

The State of Green Infrastructure in the East Midlands

Technical Note 1 (October 2009)

Executive summary

This note is intended for all those involved in planning and delivering Green Infrastructure (GI) in the East Midlands, it summarises the policy drivers for delivering GI; the work already undertaken to support GI; the support available within the region and brief guidance on the suggested contents of local GI strategies. For more detail and guidance do visit the [EMGIN](#) web site.

Introduction

The Government's PPS12 stresses the vital role GI plays in delivering sustainable communities. It is seen as being; "a network of multifunctional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life in sustainable communities"

This is also reflected in Policy 28 of the East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS), which seeks the development of "green infrastructure plans based on character assessments of existing natural, cultural and landscape assets and the identification of new assets required to meet the needs of existing and expanding communities". The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) also includes a strong focus on the need to plan for GI through its priority action 'protect and enhance green infrastructure', which forms a key element of Strategic Priority 6 'Environmental Protection'. The RES encourages the integration of GI issues into the planning system; the need to work with developers and land owners to ensure opportunities for new and improved GI are integrated into physical development schemes; and, to realise the environmental, social and economic potential of GI.

At the regional level GI is now also firmly recognised as being a core component of the Rural Development Framework and is implicitly recognised in numerous other regional level strategy and policy documents concerning planning, health, sport, biodiversity, culture regeneration and many more.

Regional environmental partners believe that GI can and should, seek to provide multi-functional benefits to the region's people and wildlife, as an integral part of the delivery of sustainable communities. GI should be provided at all spatial scales, from individual sites through to the landscape scale; focus on urban as well as rural locations; and, be considered as an essential component of development schemes from project inception through to delivery.

This paper acts as a gateway to the EMGIN web site and seeks to assist those undertaking GI planning and delivery in the region by:

- Summarising the strategic work on GI policy already undertaken to providing the context for more locally focused GI work
- Highlighting support that is available, particularly through EMGIN
- Summary guidance on the elements we see as being necessary to include in a local GI strategy and links to some sub regional examples of GI work.

Previous East Midlands Regional and sub regional GI work

The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) and a number of its regional partners commissioned the first regional GI study in 2005. The study was entitled the “[East Midlands Green Infrastructure Scoping Study](#)”. This study investigated the potential for mapping the functionality of green infrastructure in a number of study areas across the region. The purpose of the study was to identify whether GI provision and deficit could be mapped and assessed spatially. The study was successful in embedding the concept of GI as a component in successful regeneration and as an integral part of “Environmental Infrastructure” – central to the region’s strategy for growth. The study also succeeded in promoting the concept of multifunctional use of green spaces and green networks. This study can be downloaded from the following link: www.emra.gov.uk/publications/housing-planning-and-transport/environment

A second study “[Green Infrastructure for the East Midlands – A Public Benefit Mapping Project](#)” was commissioned in order to provide a strategic view of where GI investment could be prioritised to maximise multiple public benefits. This study can be downloaded from the following link: www.emra.gov.uk/publications/housing-planning-and-transport/environment

In addition, at the sub regional level work in Northamptonshire by the River Nene Regional Park (RNRP) to create an [environmental, character and GI suite](#) (Nov 2006) provides a tool kit for building up a GI strategy base. See www.rnrp.org

Their publication [Creating successful Green Infrastructure Plans](#) provides a summary and update of this work including summarising advice and experience in preparing delivering GI strategies at the sub regional and local levels and includes suggestions on data sets and data sources.

In the [6Cs Growth Point](#) area (Southern Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire) the development of the GI strategy provides a model of [GI strategy](#) development, baseline evidence and a strategic strategy for this sub area as well as addition advice on GI delivery. It provides a mapping of a strategic GI network which can be used in more local work. See www.emgin.org

Much of this work in the region and other guidance is summarised in the [Green Infrastructure Guide for the East Midlands](#) which also gives case studies of the delivery of many different aspects of GI delivery in the region. See www.emgin.org

emda GI Toolkit

East Midlands Development Agency (emda) commissioned AMION Consulting to undertake research into the economic value of GI and to consider evaluation and assessment priorities related to public sector intervention into GI projects. This research culminated in the 2008 report “[Green Infrastructure Programme; Evaluation and Recommendations for Future Developments](#)”, which highlights that GI projects are becoming increasingly important in regenerating areas, reviving communities, and attracting investment. It identifies that GI developments can bring key economic benefits, such as increased property values and job creation and retention, as well as boosting tourism and visitor spend. Following on from the research, a Green Infrastructure Toolkit has been designed to support the development and delivery of GI projects that will contribute to achieving sustainable economic growth. The toolkit provides support and guidance for the development of GI projects, explains the rationale for investment in GI and offers an evaluation and assessment framework to assist practitioners with their decision making. The Toolkit is for the benefit and use of local authorities, sub-regional partners, commercial businesses and other partners across the East Midlands who are involved in bringing forward GI projects.

Regional and sub regional Support for GI planning and delivery

In addition to the material and links described above in order to support the production of GI strategies [Natural England](#) have produced in addition to their valuable a national guide on GI entitled “[Green Infrastructure Guidance](#)” www.naturalengland.org.uk

A regional landscape character assessment “[The East Midlands Regional Landscape Scoping Study](#)” available via the NE website at www.naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England have been working with the Regional Biodiversity partnership, piloting a technique to map key biodiversity habitats and opportunities to extend them as part of the strategic GI delivery and expects to be able to map this information and make it available to inform GI strategy production and delivery.

Natural England, working with the Green Space Forum, has also been working to map the availability of accessible green space, which will also inform GI strategies and should be available later in the year, however data provision by local authorities will be essential to develop this work.

And [English Heritage](#) are also working on a historic environment data set.

The Greenspace East Midlands web site contains practical examples of and advice on, GI delivery www.green-space.org.uk/eastmidlands

East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network (EMGIN)

To coordinate the work in the Region and disseminate it further, the East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network (EMGIN) has been set up. It hosts a web site on which are all the key documents listed above, good practice examples and it hosts an annual conference to further disseminate and discuss Green Infrastructure in the Region. See www.emgin.org

Further development for EMGIN could include more microsites, conferences and seminars, guidance on embedding policies in core strategies and tackling the long term management issues. Other development could include signposting to guidance/ funding sources.

Summary guidance on of the elements needed for a local GI strategy

There are many definitions of GI however they generally have following common key features. These are:

- The GI forms a network
- The network is multifunctional
- It delivers high quality built and natural environments
- It is delivered in and links both urban and rural environments
- It assists in delivering delivers sustainable communities covering social, economic and environmental matters

A completed local GI strategy should:

- Provide a baseline database of existing GI assets, including the ability to cope with planned growth. These include landscape character and geology; biodiversity assets (both point and corridors especially those identified in BAPs) ;public open space and other open leisure sport and recreation and tourism assets; other woodland and forestry assets; historic/ cultural assets; non vehicular movement routes (paths etc) ; areas of farming and food production including allotments; flood protection regime and other appropriate drainage assets; opportunities given areas future minerals abstraction
- Evaluate the quality and quantity of strategic landscape biodiversity & historic features, access routes and accessible green space
- Identify deficiencies and other factors affecting demand including; areas of housing growth; deprivation in: health; education; employment opportunities; open space; recreation; sport access; poor air water quality; areas liable to flooding
- Opportunities for enhancement (including areas of poor environmental quality/ areas deficient in biodiversity)
- Identify gaps in the network (including where path networks need enhancing taking into account ROW Improvement Plans or where habitats are poorly linked)
- Create linkages for people and wildlife preferably continuous but where not as “stepping stones”
- Identify opportunities for increasing multiple, complementary uses of parts of the network (eg recreation/ biodiversity and flood protection)
- Produce an action plan with long term delivery of projects to achieve the above actions, also showing sources of resources and funding including those for long-term management options for the GI elements.

Some principles for designing and delivering a GI Strategy:

To deliver the key features described above the following principles should be applied in designing a GI Strategy and the delivery of GI. They should seek to:

- Be produced following the maximum stakeholder input
- Increase local links for people and wildlife
- Maximise multifunctional use of sites and the network consistent with their carrying capacity

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- Increase local links for people and wildlife
- Maximise multifunctional use of sites and the network consistent with their carrying capacity
- Contribute to the management, conservation and improvement of the local landscape in line with local character assessments
- Contribute to the protection, conservation enhancement and management of historic landscape, archaeological and built heritage assets
- Maintain and enhance biodiversity to ensure that development and implementation results in a net gain of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats
- Create new and enhance existing recreational open sport and leisure facilities, particularly those that present opportunities to link urban and countryside areas
- Be designed to high standards of quality and sustainability to deliver social and economic, as well as environmental benefits
- Provide focus for economic development (inward investment/ tourism etc) social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning.
- Assist in Climate change mitigation (so CO2 reduction) and adaptation

Some current examples of local GI strategies and other similar material in the Region:

Mansfield Interim Planning Guidance www.mansfield.gov.uk/pg

Hinckley and Bosworth www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk

North Northamptonshire Core spatial strategy www.nnjpu.org.uk

This paper has been produced by EMGIN to assist those delivering Green Infrastructure strategies and Green Infrastructure on the ground in the East Midlands Region.

We need your help in telling us how helpful you have found it and what you would like to see in future editions of the guide.

Do tell us your thoughts through the EMGIN website.

Thank you