

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON TUESDAY, 6 MARCH 2007

## MEMBERS

\* Cllr R W Hallett - Chairman

\* Cllr A R Vale - Vice-Chairman

∅ Cllr J Brazil

\* Cllr B E Carson

∅ Cllr G H W Rosevear

\* Cllr M Stone

\* Cllr A Ward

\* Cllr J A Westacott

\* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Officers in attendance:

All items: Strategic Director (Community), Head of Landscape and Leisure and Countryside Project Officer

## EPDG.13/06 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Environment Policy Development Group held on 9 January 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## EPDG.14/06 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none was made.

## EPDG.15/06 **LIFE INTO LANDSCAPE PROGRAMME 2003-2007**

A report was considered which reviewed the performance of the Life into Landscape programme, examined the outputs and achievements of the partnership, and discussed the most successful elements of relevance to the Council's objectives and cross-cutting themes.

In presenting the report, the Countryside Project Officer played to the Group a short film which demonstrated the current programme, highlighted the key challenges which were to be faced and identified the 10 individual projects under the following three key themes:-

- economy (countryside recreation and access);
- environment (landscape and heritage);
- community (social inclusion – people).

The partnership was District Council led initiative with the broad aim of conservation and enhancement of the district. A number of the successful schemes were highlighted including restoration of 50 green lanes and enhancement of 23 recreational routes, both of which were to be maintained by Devon County Council. The issue of access for all had also been addressed in parts of the district, with disabled access provided to remote coast and countryside places. Furthermore, during the 2006 summer period South West Tourism carried out a survey on the tourism industry, the results of which would be available soon. Initial findings had showed that 42% of respondents noted that the main attraction was the scenery, with 7 out of 10 people being attracted to the area for recreational walking. The partnership had addressed 'raising awareness' of the district's heritage through new interpretation panels and leaflets.

Furthermore, two hundred farmers and landowners had received free conservation advice and 110 grants were awarded to help enhance the district's character. Twelve villages had been the subject of archaeological heritage appraisals and 5 scheduled monuments had been conserved.

The scheme had community involvement at its heart, with local people taking action in many ways. Highlighted from the report was the 5000 volunteer days which Life into Landscape had hosted, with a further 2500 achieved by young people.

The report concluded by stating that Life into Landscape had been a highly successful Council led initiative, which had demonstrated how efficient and effective externally funded partnerships could be. An opportunity had now arisen to review the 10 original Life into Landscape projects in light of national, regional and local priorities and the new initiatives embracing the themes of health, youth and climate change whilst reaffirming commitment to the most successful aspects of the current programmes.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- a) On behalf of the Group, a Member extended their congratulations to all those involved in the Life into Landscape projects as outputs had more than exceeded expectations. The work of community groups was also commended by the Group and it was hoped that there would be continued support and resource available to supplement this work;
- b) Reference was made to the main funding streams which had enabled Life into Landscape to operate successfully, that were now no longer available. New avenues for gaining external funding were being investigated in order to continue projects. The importance of a co-ordinated approach with partners was stressed and in some instances it was noted that partners would be better placed to apply for funding bids;

- c) The issue of beach cleaning was raised by Members. Members were informed that 5 beaches in the South Hams had been nominated for the blue flag award;
- d) The importance of 'signposting our heritage' was referred to not only for historical towns but also in relation to key open spaces;
- e) Attention was drawn to appendix 3 of the presented report. In discussion on this appendix, 'healthy lifestyles' was highlighted as an important issue especially in light of the government's current healthy lifestyles initiative drive. A further important aspect to bear in mind whilst considering Life into Landscape initiatives, was the Climate Change agenda. A Member of the Group commented on the importance of alternative means of travel in terms of recreational routes and the positive impact this may have on carbon foot printing. Moreover, it was suggested that these national priorities could be used to obtain funding;
- f) A Member suggested engaging local businesses in the development of public right of ways, especially those whose premises were located out of the town/village centres and therefore may benefit from the access routes. Furthermore, it was also suggested that for large development proposals, section 106 monies be used as a means of funding certain initiatives.

### **RECOMMENDED**

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that the Environment Policy Development Group have considered and commented upon:-

- a) its belief that the outputs achieved by the Life into Landscape programme are above expectations and have provided a significant amount of funding into the district;
- b) future opportunities for new programmes of work which encourage external funding linked to the Corporate Priorities and cross cutting themes within the Council's Priorities.

(Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.20 pm).

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Chairman