

ITEM

ITEM

Environment Policy Development Group 6th March 2007

LIFE INTO LANDSCAPE –PROGRAMME 2003-2007

Report of Head of Landscape & Leisure

Statutory Powers: Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Section 87)

Financial Implications: None at present although the report provides the 'direction of travel' for future external funding bids. Successful bids for external funding will usually require some form of contributory funding (either capital, revenue, or both) from the Council. Provided the funding stream applied to contributors to corporate priorities, leveraging in external funding provides a value for money approach to securing Council and community objectives. The report also presents the current financial position in preparation for the final grant claim. The total three year operating budget for Life into Landscape was £1,299,570, closing on 31 March 2007. The South Hams District Council contribution was £75,000 capital and £41,700 eligible in-kind expenditure by way of finance and administration support.

Purpose

To review the performance of the Life into Landscape programme, to examine the outputs and achievements of the partnership, and to discuss those most successful elements of relevance to the Council's objectives and cross-cutting themes. To examine the potential for programmes of work involving new partnerships and external funding. A video film has been made which will illustrate the current programme and stimulate discussion on the future.

The current programme has been the cornerstone of the Council's positive work to achieve CP3, maintain the distinctive environment while enabling access and sensitive development. It also contributes towards CP2, Good Jobs – creating the condition for growth and economic activity; delivering green tourism and access outputs that contribute to visitor spend targets and relate to the quality of the environment. The programme has also contributed significantly to the Council's commitments to sustainability, community involvement, effective partnerships and value for money.

When considering outputs, their impact upon health, youth and climate change can be assessed particularly when establishing key opportunities for future development.

Recommendations

That the Environment PDG provides comments to Executive upon:

- 1. the outputs achieved by the Life into Landscape programme;**
- 2. future opportunities for new programmes of work that attract external funding identified in the report.**

Background

1. Members will be aware of the development and delivery of the Life into Landscape programme.
2. The programme emerged from the process of consultation upon the South Devon AONB Management Plan in response to challenges the area faced. The initiative includes ten individual projects that have been delivered in an integrated way with a number of partners. The programme has achieved outputs that benefit three key themes:
 - Economy (countryside recreation and access)
 - Environment (landscape and heritage)
 - Community (social inclusion – people)
3. An integrated approach has been taken so that each individual project supports another. In this way three key aspects are achieved:
 - New and enhanced recreational opportunities are provided, maintaining visitor numbers and increasing spend in the area.
 - Assisting to reverse the trend of decline in the local natural and historic heritage value by restoring and enhancing targeted habitats and landscape features.
 - Promote social inclusion, appreciation and local involvement within the AONB and surrounding landscape.
4. Key challenges that were to be faced:
 - Co-ordination of conservation initiatives and organisations involved in nature and heritage conservation.
 - Historic network of green lanes and paths, unconnected and offering little recreational value to residents or visitors.
 - Access opportunities for people with disabilities were poor.
 - Pressure of suburbanisation of the countryside, second homes and changing land ownership, with incomers and influence from Plymouth and Torbay.
 - Low levels of awareness about the AONB, its designation and values.

Project delivery and achievements

5. SHDC are the lead organisation and have delivered the scheme in partnership with South Devon AONB, DCC, BTCV, DWT and TCCT. English Heritage and The Countryside Agency have given further support, with funding from HLF and ERDF.

6. The achievements (in terms of outputs) of Life into Landscape in the period 2003-2007 are set out in full in Appendix 1. It should be noted that Life into Landscape either met or exceeded the targets set with the Heritage Lottery Fund and European Regional Development Fund (GOSW). The broader outcomes will be presented at the meeting.

a. Countryside Recreation and Access (Economy Theme)

7. The programme outputs include 50 green lanes enhanced for walking and riding and 23 improvements to recreational paths, including safe links between communities and new walking trails. 18 'access for all' improvements were carried out to improve opportunities for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments.
8. A year long survey of the countryside recreation activities of both residents and visitors, with an assessment of the economic value, has been carried out by South West Tourism for Life into Landscape, a study which should help shape future policy.
9. Ten locations have benefited from new or updated interpretation panels, raising awareness amongst visitors. Other developments within this theme include a new website for the South Devon AONB, and workshops with staff from Tourist Information Centres in the area as a means of information exchange.

b. Landscape Heritage and Nature Conservation (Environment Theme)

10. Twelve South Hams communities have taken part in the parish heritage appraisals, led by professional archaeologists. The aim has been to engage the community in completing full archaeological records for their parish, with a variety of workshops including field walking and finds identification being well supported.
11. Five Scheduled Ancient Monuments have been conserved and enhanced through the historic environment project, the monuments being Iron Age hill forts and earthworks. The work has included geophysical surveys of the monuments, the fencing of earthworks to allow a reversion to grazing (to protect archaeological remains) and interpretation of sites to the wider public.
12. More than 200 farmers and landowners received free conservation advice through the landscape heritage scheme, including a mix of local farmers and new incoming landowners. As a result, 116 conservation grants were awarded to a maximum of £2,500 at a rate of 50% of the cost of conservation works carried out. This resulted in some considerable achievements on the ground, including 18 km of hedgerow restored, 32 traditional orchards conserved and 71 wildlife sites in the South Hams enhanced.

c. Community Involvement (Social Inclusion – People Theme)

13. Involving local communities has underpinned much of the activity carried out through Life into Landscape. The whole initiative was shaped through lengthy public consultation, with groups and individuals contributing ideas as to where projects would take place. Town and parish councils, community and amenity organisations, local history, walking and riding groups, conservation organisations, landowners and social and special needs support groups have all been directly involved in Life into Landscape.
14. In terms of outputs, through the 'countryside connections' and 'natural beauty' programmes, Life into Landscape hosted around 5000 volunteer days, with a further 2,500 achieved by young people. More than 250 heritage and crafts events were held, and 50 community groups involved.
15. It has been a feature of Life into Landscape that it has involved a full cross section of the community in its activities, and its work in engaging 'hard to reach' groups and individuals has made it one of the most innovative and successful initiatives in the UK.
16. Life into Landscape has fully embraced social inclusion, actively involving people with physical disabilities, mobility and sensory impairments, adults and young people with learning difficulties, people recovering from poor physical and mental health, those living in rural and (in neighbouring Plymouth/Torbay) urban isolation, people living in areas of social deprivation and people from ethnic minorities, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Finance Summary

17. The above outputs have been achieved within the capital and revenue expenditure limits set by the project partners at the outset. A full summary of the Life into Landscape budget is set out in Appendix 2. Where cost has exceeded the original budget limits, as with the three access programmes (green lanes, recreation routes, access for all) the overspend has been directly offset by additional funding from the project partners.

Accolades and recognition

18. Life into Landscape has enjoyed a high profile throughout, not only on a local and regional level but also on the national and international stage. Twice-yearly newsletters delivered free to all South Hams households, allied to regular media coverage (including features on BBC Spotlight) has highlighted the achievements in the local area.
19. Life into Landscape achieved international fame in 2005, with a 'Highly Commended' in the Best Protected Area category (in this case South Devon AONB) at the Responsible Travel Awards. The initiative was runner up to Base Camp Masai Mara, Kenya.
20. Life into Landscape also made a presentation to 'icomos' (International Council on Monuments and Sites UK - leading civil servants and figures in the world of conservation) to demonstrate good practice for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, signed by the UK government in 2006, with a suggestion that Life into Landscape could form the first UK entry to the European Landscape Awards.

Review of challenges to be faced

21. Members are invited to consider the progress under the themes and in tackling the challenges raised in paragraphs 2 and 3. In particular members may wish to consider the following issues:

- The changing land ownership structure, land arrangement advice and grant availability for smallholders ('incomers').
- The continued trends of social integration, urban deprivation and rural isolation.
- The growing awareness of climate change issues and need for local initiatives.
- The effect of the 'Choosing Health' White Paper and the drive for healthy lifestyles.
- The effect of the Children's Act and the needs of young people within a rural area.
- The continuance of 'cutting edge' initiatives like Countryside Connections addressing diversity, urban/rural integration and social inclusion.
- The stimulation of civic pride and better public spaces assets that contribute significantly to economic regeneration.

Developing future programmes – external funding strategy

22. Work has begun by reviewing four key cultural related strategies:

South Hams Community Strategy
Public Space Strategy
AONB Plan
Leisure & Recreation – Active South Hams
Play Strategy

23. All of these strategies have action plans that have been established with considerable community consultation. Further work is required to build in climate change, equality, and social inclusion issues and include the Council's cross cutting themes relating to children and young people and healthy living. Common actions will emerge that could form new integrated programmes of work.

24. An assessment of the current range of external funding opportunities is also being undertaken to identify key areas upon which to focus and concentrate staff development time e.g. Big Lottery 'Changing Spaces' and Reaching Communities Programmes.

25. Further work is needed to draft an External Funding Strategy for culture related programmes of work. These could be delivered through a range of partnerships promoted by the L&L Group. The AONB unit are engaged and are contributing towards this process to ensure countywide and regional funding opportunities are co-ordinated.

26. A summary of the potential future of each of the ten Life into Landscape project elements is presented in Appendix 3. Members are asked to consider the way forward for each and the Council's role as enablers of future project programmes.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Council and its partners fail to deliver outputs stipulated by HLF and GOSW	Regular partner steering group meetings to monitoring program
Council fail to deliver financial arrangement and performance targets	Audit reports on financial management
Partners do not engage with programme and deliver outputs	Consultation and involvement in preparation of the programme and its delivery
Broader Equality, Inclusion and Social integration momentum lost	Ensure people outputs to be built into new programmes.
Potential partners fail to engage in future programmes	Promote achievements and illustrate 'track record' for programme delivery and new objectives
External funding opportunities missed for Council Priorities	Plan and manage targeted funding bids through an external funding strategy
Grant criteria not relevant to South Hams Area	Raise profile and awareness of Rural and Urban issues in South Devon and neighbouring Torbay/Plymouth

Conclusion

27. Life into Landscape has been a highly successful SHDC-led initiative, that has demonstrated how efficient and effective, externally funded partnerships can be. It has enabled a wide range of cross-cutting themes to be addressed, including key Council objectives relating to maintaining the distinct environment, enabling access, and contributing to 'good jobs' and economic activity linked to green tourism.

28. The core themes of environment, people and the economy – set in 2003/04 – appear to remain as relevant to current Council aims and objectives in 2007. There is, however, an opportunity to review the ten original Life into Landscape projects in the light of current national, regional and local priorities and new initiatives to embrace the themes of health, youth and climate change, whilst reaffirming commitment to the most successful aspects of the current programmes.

29. It has become clear that the main funding streams that enabled Life into Landscape to operate successfully (Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership and European Regional Development Fund Objective 2) are no longer available. However, new opportunities for externally funded partnerships have arisen through BIG Lottery initiatives such as Reaching Communities (up to £500,000) and Changing Spaces (grant to be announced), both of which aim to tackle the themes identified in this report. Members are asked to discuss the achievements and consider ways forward following the end of the Life into Landscape programme.

Ken Carter
Head of Landscape & Leisure

Environment PDG
6th March 2007

Keith Rennells, Countryside Projects Officer

Background Documents:
Life into Landscape – Business Plan

Appendix 1

Theme	Programme	Partners	Outputs
Countryside recreation and access (*BTCV = British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)	1. Green lanes conservation	DCC, AONB, *BTCV, visitor payback	50 green lanes (50 km) improved for access 200 km of longer walking + riding routes improved
	2. Recreation route enhancement	DCC, AONB	20 enhanced links within PROW network, including safe walking paths
			3 new walking trails linking places of heritage interest
	3. Access for all	DCC, AONB, S Hams Access Group, RNIB, National Trust etc.	18 locations with improved disabled access
			3 access workshops for land managers and comm. orgs
			20 community groups assisted with access
	4. Visitor monitoring	DCC, AONB, SW Tourism	Full year visitor survey of countryside recreation activity
	5. Signposting our heritage	DCC, AONB	New AONB + LiL websites and newsletters etc
			10 interpretation projects at key visitor locations
			Workshops for TIC staff
Landscape heritage and nature conservation	6. Parish heritage appraisals	DCC (County archaeologist) AONB, local history societies	12 parish heritage appraisals + reports in South Hams
			30 history/heritage training events and workshops for local communities
	7. Landscape heritage scheme	Devon Wildlife Trust, AONB, RSPB etc	217 advisory visits to land owners; 116 landscape grant awards (50% up to £2,500)
			18 km hedge restored, 32 traditional orchards restored, 71 wildlife sites enhanced
			15 landowner workshops and demonstration days
	8. Historic environment project	DCC (County archaeologist), AONB, English Heritage	5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's) with conservation management
5 SAM's with improved access and interpretation			
Community involvement	9. Countryside Connections	BTCV, AONB, social and community support groups	202 practical projects; 3800 volunteer days
			34 community groups involved; 10 training events
			163 heritage education and arts events
	10. Natural Beauty	Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust, AONB	69 community and heritage events; 1050 volunteer days
			117 awareness + education projects (inc 2345 children)

Appendix 2

Life into Landscape – budget summary 2003 – 2007

Capital + revenue expenditure

Programme	Budget (£)	Projected spend (£)
Green lanes conservation	172,730	(1) 185,909
Recreation route enhancement	90,910	(2) 102,457
Access for all	90,910	(3) 107,769
Visitor monitoring	22,730	22,730
Signposting our heritage	77,270	78,389
Parish heritage appraisals	86,360	86,360
Landscape heritage sch. (SHDC)	189,248	189,248
Landscape heritage sch. (DWT)	90,262	90,258
Historic environment project	40,910	40,910
Countryside connections (BTCV)	198,090	198,214
Natural beauty (TCCT)	108,800	103,148
Contingency	89,650	0
SHDC finance/admin	41,700	41,700
Total capital/revenue costs	1,299,570	**1,249,318

** Figures as of 14 February 2007, at which point all programmes within original spend limits, with final claim to HLF and end of project report due 31 March 2007.

Capital and revenue income

Partnership contributions	Budget	Actual
SHDC development b/forward	980	0
South Hams District Council	75,000	75,000
Devon County Council	75,000	75,000
Countryside Agency	15,000	15,000
Devon Wildlife Trust	10,000	9,025
English Heritage	15,000	15,500
BTCV (inc volunteer time)	94,030	94,030
TCCT (inc volunteer time)	34,500	34,500
SHDC (staff support time)	41,700	41,700
Visitor payback	11,690	11,690
Contingency funding	21,100	0
Heritage Lottery Fund	749,500	749,500
ERDF Objective 2	156,070	156,070
Additional income to offset (1,2,3)	0	39,627
Total cap & rev income	1,299,570	**1,277,015

BTCV = British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

DWT = Devon Wildlife Trust

TCCT = Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust

ERDF = European Regional Development Fund

1. Review of Life into Landscape Projects and the Future

Relevance of the current project programmes and the development of new approaches to tackle new challenges arising from Community Strategy, Public Space Strategy, Town and Parish plans.

2. Countryside and Recreation (Economy)

Green lanes – substantial improvements to the network, with future maintenance and further works to be picked up by DCC. The Green Tourism Visitor Payback initiative – On The Right Tracks – also under review with regards future themes.

Recreational routes – identified within parish plans, with public demand for safer walking routes between communities; links to tourism, community safety and health agendas.

Access for all – continues to be important for equality of opportunity and social inclusion.

Visitor monitoring – survey of countryside recreation complete that will help shape policy, with ongoing monitoring of the rights of way network continued by DCC (Highway Authority) as a PSA2 target.

Signposting our heritage – developed website and continue information and product development promotion with Tourism; particular need identified for parks and key open spaces.

3. Landscape and nature conservation (Environment)

Landscape heritage scheme – DWT delivered, but advice now limited. Demand remains from incomers and 'new' landowners. Potential for tree planting campaign with partners following landscape character management options. This linking with climate change and community Tree Wardens, public space adoption and sponsorship opportunities.

Parish heritage appraisals – parishes interested at the outset have participated in the scheme. Funds are now available directly from HLF for other groups to carry out these types of local history projects in future.

Historic environment project - projects delivered for most 'at risk' monuments, with support now in place through Defra Environmental Stewardship scheme option, and directly from English Heritage.

4. Community Involvement (People)

Natural beauty (TCCT) – Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust has a new HLF funding stream for Berry Head to take this aspect of LiL forward.

Countryside connections (BTCV) – currently scaled down with links to Plymouth and Torbay remaining. Tremendous impact on individuals lives with future social inclusion potential to deliver environment initiatives emerging from Public Space

Strategy, town and parish plans. 'Green Gym' pilot proposed for Plymouth and South Hams, based at two locations (proposed Kingsbridge and Totnes). Links to LSP Active South Hams and environment groups.

5. Emerging themes

The original integrated approach involving three themes appears to remain relevant:

People - community involvement
Economy – countryside and recreation access
Heritage Environment – landscape and nature conservation

A new approach could develop these themes to become:

People – youth and health, access and diversity (social inclusion)

Projects: Green Gyms (delivered with BTCV); Health Walks (delivered with Tone Leisure) Countryside Connections (delivered with BTCV)

Economy – public space and civic pride (asset management)

Projects: Recreation Routes (delivered with DCC); Access for All (delivered with DCC); Green Tourism Visitor Payback (new themes)

Environment – climate change and landscape character

Projects: community open space initiatives (environmental conservation, community allotments/horticulture); landscape character advice/support to landowners (tree wardens/tree scheme); climate change initiative

6. Funding Opportunities

Approaches to the original funding bodies for Life into Landscape (HLF and ERDF Objective 2) has clarified that no succession funding will be available from those particular streams. However, new opportunities are being identified through the BIG Lottery as follows:

Changing Spaces – awaiting announcements on grant details, but will focus on three priority areas – community spaces, local community enterprise and access to the natural environment, a package which could lend itself to a follow up to Life into Landscape.

Reaching Communities – grants of up to £500k – aims to help those most in need, to ensure communities are involved in project delivery, and to support projects that respond to locally identified needs. Again, these aims meet with proposed follow up work for Life into Landscape.

Other external funding opportunities are being monitored by Landscape & leisure staff.