

Agenda Item 7

EXECUTIVE

07 MARCH 2023

LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY - A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

COMMENTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On 28 February 2023, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee considered a report in relation to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy - A Partnership Approach and unanimously supported the Recommendations to the Executive.

The following points were highlighted:

- Members enquired how nature recovery was being measured and how elements such as biodiversity net gain were benchmarked to allow for direct comparisons and establishment of performance; in addition, Members asked whether sanctions were being considered for not achieving targets. Officers explained that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy were used as a guide for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); there was a metric in development, a calculator set on a national level, used to measure the biodiversity value at set intervals (at the start, and when the development is implemented) which needed to indicate a net gain of at least 10% on site -ideally- and off site. Officers acknowledged that gains may not be always achievable onsite and offsite BNG would be necessary. Officers were collaborating with the strategic network of Green Infrastructure, Greater Lincolnshire, and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust towards setting up a registry of landowners who were keen on entering their land into the project as well as with developers who were interested in buying credits, within which they can negotiate prices for land (between landowners and developers). This was over a 30year period, therefore robust monitoring and enforcement was essential in line with further guidance anticipated.
- Further clarity was sought on whether this was a framework for administering the strategy and raised a concern on how the framework would fit into the ad hoc way in which biodiversity net gain was being developed and delivered through the planning system. Officers elaborated on how the framework was guiding the biodiversity net gain; the document was identifying the best habitats and places for wildlife and would also help ensure that the right habitat creation and enhancement fell within the right place.
- Further concerns were echoed in relation to the 10% score to be achieved in terms of this being a potentially unrealistic benchmark. Officers explained that 10% was the mandatory minimum score.
- Members commended the framework being put forward, acknowledged that there were clear benefits derived from that, however noted concerns on the long-term deliverability of the programme, on the value of taking agricultural land out of production in order to provide biodiversity, net gain and emphasised on the need for more information around the process and mechanisms that were being developed, which was anticipated when detailed statutory instruments were published.

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