

## ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD OVERVIEW PANEL

10 NOVEMBER 2005

## UPDATE ON THE KINGSTON LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

## REPORT BY THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

**SUMMARY**

The Executive adopted the first part of the Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan in September 2004. This report provides an update on the progress of the Kingston Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

**ACTION BY THE PANEL**

The Panel is asked to note and comment on the progress of the Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan.

**BACKGROUND**

1. Biodiversity is in simple terms the variety of life on earth. The concept of supporting and encouraging Biodiversity is now accepted in all circles from Government, business, academia and volunteers.
2. A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) outlines a long-term commitment to the sustainable management of the biodiversity value of a natural area. The aim is to increase biodiversity where it can be sustained and contributes to local character.
3. The Executive adopted the first part of the Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan (KBAP) in September 2004. This Plan was developed by a core partnership of interested and committed members of the Kingston community. They make up the Kingston Biodiversity Group. The KBAP has been produced for the following reasons:
  - to deliver the UK BAP at a local level;
  - to promote, educate and harness the biodiversity theme in the borough; and
  - to bring about change in practices that are detrimental to the environment and wildlife.

**The National and London Framework**

4. The KBAP was developed using the principals of *Working with the Grain of Nature – A Biodiversity Strategy for England* (ODPM 2002), and the *London Biodiversity Action Plan* (London Biodiversity Partnership 2001). *Working with the grain of nature* sets out the framework for implementation of the UKBAP in England and is also the principal means by which the government will comply with its duties under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The strategy's five-year programme includes proposals for the support and development of local partnerships. Local

action is a major cross cutting theme in the Governments approach. The production and implementation of the KBAP achieves, for Kingston Borough, this part of the strategy.

5. The London Biodiversity Partnership was launched in 1998, as a response to the Rio Convention and publication of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Since then the London Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) has produced 31 Action Plans, 11 habitats, 12 species and 8 Generic Action Plans. The London boroughs are supported by the London Biodiversity Partnership in the production of their BAPs. To date, 10 London boroughs have produced BAPs, 11 are currently in production, 8 have a partnership but have not produced anything yet and 3 have done nothing at all. The KBAP follows the format of the LBAP.
6. Local authorities have a duty under the Local Government Act 2000 to promote the environmental, social and economic well-being of their areas. Section 4 requires them to prepare Community Strategies. DETR circular 4/2001 makes clear that LBAPS are among the elements local authorities should build upon when preparing their community strategies and that Local Wildlife Sites (in Kingston these are Sites Important for Nature Conservation) are important components in the LBAP process.
7. To this end the KBAP was one of the first year objectives of the Kingston Community Plan 2004-2009. In addition, the production of the Good Practice Guide for Biodiversity in Kingston (GPG) (discussed further in paragraph 8) achieved a further objective. We will build on these objectives by continuing the habitat and species audit of the borough using local knowledge and expertise. The audit is an important element of the KBAP. In turn, the collated data will contribute to the Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL), which is administered by the London Wildlife Trust.
8. The body of the KBAP comprises of Species Action Plans (SAP) and Habitat Action Plans (HAP). In the spirit of Biodiversity Action Planning, the aims, objectives and targets of these plans are led by the core partnership. To date the KBAP has 4 Action Plans, which have taken longer than first anticipated to move forward. One reason for this delay is that the core partnership wanted to make certain the GPG is published by the end of 2005. However, several targets of the Open Standing Water Action Plan have been achieved by taking positive advantage of operational practices, such as the restoration of Plough Pond. And by meeting the targets of the Tolworth Court Farm Fields LNR Management Plan and Countryside Stewardship Scheme by increasing wetland habitats on one of the fields. A further improvement under the nature conservation aspect of grounds maintenance has been by constructing a boardwalk to improve access and excavating a pond in Malden Meadow, Old Malden. This meadow supports locally and regionally rare plant communities that were in danger of being trampled. The boardwalk allows a dedicated access for the visitor and protects the important plants.
9. The existing Action Plans are as follows:
  - Species –Rich Hedgerows and Green Lanes HAP
  - Open Standing Water HAP
  - Water Vole SAP
  - Farmland Birds SAP

10. It is anticipated that the existing HAPs and SAPs will move forward in 2006. This will be achieved by developing the existing aims and objectives of the Action Plans and setting the targets. To meet the targets various individuals and organisations will be involved. An example of how this may be achieved for the Species-rich hedgerows and Green Lanes HAP is as follows: RBK sets up a training scheme and trains volunteers to undertake an extensive hedgerow survey of the borough. The UKBAP lead partners for the UK Species-rich hedgerow HAP have published a comprehensive survey programme to be used in this kind of training. The other HAPs have similar objectives. One of the key challenges for 2007-2007 is to develop and increase members of the partnership to identify and meet the targets.

### **Kingston Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the Planning Process**

11. The Biodiversity Group recognised that the key to conserving Kingston's biodiversity was by the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat ultimately achieved through land-use policies. Wildlife in Kingston faces major challenges from development, inappropriate management and lack of awareness. The KBAP can play an important role in guiding planning considerations. With this in mind a Planning and Biodiversity Group was set up with members of the core partnership, Development Control and Policy Planning Officers to produce a Good Practice Guide (GPG) for Biodiversity within the Planning Process (Annex A). This GPG forms an integral part of the KBAP.

### **Biodiversity Indicators**

12. One of the key elements of biodiversity conservation is initial surveying and on-going regular monitoring of individual species, for example, birds and butterflies, specific habitats, for example, species-rich grassland and broad habitats, for example, secondary woodland. This information is used to predict change, which can be positive or negative. Action can be taken as a result of such information. An audit, currently being generated, will provide the baseline data against which the change will be assessed. Using this data Biodiversity Indicators can be identified and set. The indicators will form part of the Sustainable Development Indicators that are being developed by the Environmental Co-ordination Unit.

### **Key challenges for 2006 - 2007**

13. The key challenges for 2006/07 are:
  - a. To increase community involvement in the KBAP process by identifying dedicated working parties for the action plans. The working parties will continue to develop the plans as they currently stand. Each party should consist of a lead member who will drive the Action Plan.
  - b. To increase the Core Partnership by inviting Government bodies such as Thames Water, the Environment Agency, English Nature, neighbouring boroughs and non-government organisations for example Richmond Park, Bushy Park and specialist groups such as Buglife and Froglife.

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- c. To publish the KBAP in a format that can be easily added to as each of the Action Plans are determined and finalised.
- d. The production and distribution of advice notes that accompany the GPG. These notes (in leaflet format) will simplify the detail of the guide for householders, developers and development control planners.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14. There are no specific financial implications from this report.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15. Local partnerships through Local Biodiversity Action plans are a proven mechanism for focusing resources to conserve and enhance nationally and locally important biodiversity. The KBAP aims to ensure the habitats and species that are found in the borough and SW London are conserved and enhanced for future generations. The need to identify and conserve distinctive natural features that are of special value to local communities is integral to the ethos of sustainable development.

**Background papers** held by the author of the report, Marie-Claire Edwards, Ecology Officer,

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- **ODPM**, *Working with the Grain of Nature – A Biodiversity Strategy for England*
- **England Biodiversity Group**. *Natural partners – the achievements of local biodiversity partnerships in England*
- **Mayor of London**. *The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy*
- **London Biodiversity Partnership**. *Annual Report 2003 – 2004*
- **Staffordshire CC**. *A review of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan 1998 - 2003*