

STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Submitted by: Head of Operations – Roger Tait

Portfolio: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Purpose of the Report

To inform Cabinet of the formation of the Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership, its purpose and aims and to seek authority for the Borough Council to be represented in the partnership.

Recommendations

- (a) That the report is received.
- (b) That Cabinet endorses the purpose and aims of the proposed Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership.
- (c) That authorisation is granted for appropriate Borough Council officer representation on the proposed Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership to aid its establishment and to support and contribute to the delivery of its objectives.

Reasons

To ensure that the Borough Council's interests are represented in the Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership, in relation to the natural environment. To enhance the Council's ability to influence development of habitats, demonstrate an ambassadorial role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity, strengthen external funding bids and secure support and advice from other organisations in the partnership.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Government White Paper, "The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature" published in June 2011, set out the vision for how nature should be protected, restored and improved in England. It recognises that partnerships are a key part in finding sustainable solutions to ecological and economic challenges. The government has recommended the creation of Local Nature Partnerships (LNP), to bring together individuals, businesses, and organisations to develop a way for the natural environment to be taken into account in decision-making.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The purpose of a Local Nature Partnership is:
 - (a) To drive a positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identifying ways to manage it as a system for the benefit of nature, people, and the economy.
 - (b) Contribute to achieving the government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of the local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities.

- (c) Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and Health and Wellbeing boards. It is the intention of the partnership to embed the SNLP into the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership (SSP), which already exists within the county, and links the area's two LEP's with the Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Local Authorities, District Local Strategic Partnerships, Special Interest Groups, and Wider Consultative Groups. Complementing the objectives set out in the Natural Environment White Paper, the SSP works at a strategic level to provide a framework for all agencies, sectors, and partners to work collectively to promote the economic and social wellbeing of the County.
- 2.2 It is envisaged that the LNP's will be seen as balanced, strategic, and knowledgeable partnership that can add value to important decision making in an area and that they will make important contributions to strategic planning matters as the government intends to add LNP's to the Duty to Co-operate in the Local Planning Regulations.
- 2.3 It is envisaged that the proposed development of the Staffordshire LNP, would involve three stages:
- (i) Wider engagement and broadening the agenda.
 - (ii) Developing a shared vision.
 - (iii) Establishing a LNP in Staffordshire.
- 2.4 It is the aim of the LNP to influence public, private and community plans by embedding the concept of natural value into decision making at all levels – providing real 'traction' for a step change in environmental action. The LNP will work with LEPs to develop the green economy and provide opportunities for increased investment in the natural environment. It will provide business, third sector and community leaders with the information they require to turn the vision into reality and to ensure that the multiple benefits that are received from good management of the land (and water) are enjoyed by all in the area.
- 2.5 The outcomes envisaged by the LNP include:
- A better organised, more strategic approach to the delivery of integrated social, environmental, and economic outcomes for people and wildlife.
 - An advisory forum to prioritise action and target resources.
 - Create functional ecological networks across the country.
 - Production of innovative green infrastructure proposals.
 - A progressive alliance of farming and environmental interests that balances long-term sustainability, rural employment, and agricultural productivity.
- 2.6 A Staffordshire LNP can develop a shared vision for the natural environment and create a framework within which organisations and local communities can easily identify how to use their particular skills and resources to greatest effect. They will also be able to influence the LNP to ensure they get a positive benefit in their own roles and operational objectives.
- 2.7 The borough will be able to access via the Staffordshire LNP support and guidance on policy formulation in relation to the natural environment. Potential access to funding to enable delivery of identified priorities and access to expertise and knowledge of the other partners to help build the capacity and capability of the borough. The strategic nature of the partnership will also raise awareness of the benefits of the natural environment and enable greater involvement in the natural environment for the borough's communities.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Endorse the purpose and aims of the proposed Staffordshire LNP and provide appropriate officer representation to work together to create a healthy, resilient natural environment as the foundation for sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being
- 3.2 Do not participate in the proposed Staffordshire LNP and miss the opportunity to influence its work and ensure that the Borough Council's interests are represented in relation to the natural environment.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 To endorse the purpose and aim of the proposed Staffordshire LNP, to aid the establishment of the partnership and to support and contribute to the delivery of its objectives.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To ensure that the Borough Council's interests are represented in the Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership, in relation to the natural environment.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 The proposal links to the following corporate priorities:

- Promoting a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough
- Promoting a borough of Opportunity
- Promoting a healthy and active community
- Transforming our council to achieve excellence

- 6.2 The Staffordshire LNP will link to the following aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy:

The green network of canals, green spaces, and parks will be protected and improved for high quality development opportunities for leisure and physical activity and facilities to promote walking and cycling. New development makes adequate provision for community facilities including health care, education, sports and recreation and leisure and ensures existing facilities are retained and enhanced where they provide for justified community needs.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has power to act.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 There are no adverse impacts towards equality relating to this proposal. The partnership is working at a strategic level towards improving the benefit and services that we get from a healthy natural environment for all residents.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 There are no current financial implications directly associated with this report although there will be a need to commit staff resources, knowledge and data to the project to ensure that the partnership can deliver its aims and objectives as efficiently as possible.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 A risk assessment is to be provided.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 The proposal should have a positive impact on sustainability and climate change as the partnership aims to put the natural environment at the forefront of any proposed decisions/developments.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This report is a key decision as defined in the Council's Constitution.

12.2 This report is included on the Council's forward plan for the period in which it is to be reported.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

There are no earlier Cabinet/Committee resolutions relating to this report.

14. **List of Appendices**

There are none

15. **Background Papers**

'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature' Government White Paper 2011