

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel
DATE	22 January 2015
REPORT TITLE	Draft South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan
Report of	Ross Kennerley. Natural Environment and Recreation Manager
WARDS AFFECTED	All

Summary of report:

Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of green spaces in and around towns and villages. GI is seen as being of increased importance because of the multiple benefits generated from the network of sites. The Council has produced a Draft South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan and Members are asked to consider the Plan and adoption.

Financial implications:

No direct financial implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members consider the report and RECOMMEND to Executive that Council be RECOMMENDED that the South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan be adopted. Any amendments prior to adoption to be delegated to the Natural Environment and Recreation Manager in consultation with chair of E & E and Portfolio holder

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Green Infrastructure consists of the network of green spaces in and around cities towns and villages. The network delivers multiple benefits for people and the environment and is of value both because of the individual benefits from each site and the connectivity created across the landscape.

- 1.2 The term *Green Infrastructure* is being widely used by government and is seen as an increasingly important area of work for Councils and communities. Creation, and appropriate management, of *Green Infrastructure* is fundamental to sustainability and increasingly sits alongside the *Grey Infrastructure* of roads, sewers and other hard infrastructure in achieving sustainable development
- 1.3 Delivery and management of Green Infrastructure requires landowner involvement, cross border working and multi agency collaboration. SHDC has been involved in pioneering Green Infrastructure Partnerships around both Plymouth and Torbay. The emerging South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan brought before Members has been generated from the work around Torbay with the South Devon Green Infrastructure Partnership.

2 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 South Devon Green Infrastructure Partnership

The South Devon Green Infrastructure Partnership formed five years ago and assisted the production of successful Green Infrastructure Delivery Plans for Torbay and for the 'Heart of Teignbridge' (covering Newton Abbot and the surrounding areas).

The partnership is made up of, and funded by, the following organisations:

- Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust;
- Natural England;
- South Hams District Council;
- Torbay Council;
- South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit; and
- National Trust.

The partnership is now well established and one full time coordinator is employed by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust on behalf of the partnership. The coordinator works part time within the Natural Environment and Recreation team at South Hams District Council.

The main aim of the partnership is to secure delivery of high quality multi-functional green infrastructure and to strengthen the green infrastructure network across the South Devon project area – with a range of access, land management and planning related work already underway. In 2013 the partnership recognised the benefit of concentrating effort on the more rural area of the South Hams. This was particularly in light of the NPPF and emerging work on the Local Plan for South Hams (now termed "Our Plan").

2.2 Planning Policy Context

Green infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as: "a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is

capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities”.

In urban areas and at a local level it includes the benefits provided by trees, green roofs, gardens, parks, playing fields, cemeteries and allotments. In a rural context and at a strategic level it can include farmland, woodland and other natural features providing important services such as flood protection, carbon storage and water purification.

Green infrastructure also includes water and wetland features including ponds, streams, rivers and estuaries. Public rights of way and linear features such as rivers can provide important connecting corridors between green infrastructure assets for both people and wildlife.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF requires Local Authorities to *“set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.”*

Planning for green infrastructure helps to ensure that there is a coherent network of green space for both people and wildlife, preventing further fragmentation and decline of habitats and species and ensuring a good quality of life for future generations.

2.3 **Draft South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan**

In light of the NPPF requirements surrounding green infrastructure, a key role of the South Devon Green Infrastructure Coordinator has been developing a Green Infrastructure Plan for the South Hams. The Plan is designed to complement neighbouring Green Infrastructure Plans produced by Plymouth, Torbay and Teignbridge and provides important evidence for the emerging South Hams Our Plan emerging Green Infrastructure policy. The preparation is seen to be of significance to Natural England and NE is providing financial support.

The Green Infrastructure Plan identifies four key themes

- Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage;
- Health, Access and Recreation;
- Sustainable Drainage, Flood Alleviation and Water Quality; and
- Local Food and Fuel.

Strategic aims and actions have been developed for each theme and specific green infrastructure projects have been identified. The projects have been split by areas, based on the section 106 clusters used by the Council planning team which split the district into four based around the key towns of Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, Totnes and Dartmouth.

The projects have been identified based on known needs/opportunities and in consultation with stakeholders and the local community. For each project a project description, key partners, potential delivery mechanisms and link back to the strategic themes is provided. The draft plan has been subject to public consultation during 2014.

The Plan will serve a number of functions and will achieve these with greater strength if the document has been adopted by the Council.

- Evidence base for Our Plan to underpin the proposed Green Infrastructure policy
- Representation of cross border themes and projects with neighbouring authorities supporting the required duty to co-operate
- A basis for local projects and partnerships with landowners and community groups
- An evidence base to support funding bids for grant aid
- An evidence base to support negotiations for s.106 funding or site based projects

It is recognised that as a evidence base to Our Plan that it will need to be subject to further formal consultation (and potential challenge) when *Our Plan* is subject to its formal Regulation 19 consultation. Only after formal adoption of *Our Plan* will the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan have full planning weight.

It is also recognised that Green Infrastructure has a close link to Open, Space, Sport and Recreation – another area where the NPPF requires the Council to develop both policy and evidence. A separate Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan is in development and care is being taken to ensure that both areas of work, and the enabling policies, are co-ordinated and complementary.

The draft Green Infrastructure Plan will be available to be viewed on the website. Any queries on the plan ahead of Scrutiny Panel can be raised with the Natural Environment and Recreation Manager or with Alexis Huggins, Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator on 01803 861406 or alexis.huggins@southhams.gov.uk.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council has the following legal powers and responsibilities

- Paragraph 114 of the NPPF requires Local Authorities to “*set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.*”
- S. 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act allows for agreements to secure obligations or payments to deliver infrastructure required to make development acceptable in planning terms.
- Miscellaneous Provisions Act and Localism Act allows for the Council to undertake projects and partnerships for community wellbeing.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Current partnership arrangements are met from within existing budgets.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 The Risk Management implications are shown at the end of this report in the Strategic Risks Template.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate priorities engaged:	Conservation of the Natural and Built Environment Sustainable Communities
Statutory powers:	See above
Considerations of equality and human rights:	No issues are identified although projects need to address accessibility issues to ensure access for all wherever reasonable and practicable.
Biodiversity considerations:	Creation, management and maintenance of Green Infrastructure has multiple biodiversity benefits
Sustainability considerations:	Creation, management and maintenance of Green Infrastructure has significant sustainability benefits
Crime and disorder implications:	None identified
Background papers:	Draft South Hams Green Infrastructure Plan
Appendices attached:	None

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

No	Risk Title	Risk/Opportunity Description	Inherent risk status				Mitigating & Management actions	Ownership
			Impact of negative outcome	Chance of negative outcome	Risk score and direction of travel			
1	Need to address NPPF requirement	Plan and evidence base isn't in place. Possible limitation to NPPF requirement	3	2	6	↓	Adopt and implement Plan	RK
2	Opportunity to support and enable green infrastructure and community projects	Lack of evidence base limits community projects and funding from grant sources	3	2	6	↓	Appropriate tree inspection policy in place	RK
		Lack of evidence base limits community projects and funding from grant sources	3	2	6	↔	Ensure plan addresses projects and links to development	RK
3	Opportunity to conserve and enhance natural environment	Negative impacts on Biodiversity, land management , water quality, flooding or environmental pollution	3	3	9	↔	Implement robust policies and procedures in accordance with legislation and guidance	RK

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ↔