Abbot to Totnes, Newton Abbot to Torquay (& on to Paignton/Brixham) and Totnes to Paignton
- Link from Tavistock to Tamar Trails Centre
- Link through Clennon Valley to Paignton western corridor (previously submitted to Growth Deal but unsuccessful)

Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=16085&p=0> and Draft Devon Transport Infrastructure Plan (doesn't cover Torbay) <http://www.devon.gov.uk/loadtrimdocument?url=&filename=PTE/15/1.CMR&rn=14/WD522&dg=Public> set out some key priorities and Torbay is currently producing a Transport Implementation Plan. Sustainable Transport Plans may also have been prepared as part of Local Plan development.

SJ to ask Andrew Ardley at DCC who we should be talking to about projects coming under Devon Trails Network.

HC explained that it was important for the PROW team to be involved at an early stage via Andrew Ardley with regard to commuted sums for on-going management etc.

MW introduced the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which helps to show which communities will benefit the most; this will provide further weight to funding bids etc. Website available here <http://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/> which links to JSNA.

There was some discussion about the need to prioritise projects but it was agreed that this was in hand through LNP board.

AH also asked whether more general projects around provision of, or enhancements to, sports facilities/play/allotments would be suitable as these were the most common projects listed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plans. JM thought that these would be more likely secured through individual developments.

GB explained that there might be synergy between the Westcountry Rivers Trust proposal 'sustainable flood management through CBA' and a new 2 year post based at the EA. Adam Slater Chair of the environment sub-group of the South West Flood and Coastal Committee could be contacted for further information.

HW said that there weren't many education projects. SJ said that all the LNP Theme Leads had an opportunity to comment.

All to consider whether any additional projects could be added – either strategic projects or specific projects which could come under one of the wider umbrella projects.

Item 3 – Local Plans: LNP Duty to Cooperate

Due to lack of time, this item wasn't covered.

Item 4 – Guidance for Neighbourhood Plans

Due to lack of time, this item wasn't covered.

Item 5 – How to develop GI indicators in line with NPPF

Due to lack of time, this item wasn't covered in detail.

JM had discussed with a Defra rep who was open to suggestions. JM suggested the NE GI Monitoring Framework could be a mechanism. AH commented that this was very ecology focussed. SB said that he had developed a monitoring framework for his own work which included recreation and access – SB to circulate.

Item 6 – Links to Naturally Healthy Work

JM introduced links between the Green Connections and Naturally Healthy themes.

A key piece of evidence work is the Naturally Health Scoping Report <http://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Naturally-Healthy-Scoping-Report-FINAL.pdf> it highlights the results of research looking at the barriers that people face in accessing Devon’s environment and a literature review of the benefits of being naturally healthy.

Work has also been on-going to encourage health and wellbeing through planning. A key idea is to widen the scope of existing Sustainable Travel Packs given to residents of new developments to cover information on local green spaces and active recreation opportunities. AH and TB to meet to discuss opportunity to develop this idea in Torbay. A Pack is being produced for the Cranbrook development. Lorna Christow of Jacobs is developing this on behalf of DCC and the aim is for a draft in September.

Teignbridge are starting to do new residents surveys to ask people about level of information provided etc. No results available yet. There has also been a Cranbrook questionnaire which SB will circulate.

Also discussed ways of funding people to help train/advise communities about using recreational opportunities e.g. trim trails.

SJ suggested that a simple advocacy paper about reconnecting people and nature be produced that could be disseminated to wider groups.

There was a discussion about Health Impact Assessments. TB said that this requirement was now on the Torbay Validation Checklist
<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourbusiness/planning/developmentmanagement/makeapplication/plans/planninglocallist2015.pdf>

MW explained that completed HIAs in Devon are listed here
<http://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/library/hia/> This includes the HIA of the West Devon Local Plan. Advice on HIA is provided at <http://www.apfo.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=44532> and tools and methods can be found at <http://www.who.int/hia/tools/en/>

Item 8 - AOB

AH asked whether we needed to produce GI guidance on Neighbourhood Plans. There is already guidance produced by Devon Countryside Access Forum <http://www.devon.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plans-dcaf-position-statement.pdf> and Devon Landscape Policy Group <http://www.devon.gov.uk/dlpg-advice-note-4.pdf> and South Hams and West Devon are producing templates for parishes to produce Open Space, Sport and Recreation Plans – this will cover open space, sport, play and PROW but won’t cover ecology, drainage etc. AH to do a search to find out what guidance is already available and circulate thoughts and templates when

completed.

AJ – wanted to discuss consistency over SUDS. Would be good to find best practice examples which could be sent to big housing companies (this could be as part of case studies sent to Mike Fox).