

East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network (EMGIN)

Regional Perspectives

Executive Summary on First Regional Workshop Programme 2007- 08

Introduction

Following four successful EMGIN workshops in Derby, Lincoln, Leicester and Nottingham it was decided to review the workshop feedback from the days and compile a summary of the state of the Green Infrastructure agenda in the East Midlands. This report has now been redrafted to take into account the final Northamptonshire workshop held on the 27th February 2008.

The workshops were fairly well attended with the following delegates at each ½ day session (not including speakers and the RNRP team members): -

Derbyshire	17 th October 2007	21 delegates
Lincoln	31 st October 2007	29 delegates
Leicestershire	16 th November 2007	22 delegates
Nottinghamshire	6 th December 2007	38 delegates

These were followed by a full day event in Northampton with training aimed at development control officers:-

Northamptonshire	27 th February 2008	69 delegates
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As a result of email contacts, bulletins and word of mouth at the end of December the website had 236 members, about half of whom appeared to have attended one or other of the workshops. Following the Northampton workshop membership rose to 287.

Website usage has been slowly dropping following a high in activity in September as can be seen below.

Month	Individual visits per month
September	465
October	433
November	401
December	328
January	341
February	295
March	313

All of the workshop sessions have been documented and are presented on the EMGIN website at the following address <http://www.emgin.org/default.asp?PageID=88>. This archive contains select photographs from each workshop, collated workshop feedback notes, and all of the PowerPoint presentations.

The following analysis is based on the documented workshop feedback, impressions from attending each seminar, and some further limited website feedback.

Regional Perspectives

Overall the East Midlands can be subdivided in the following manner, based upon some of the inter-relationships between the counties, sub-regions and cross regional links.

- Northamptonshire and the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) Growth Area sub region
- 6C (3 Cities & 3 Counties sub region) including Leicestershire.
- Areas of Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire outside of the 6C sub region area
- Lincolnshire.

At regional level the following themes appeared during the workshops.

Northamptonshire: -

The county forms approximately half of the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) Growth Area Sub Region. The county has a well established landscape character framework, a strategic Green Infrastructure study at sub regional scale with local studies ongoing, but completed for Corby and Daventry.

The green infrastructure agenda has been developed to a greater degree and in advance of the rest of the Region, by the early announcement of the MKSM Growth Area, supported by the formation of the River Nene Regional Park as a result of this process. The River Nene Regional Park has become the green infrastructure delivery vehicle for Northamptonshire, and information sharing and awareness raising has been a key part of its role.

However there appears to be some lack of awareness of GI issues at officer level which needs continuing focussed attention to educate and inspire development control officers to become GI practitioners and take up the ECA & GI suite for planning purposes. The RNRP is in a key position to be able to deal with this and to support delivery partners with the strategic implementation of GI funding based on the existing GI Strategy studies.

Lincolnshire: -

Lincolnshire suffers from poor transport infrastructure and traditionally has a low skill, low wage economy. It shares few of the features of the other counties within the region as it is isolated by coastal boundaries and not included within either the MKSM or 6C Sub Regions. Lincolnshire has a rural economy suffering from very different deprivation issues from the rest of the region, as can be seen in the '*Green Infrastructure for the East Midlands – A Public Benefit Mapping Project*' report.

Grantham and Lincoln have been designated as Growth Points by the government and therefore should benefit from some GI funding, however accessing this is dependent on formally constituted partnerships.

The new Ecotown shortlist announced by the Government includes a proposal at Manby in a first attempt to deal with the strategic issue of the loss of coastal communities to flooding and erosion, which was discussed in one of the Lincolnshire workshops.

These factors place Lincolnshire closer in terms of problems and solutions to other out-of-region coastal counties e.g. Norfolk and Yorkshire. Local and international partnerships (e.g. Netherlands and other INTERREG participants) and links with the East of England region and other coastal margins that share a similar set of socio-economic drivers (or have found effective solutions, perhaps through tourism or targeted skill base development) should be encouraged. Finally Lincolnshire can further exploit its proximity to the large and developing population centres in the rest of the region.

Three Cities & Three Counties Sub Region: -

Made up of Derby, Nottingham, surrounding areas of their respective counties, Leicester and the whole of Leicestershire, the 6C Sub Region is now the main focus for the Growth Agenda in the East Midlands; the announcement of the government's preferred Ecotown proposal for the region is expected in the next few months, and the location of this may or may not be within the 6C area.

The Green Infrastructure steering group is working has a developing 6C GI Strategy in order to guide the spending of GAF funds, this process will start in earnest once the new 6C GI Development Coordinator post is filled.

There is a need for all 3 cities and the Districts, Boroughs and County authorities involved in the 6C to form a strong partnership and build strong vertical and horizontal cross border links – city and county, district/borough and county as well as cross border county to county relationships need to be fostered and strengthened in order to submit successful partnership bids for GAF and match funding for projects. A cross-cutting green infrastructure sub group exists on paper as a key part of the management structure for the 6C area; this needs to be put into practice to develop a holistic approach to GI planning and delivery.

Additional stakeholders need to be brought into the process by the inclusion of relevant private and voluntary sector organisations, and this message needs to be communicated to CEO level managers in order to gain organisational buy-in and access to funding.

The 6C sub region has an additional opportunity to foster cross border out-of-region links with the West Midlands in order to properly plan strategic GI. The National Forest is a good example of cross regional GI.

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire outside of 6C Sub Region: -

The areas of the these Counties outside the 6C area will undoubtedly come under additional pressure from Growth Point developments in the 6C area, as well as from the Growth Point at Newark. However it is predicted that there will be significant funding deficits for GI projects in the areas surrounding the 6C sub region and potentially a lack of focus on GI issues.

It was suggested that it would be of benefit if the 6C Green Infrastructure strategy could take a strategic overview and deal with the GI planning issues in the rest of these 2 counties. The Peak National Park needs to be engaged and brought into the process.

Ecotowns: -

Recently the Government have announced the Ecotowns shortlist, from which 10 sites will be selected in 2008. There are 3 locations in the region for new Ecotown proposals – Manby (Lincolnshire), a review of the area of Rushcliffe Borough (Nottinghamshire), and Pennbury, an area of rural Leicestershire to the south east of the city. Both of the latter lie within the 6C sub region.

One of these developments will lead to the development of a new greenfield or brownfield settlement, which will have additional Green Infrastructure requirements and environmental impacts, and presumably will benefit from additional Green Infrastructure funding for both planning and implementation.

The impact of this agenda and its rationalisation with the existing RSS and RES is currently unclear. On the one hand, Eco Towns pose a new opportunity to revolutionise sustainable design, landscape ecology and landscape architecture. Conversely there are the environmental implications of large scale greenfield development, for example the loss of additional countryside, significant negative impact on heritage assets including in many cases military archaeological remains on MOD land and airfields, as well as significant changes to local landscape character.

Strategic Themes

Which are the priority groups to engage with EMGIN? : -

The following summary lists highlight the priority groups still which need to be engaged in the GI debate via EMGIN, or in project specific local partnerships (collated from workshop feedback to Q1 of the worksheet). Some bodies listed as missing in workshop feedback actually attended other EMGIN workshops and therefore have been excluded.

Public Sector; groups to be engaged

Some bodies listed as missing in the workshop feedback actually attended other EMGIN workshops and therefore have been excluded

- Identified GI Champions (Elected Members?)
- Strategic, District and Borough planners and conservation officers from ALL relevant Local Authorities
- Other relevant Local Authority departmental representatives
- Forestry Commission
- Sport England
- Parish Councils
- Primary Care Trusts
- GOEM
- Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- Peak National Park

Voluntary sector; groups to be engaged

- Community Groups
- Local Access Forums
- Sustrans
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- National Trust
- Groundwork Trust
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Private sector; groups to be engaged

- Water companies
- National Farmers Union
- Country Land and Business Association – mentioned at every workshop, regular attendance and communication required
- Developers
- Consultants
- Tourism industry representatives

Regionally, what are the main agendas and funding opportunities? : -

The following lists are the recurring common agendas and drivers regionally and sub regionally (collated from workshop feedback to Q2 of the worksheet).

The Growth Agenda and related funding

- Growth Areas (MKSM sub region, Milton Keynes Community Foundation style tariffs)
- Growth Points (6C sub region, Newark, Grantham and Lincoln cluster)
- Ecotowns

Olympic 2012 and Cultural Olympiad bids
European Directives
Sustainable Communities and multifunctional green space benefits

Lottery Funding and match funding
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund
Local Strategic Partnerships
Various Area Agreements
Private sector investment and match funding opportunities

Plans

- Local Transport plans
- Biodiversity Action plans
- Minerals and Waste plans
- Rights of Way Improvement plans
- Local Development Frameworks
- Core Strategies
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Regional Economic Strategy
- Olympic 2012 Strategy

EMGIN – Future Developments

The workshops produced a list of action points which members would like EMGIN to address at regional, sub regional and local levels (collated from workshop feedback to Q4 of the worksheet and Chair's Closing Summaries).

Actions

- Review the cycle of LDFs and Core Strategies in the East Midlands region, prioritise responses by local timetables
- Produce GI fact sheet / executive summary for elected members and CEOs
- Enlist GI Champions from elected members
- Provide a regional forum for Local GI Coordinators / Champions
- Revise and republish the MKSM Green Infrastructure Good Practice Guide with regional examples
- Explore issues around provision of a data portal or forge links with the Regional Observatory to enhance environmental, health, tourism etc spatial datasets
- Continue to disseminate GI related information via newsletters and meetings
- Help produce GI Strategies
- Promote Green Infrastructure in mainstream planning and in Local Area Agreements
- Coordinate joint working efforts
- Promote stronger policy on green space provision – Revised RSS?
- Organise GI training events
- Identify and target key groups
- Promote partnership working in all areas
- Work with Lincolnshire on developing appropriate out of region and European links
- Provide advice on funding bids

Website development

Some website changes have been requested by delegates at the workshops or via website feedback.

The possibility of amending the EMGIN website to include County GIN extensions for each county in the region to encourage local partnership working was raised in several workshops, and that is one possible future development, however it may also be useful to reinforce the links within the 6C area and have a separate 6C sub regional forum in addition to 5 County forums.

Additional changes are proposed to the website to make it easier for casual users to gain access to some of the information in public pages, as well as changes to login/account creation system and linking existing user accounts to the event booking system in order to copy user details in to the form by default. Users do not wish to have to log in to EMGIN every time that want to see the site and some of the content is appropriate to be released to a wider audience.

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02/04/2008