

NATURE IMPROVEMENT AREA GREATER THAMES MARSHES

OUR VISION for the Greater Thames Marshes is of “a living and vibrant marshland and estuary landscape where skilled and enthusiastic residents, visitors, businesses and technical experts are harnessed to work in partnership, delivering more wildlife, more public understanding and enjoyment of the environment and greater resilience by the natural world to the changes brought about by development and climate change.”

ADVISORY GROUP: MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: Wednesday 23rd April 2014

Venue: Room 113, 26 Bedford Way, University College London, WC1H 0AP

Attendees:

Pat	Fitzsimons	PF	Thames Estuary Partnership (Chair)
Dean	Philpot	DP	Thames Estuary Partnership
Nigel	Brown	NB	Essex Society of Archaeology & History
Claire	Cadman	CC	Essex Wildlife Trust
Kate	Collins	KC	Sheils Flynn
Stuart	Connop	SC	University of East London
Nicola	Davies	ND	Natural England
Natalie	Earl	NE	Swale Borough Council
Les	Edwins	LE	NIA Farm Conservation Advisor
Ian	Frood	IF	Farmer
Greg	Hitchcock	GH	Kent Wildlife Trust
Melanie	Hughes	MH	Natural England
Paul	Jenkinson	PJ	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
John	Meehan	JM	Essex County Council
Sam	Page	SP	Bumblebee Conservation Trust
Sarah	Poppy	SaP	English Heritage
Mark	Pritchard	MP	North West Kent Countryside Partnership
Nick	Reid	NR	Environment Agency
Jo	Sampson	JS	RSPB
Sarah	Taylor	ST	Natural England
Chris	Valdus	CV	Medway Council
David	Webb	DW	Environment Agency

Apologies:

Charles Tassell
Luke Bristow

Campaign for the Farmed Environment
Essex County Council

M O R E . B I G G E R . B E T T E R . J O I N E D .

This project has been supported by Defra, DCLG, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Natural England.



giving
nature
a home



Review of 2 years delivery and Year 3 - John Meehan

JM provided an overview of what Nature Improvement Areas (NIA) were set out to accomplish with particular reference to the aims of the Greater Thames Marshes NIA.

Advisory Group members requested further information on mapping and Thames Terrace Invertebrate (TTI) project, information on these can be found at <http://greaterthamesmarshes.com/facing-change/> and <http://greaterthamesmarshes.com/tti/> which includes documentation such as the TTI Masterplan: <http://greaterthamesmarshes.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/NIA-TTI-Masterplan-May-2013.pdf>. Attendees asked questions about Green Infrastructure, the relationship with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, and the Local Environment & Economic Development.

Legacy and Resources; Update on the two NIA HLF and LIFE bids - Kate Collins

KC gave a breakdown of two bids currently being developed for Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and EU LIFE+ funding. The bids focus on securing a legacy for NIA projects, with a focus on climate adaptation, creating an ecological network, partnership working and local community engagement.

The LIFE+ bid will look to build upon the international importance of the Thames and to establish a better evidence base for climate adaptation measures in estuaries. The aim is to restore, adapt, innovate and inspire decision-makers and shareholders to understand and effectively manage the ecosystem services of the Thames. This project has raised the suggestion that the NIA legacy could be secured by working toward Biosphere Reserve status.

The HLF bid, entitled Pathways to the Marshes, aspires to connect communities of South-East Essex to their natural environment by inspiring a sense of ownership. The bid has been submitted to HLF, encompassing 27 individual projects under the areas of promotion, access, biodiversity, history, community engagement, art and education.

Attendees raised questions about the challenge of achieving multiple benefits. The group raised the issue of how invasive species can be a problem for climate change adaptation. There was concern that the stakeholder groups within the NIA are unbalanced. KC assured the group that wider representatives are being consulted. KC welcomed any ideas to link environmental issues to economic growth.

Nature Watch Points & Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Jo Sampson

JS gave a presentation outlining NIA delivery to date in relation to Obj 4 Communications and Access projects. There is further funding available from the NIA, which could be used to lever in additional resources, for both Stakeholder Events and Nature Watch Points. JS invited suggestions and recommendations from the Advisory Group for future projects. Options discussed included:

- Projects on community engagement and communication
- The use of social media e.g. Twitter

In response to queries from the floor, JS stated that the online survey targeting additional external stakeholders will provide some information on public recognition of the NIA.

[**ACTION:** The NIA is open to suggestions and ideas so please contact us to progress these discussions.]

Climate Change Action Plan - Jo Sampson

JS reported on a RSPB Futurescape / NIA climate change adaptation workshop held in January 2014 involving representatives from the Advisory Group. The workshop began by assessing projections of climate change and considering how these would affect NIA actions and conservation delivery in the Greater Thames. A full version of the presentation is available on request.

The workshop outputs were summarised and the group considered what is next for the NIA:

- Develop a longer term NIA strategy to enable the Greater Thames Marshes to adapt to climate change
- Develop a common message from the workshop on climate change within the NIA

[**ACTION:** NIA to continue developing this workstream and report back to the Advisory Group]

TE2100 Habitat plans; working with the GTM NIA – Nick Reid

Following on from the climate adaptation presentation, NR gave an overview of the Environment Agency's (EA) priorities, specifically to prevent habitat loss through coastal squeeze, reduce maintenance costs, open up habitats and maintain partnership work.

The TE2100 programme is being implemented over 3 phases known as TEPI, TEPII and TEPIII. Phase I is seeking to create 300 hectares by 2026. NR highlighted Great Bells Farm as a case study habitat creation project (150ha coastal grazing marshes on Isle of Sheppey, which was delivered in partnership by EA and RSPB), which has been nominated for a CIEEM Award in the NGO Impact category <http://www.cieem.net/ngo-impact-award-1>.

GTM NIA Farm Advisor and NE Land Management update - Les Edwins

LE provided the Advisory Group with a progress update on the NIA Farm Conservation Advice project, highlighting some of the changes which have been made to the project since the Business Plan following a review of the project, and learning from other NIAs. For example, larger quarterly "Farm Focus Groups" have been replaced by smaller, informal and more productive "Farmer Discussion Groups" (FDG). The two core issues discussed at the last FDG were the impacts of flooding and predator control, noting that for farmers the costs of effective predator management were prohibitive.

Advisory Groups members asked about New Environmental Land Management Schemes (NELMS), recommending that the NIA should be closely involved in the Natural England led-discussions around NELMS targeting (this is currently being channelled through LNPs).

[**ACTION:**] LE to facilitate an update to the NIA Advisory Group on the development of NELMS

Any Other Business

NB spoke about using the information in the hand-out on bids provided as a case study, stating it provides a useful insight into HLF, LIFE and environment programmes. NB also stated that his team have recently completed a report on Historic Grazing Marshes in Essex which he will share with the NIA and KC to support future development of projects.

JM is meeting with the LNP shortly to continue discussions and expressed that the AG will be kept informed.