

supported by



Executive Summary

Green Infrastructure Skills Training Programme 2009

Introduction

On behalf of the East Midlands Regional Development Agency (emda) the River Nene Regional Park (RNRP), in partnership with the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) and supported by Natural England, co-ordinated and delivered a series of five Green Infrastructure Seminars and Training Workshops in the period between February and March 2009, across the East Midlands. These events were organised in locations across the East Midlands, which were selected to be particularly accessible, although not exclusively, for those administrative areas outside the established growth areas and growth points.

The objective was, in those areas outside the growth areas and growth points, to demonstrate the principles, benefits and how Green Infrastructure can be delivered, to Regional and Local government and non governmental organisations, elected members and other interested parties.

Programme

The morning programme for each event combined a regional overview with awareness-raising of GI issues and was aimed specifically at elected members and Senior Officers, as it covered Strategy and Policies and provided examples of (local) Green Infrastructure initiatives from across the region.

The afternoon programme was devoted to training workshops and was aimed primarily at Planning and GI Practitioners. The topic areas were; Partnership and Governance, Landscape Characterisation, Toolkits, Website and Partnership and Mentoring.

There was also an introduction to the new EMGIN website area, which is dedicated to the GI seminars and workshop programme and has been established as part of the emda commissioned programme.

Monitoring

Feedback forms were provided as part of the delegate packs and a full and informative analysis of those returned is included in the full report.

North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire

At the Nottinghamshire event, it had been clearly identified that there was a lack of coordination in relation to partnership working, a key element in developing a robust GI strategy. Subsequently, as a direct result, the seven Local Authorities from North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire, which form the basis of the Northern Sub Regional Group, have established where the GI framework presently sits in each of the seven administrative areas. This is now due to be taken forward to establish an overall GI strategy for the Northern Sub Regional Area.

Rutland and Lincolnshire GI

It appeared from the two Lincolnshire seminars that there may be a lack of common understanding as to what constitutes GI in that area, as well as a lack of strategic or joined-up thinking about GI methodologies, appropriate data sets to include and appropriate scales for studies. However, the lead officer for Lincoln City is a strong advocate of GI and considers the increased level of interest is extremely positive and an opportunity on which to build.

Discussions with the Lincolnshire County Archaeologist suggest that Historic assets are generally not regarded by colleagues in other disciplines as contributing significantly to the development of GI plans. GI in Lincolnshire was generally considered to have a lower level of direction outside of the Wash.

The discussion of data sets to feed into the Lincoln Policy Area GI strategy preparation process highlighted concerns about the unification of neighbouring GI strategies in the future.

Additional research would need to be carried out to establish the position in Rutland but appears to need to be included in any coordination attempts for GI Strategies, or risk becoming isolated as carrying out a GI strategy at this local scale may be prove to be unsustainable.

MKSM Update

As a result of one of the seminars, a representative from RNRP attended the first workshop on the development of an Exemplar GI Project, specifically for Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. It was clear from the outset that there has been little strategic focus or partnership work regarding GI within the targeted area; the point being reinforced through RNRP being the only Northamptonshire organisation invited to the event despite the county forming the East Midlands component of the MKSM Growth Area.

Although Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire lie outside of the East Midlands, the event highlighted that similar issues exist at a cross regional level.

Key Points:

- The concept and scope of Green Infrastructure (GI) is not generally well understood or appreciated by elected members and planners across the East Midlands Region
- There is a need for greater dialogue and coordination across the region to maximise opportunities for the integration of GI
- There is a need for a more strategic approach to GI to be adopted
- The need for and benefits of multi-disciplinary working are not widely appreciated in some organisations across the region
- The north and east of the region were identified as requiring particular support
- Coastal areas in the region face particular problems associated with the potential effects of climate change, which a strategic approach to GI could assist with
- Rutland, possibly by virtue of its size and governance, is at risk of being isolated from the 6Cs and closer working with surrounding areas
- There are strong exponents and advocates of GI in the region that have a desire to work more strategically with colleagues
- Officer time at District and Borough level devoted to GI is generally limited, as expressed by some invitees who could not attend due to lack of resources for GI support available from Local Authorities.