

# **BRECKLAND PARTNERSHIP**

**19 FEBRUARY 2009**

**Report of Mark Fretwell, Partnership (LSP) Officer, Breckland Council**

## **The Environmental Project Group**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the LSP Board Members on the progress with the Environmental Project Group. Together with a broader outline providing the national context of climate change within a local setting.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the LSP Board:

- 2.1 Note [for information and planning purposes] the contents of this report.
- 2.2 The Environmental Project Group (EPG) to put forward a future plan of activity with defined outcomes & the relevant costings to the May 14<sup>th</sup> LSP Board meeting.

### **3. Background**

#### **National Context:**

3.1.1 *Each council's vision must incorporate both mitigation & adaptation & the challenges of delivering at least a 26–32 % reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 & at least a 60 % reduction by 2050; building a low-carbon local economy; protecting communities from extreme weather events & developing climate-resilient public services. (According to the LGA Climate Change Commission report).*

3.1.2 The statutory framework LGA – “*Our challenge to local government & the wider public sector is that there should be no poor performers on climate change by the end of 2009. Local government, working with key national & local partners, including national government, the Audit Commission, CIPFA & the bodies that support local government improvement, should establish the reduction of carbon emissions, & resilience to climate change as priorities for every council & local strategic partnership (LSP), not replacing existing priorities but built into all*”.

3.1.3 Local government is uniquely placed to tackle climate change with a democratic mandate for action, close proximity to citizens, & a strategic role leading other public, private & voluntary sector partners. There are some outstanding examples of local council leadership and it reveals that momentum is now building more widely.

3.1.4 The Audit Commission has an essential role to play through the comprehensive area assessment (CAA) to ensure that sustainability is embedded effectively in the work of local government. The CAA will place much greater emphasis on sustainability including the statement that “*long-term value for money requires the sustainable use of resources. This means taking account of the long-term impact on costs and wider implications, including for the environment.*” The Audit Commission will need to consider how it will strengthen its capacity to secure sustainability in the operations of local government & its partnerships.

## **Local Context:**

3.1.5 The LSP Board members agreed at the December 11<sup>th</sup> Board meeting that an Environmental Project Group (E.P.G) should be set up & for an outline report to be submitted to the next LSP Board meeting.

3.1.6 A pre-meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> January to discuss potential projects/ideas that could be discussed at the EPG & the options included:

- A green village – utilizing peers & partnership contacts
- A fuel poverty programme e.g insulation (ward level data)
- Community composting schemes
- Eco-House (virtual) incorporating env, home safety, & fire initiatives
- Schools involvement – competition promoting green initiatives
- Environment & Energy weeks (road-show events)
- Thermal imaging data – advise/support env. improvements
- Environmental groups developed (Ashill)
- Bio-diversity - management of County wildlife sites (grant system)
- Travel Plan schemes (business/partners/Breckland Council)
- Green initiative programmes including partners e.g wind turbine
- Grant award schemes - public/partners/schools - match funding

3.1.7 An invite to the LSP Board members, relevant external contacts & the key internal Service Managers was distributed & a meeting took place on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2-4 PM in the Norfolk Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham.

3.1.8 The key National Indicators (N.I) that were the focus of the E.P.G were as follows:

**N.I 186** Per capita reduction in CO2

**N.I 187** Tackling fuel poverty % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating

**N.I 188** Planning to adapt to climate change

**N.I 197** Improve local bio-diversity –active management of local sites

3.1.9 The proposals that were given the most support from the attendees were as follows:

### **Virtual Eco – House Project**

3.1.10 The aim of this project is to provide a method by which a large proportion of the District can access information on how to live an environmentally sustainable life, in particular, energy efficiency advice. It would take the form of a virtual web house which visitors can freely navigate around. Within each room there will be clearly highlighted 'clickable' objects. Each one brings up an information panel with an average of two paragraphs of text, featuring links to related sources of information or potential funding available.

3.1.11 Although this idea originally started out with the remit of an exemplar of energy efficient living, our research found that the Energy Savings Trust had recently launched their own version <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Home-improvements/The-Energy-Saving-House>.

3.1.12 It was felt that there is still merit in` developing a local version of this site, with relevant local information in relation to advice, support, & funding sources etc. However the scope of the virtual house could also be broadened to include advice regarding water efficiency, home security & fire safety for example in order to reach a broader audience.

3.1.13 Provisional quotations to develop this site are between **£6-8K**. If LSP Board members are supportive of this project in principle a more detailed brief can be further developed. It would be useful to ascertain which partners would be interested in using the virtual house as

a portal for promoting their own messages.

### **Environment Week**

3.1.14 Breckland Council plans to hold 2 week long events to raise awareness of environmental issues. The events will be held in each of the five market towns, where possible on market days.

#### **Spring Clean Week – 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April**

3.1.15 This week of events will form part of the month long Breckland Blitz (links to the Pride campaign). The event aims to raise awareness of caring for the environment in which we live, & the work which is undertaken to keep our market towns clean & tidy. The event is still being planned, & the following ideas are being further developed:

- An information stand to disseminate the key environmental issues & Pride campaign
- A perspex box to show visitors how much litter has been collected in their town/area.
- Joint litter patrols with our Enforcement Officer & the PCSO's
- A reward scheme for those who dispose of their litter appropriately
- A cigarette litter focus
- A presence by our Cleansing Contractor Serco

#### **Energy Week – August (dates to be confirmed)**

3.1.16 This week of events will aim to raise awareness of the ways in which we can all save energy. Ideas in discussion for this event are:

- Utilising the Energy Bus
- Energy Saving Trust to attend – Driving simulator
- Information available on improvements which can be made to properties but also easy changes which do not have a cost implication
- Providing grant/funding information

3.1.17 These events will have no cost implication for the LSP, but resources may be required in assisting with venues or the delivery of the events.

3.1.18 An invitation is extended to all LSP Board Members to support us at these events. If partners would like to promote a particular environmental project or campaign of their own at these events prior notice will be required to ensure sufficient space can be managed.

### **3.2 Issues**

3.2.1 The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, set out the challenge recently when he said: "our mission is, in truth, historic & world changing – to build over the next fifty years & beyond, a global low carbon economy. And it is not overdramatic to say that the character & course of the coming century will be set by how we measure up to this challenge." There is a political consensus on the need for action. The Rt Hon David Cameron MP, leader of the Opposition, has said: "The long-term nature of the climate change challenge demands a framework & disciplines that no government, of any political colour, will ever be able to fudge".

#### **The Challenge of Climate Change**

3.2.2 There is now consensus among the international community that the world is warming & that this is mainly the result of human activities. The evidence for climate change is compelling & there is overwhelming agreement among scientists that human activity is the cause. There is a growing understanding of how the impacts will vary across the world. The UK climate is expected to become warmer, with wetter winters, drier summers, & more extreme weather events, such as heavy rain & high winds.

#### **The Nottingham Declaration**

3.2.3 Breckland Council is committed to the Climate Change agenda & will be signing the

Nottingham Declaration by the end of March 09. How committed are the LSP Partners in working in partnership with Breckland Council to deliver the climate change agenda.

3.2.4 The Declaration recognises the central role of local authorities in leading society's response to the challenge of climate change. By signing the Declaration councils pledge to systematically address the causes of climate change & to prepare their community for its impacts. Signing is a public commitment to take action and a catalyst for a more systematic response.

3.2.5 Five reasons to sign the Declaration

1. Reassure your residents.
2. Strengthen your council's response.
3. Perform well.
4. Save money and access resources.
5. Improve the quality of life of local communities.

3.2.6 The Environmental Project Group (EPG) will have resource implications and a funding request may be appropriate for the May 14<sup>th</sup> LSP Board meeting.

### **3.3 Options**

3.3.1 To note [for information and planning purposes] the contents of this report.

3.3.2 The LSP Board (Breckland Partnership) to jointly work together to combat climate change by utilizing all the skills, knowledge, & resources effectively to create real change that will add value for money & in doing so will create an improved environment for the communities in which we live, work & visit.

3.3.3 A publicity launch campaign in terms of the Environmental Project Group & the signing up of the Nottingham Declaration & our commitment to make change through the LSP.

### **3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

3.4.1 The Environmental Project Group requires the support of the LSP Board members in order to achieve its objectives of making significant improvements in relation to climate change & to promote green initiatives.

3.4.2 Local Performance Framework: The new local performance framework includes national indicators (NIs) for: CO2 reduction from local authority (LA) operations; per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area; and planning to adapt to climate change. 90% of Local Area Agreements include nationally agreed targets on one or more of these indicators. Local authorities' performance on climate change will be assessed within Comprehensive Area Assessments undertaken by the Audit Commission.

3.4.3 Kyoto Protocol: The UK Government has signed the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Protocol commits the UK to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 12.5% from 1990 level by 2008-12. At the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007, participants agreed that deep cuts in global emissions will be required, in future and to enter into discussions for a post-Kyoto agreement to be agreed by the end of 2009.

3.4.3 The forthcoming Carbon Reduction Commitment & the pressure to cut CO2 together with the recession, means there has never been a better time to get buy-in to tackle climate change. When combined it puts a greater imperative to save energy & consequently money.