

Brighton & Hove Council

Wildlife Advisory Group

Minutes of the Meeting held Tuesday, 17th April 2007
King's House

Key Recommendations for the Sustainability Commission

1. The WAG supports the principles set out in Annex 6 of the draft SPD on Nature Conservation and Development and particularly the principle of quantifying the need for nature conservation gain as part of development. We look forward to the SPD's finalisation and adoption at the earliest opportunity.
 2. The WAG fully supports the proposal to have biodiversity as the theme of the 2008 Sustainability Conference and looks forward to working with the council to generate ideas and carry the project forward.
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Present:

Wildlife Advisory Group Members

Cath Laing (CAL)	Sussex Bat Group (Chair)
Helen Fazakerley (HF)	Friends of Preston Park
John Patmore (JP)	Botanical Society of the British Isles (Vice Chair)
Maureen Holt (MH)	Keep the Ridge Green
John Burns (JB)	Chairman, Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation
Jane Field (JF)	Natural England
Angela Marlow (AM)	Sussex Wildlife Trust

City Council Representatives

Jane Willmott (JW)	Countryside Manager
Matthew Thomas (MT)	Ecologist (minutes)

Apologies

Phil Belden (PB)	Brighton Urban Wildlife Group
Patrick Fitzsimons (PF)	University of Sussex Bat Research Group
Martin Robinson (MR)	Benfield Wildlife & Conservation Group
Janyis Watson (JW)	Sussex Wildlife Trust
Gloria Wheatcroft (GW)	Council for the Protection of Rural England

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting (23rd January 2007)

JP: 'Geological' should be replaced with 'Earth science'.

The minutes were then agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

Feedback from the Sustainability Commission

It was reported that Councillor Gill Mitchell had raised concerns about the quality of biodiversity data being fed into development of the LDF.

3. Council News

JW: Cityparks has been re-organised as part of a move to develop a clearer vision for parks and open spaces. It was agreed that the new structure would be attached with these minutes (see attached).

4. Nature Conservation & Development Supplementary Planning Document

a. Choice of species in naturalistic planting schemes

JP: Raised concerns about the choice of plant species proposed for inclusion in Annex 7 of the draft SPD. The Annex provides advice to developers on the use of plants for landscaping and habitat creation schemes. These include non-native species and species native to the UK but not previously recorded in Brighton & Hove. JP would much prefer to see only locally native species promoted.

After discussion it was agreed that JP's letter of 9th November 2006 commenting on the draft SPD should be posted onto the CityWildlife Forum to promote discussion about the issue of native and non-native planting, with a view to arriving at a consensus at the next WAG meeting.

MT agreed to redraft Annex 7 to take account of JP's concerns.

b. Quantifying 'added biodiversity' (Annex 6) worked examples

MT introduced a second WAG discussion on Annex 6 which is a detailed prescription of the habitat requirements of new developments. Various 'real life' worked examples were tabled, from small, householder developments to large schemes.

After discussion it was agreed that the current formula for calculating habitat requirements was too onerous for small schemes, whereas larger ones would be asked to contribute too little in comparison. Alternative formulae were proposed, based on number of households and the area of the proposed development. It was also mentioned that 'ecological services' (such as ameliorating storm-water runoff) as well as biodiversity should be taken into account to calculate an 'ecological footprint'.

5. The Sustainability Conference 2008 - Biodiversity

MT briefly introduced the proposed theme of the 2008 Sustainability Conference. The current thinking is to have a general theme of 'Brighton and Hove as an UNESCO Urban Biosphere Reserve' following a similar commitment in the refreshed Community Strategy. The idea is to start at the strategic level and then work down to focus on a range of novel local initiatives.

- Other ideas put forward at the meeting included:
- Including adoption of BAP targets for Brighton & Hove during the conference
- Publication of the Biodiversity Strategy
- Promote community involvement and urban fringe issues
- Demonstrate how biodiversity relates to the core themes of the city and issues such as tourism and transport.

6. Establishing adequate baseline information for the LDF

a. Biodiversity Survey

MT: Funding has been allocated to complete a Phase I habitat survey of Brighton and Hove as part of the environmental information needed to inform development of the Local Development Framework. The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre is to produce a report identifying the gaps in the existing data and the work needed to fill them. The final report needs to be complete during the summer.

The Phase I survey was welcomed as an essential step towards addressing biodiversity requirements in the city.

b. Green network research update

AM introduced a Powerpoint presentation on work to establish a green network across all of Brighton and Hove. The intention is to incorporate ecological services; people's need for natural open space and species movement into a new methodology which will stand up to scrutiny at Public Examination. This may be the first time this work has been

attempted for an existing urban area. The project partnership is the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Environment Partnership, Brighton University and Brighton & Hove Council. The GIS- based project will use data collected from the Phase I survey and aims to be completed in autumn 2007, in time to be integrated into LDF policy development.

c. Setting BAP targets for Brighton & Hove

Due to lack of time this agenda item was carried forward to the next meeting.

7. Key recommendations for the Sustainability Commission

It was agreed that the following recommendations should be drawn to the attention of the Commission:

3. The WAG supports the principles set out in Annex 6 of the draft SPD on Nature Conservation and Development and particularly the principle of quantifying the need for nature conservation gain as part of development. We look forward to the SPD's finalisation and adoption at the earliest opportunity.
4. The WAG fully supports the proposal to have biodiversity as the theme of the 2008 Sustainability Conference and looks forward to working with the council to generate ideas and carry the project forward.

8. AOB

MH: Concerned about proposals to site a mobile phone mast at the bottom of the drive to the windmill on Green Ridge. Pre-application discussions are underway.

MH: Green Ridge have written to David Lepper MP about the continuing damage taking place to the ancient hedge at Green Ridge.

JW: Springwatch Festival Family Fun Day will be held again this year at Stanmer Park, 10-4pm on 12th June, preceded by two weeks of wildlife events for all the family. A leaflet with full details is available from the Countryside Team.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at approximately 12.30pm.

Date of next meeting: 7pm, Tuesday, 17th, July, Booth Museum