

ADEPT Natural Capital and Heritage Working Group minutes

20 November 2019 (by teleconference)

1. Introductions

Attendees: Adam Stewart (DEFRA), David Sutherland (Buckinghamshire), Liz Small (North Yorkshire), Peter Chamberlain (Devon) Becky Waite (DEFRA) Liz Milne (Kent), Hannah Bartram (ADEPT).

Apologies: Andrew Leeming (LEP), Jeremy Pickles (East Riding of Yorkshire) Kathryn Deeney (Plymouth), Neil Coish (Torbay), David Dale (ADEPT)

The group agreed the current arrangement that this group would be co-chaired by Liz Milne and Liz Small following the departure of past chair Rachel Bice to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Liz M asked for anyone to come forward to be Co-Chair volunteers to help out.

2. The group's draft objectives shown below were reviewed with timescales and work priorities discussed:

- a. To develop the ADEPT Natural Capital and Heritage Working Group membership and structure and build and maintain effective partnerships with Defra, central agencies, local government bodies and relevant professional associations.
- b. To work with Defra, and other relevant Government departments and agencies, to:
 - i. Influence the implementation of the 25 Year Environment Plan (and its associated initiatives)
 - ii. Influence the development of the Environment Bill.
 - iii. Ensure there is sufficient understanding, capability and capacity within local authorities to respond to any new burdens/responsibilities.
- c. To consider the impacts on and role for natural capital and heritage in respect of Climate Change; and, in particular, provide a focus on natural solutions for climate change.
- d. Make links and contributions to the wider work of the Environment Board.
- e. (To also consider whether we need a specific objective relating to Brexit).

The objectives were agreed with one change that item 2 b ii should be changed *from influence the development of the Environmental Bill* to 'Influence the development of emerging environmental legislation and respond to climate change carbon net zero 2050 target.'

DEFRA colleagues warned that they were limited in what they could say due to purdah and change of government.

Environment Bill is on hold due to the election and the new government will have new policies. Manifestos are being looked at. There is a LGA push for a joint national task force on climate change which will include case studies and regional workshops.

25 Environment Plan: - still stands but could change with a change of government. It has been published in law. Fine to leave in the purposes. 2 b) iii – need to share practice about implementing new responsibilities and the new burdens on local authorities.

Action: Circulate the revised objectives to group for agreement. LS

3. The forward work priorities for the group were discussed out of the following list previously circulated:
 - a. Environment Bill
 - b. Biodiversity net gain
 - c. Local nature recover strategies / Nature recovery networks
 - d. Local natural capital plans
 - e. LEP industrial strategies
 - f. ELMs
 - g. 25 year environment plan connections
 - h. Glover Review
 - i. Climate and ecological emergency (carbon net zero)
 - j. Data and evidence
 - k. Capacity and capability of local authorities in respect of natural capital and heritage
 - l. Health and wellbeing of sector
 - m. Any other 25 YEP targets of interest...for example tree planting and woodlands strategy
 - n. (heritage priorities undefined – advice requested from group)

The group agreed that the next 6 months will be waiting to find out what the new government's policies will be in respect to the Environment:

The group discussed initial immediate themes:

- Tree planting, - having the right skills to plant trees. Are there enough to deliver – skills to deliver it. (linked to item k)
- Skills; where are we at in terms of responding.
- Planning systems – need to connect to local plans. Baseline information for nature recovery plans. Suggestion that RTPi colleagues in our groups could be invited. Climate Change will be a key theme for the ADEPT president next Summer.
- Discussion around Eco System Services and carbon sequestration.

A draft prioritised work list for the group was discussed:

0- 3 months:

- Responding to Climate and Ecological Emergency (meaningfully)
- What skills are needed
- Feedback from Ox Cam and other pilots (Natural Capital plan and evidence base).

3 – 6

- What's next for the 25 Yr. Environment Plan. Stock take of Climate Change solutions. Engagement with Planners
- Plant Diseases: Assess where LA are with response and raising awareness of tree disease issues such as ash die back.
- 25 Environment Plan – learning from the pioneers.
- Glover Review – keep a watching brief.

6 – 12 Months

- Biodiversity net gain
- Nature Recovery strategies
- Natural Capital Plans

Climate Change ADEPT Workshops are being organised with an ADEPT work plan being discussed to include practical steps and evidence base. Skills are also being looked at initially focussed on Highways but could include Natural Capital. Group to have a role in sign posting generally; Climate change impacts and commissioning carbon audits were mentioned. The Friends of the Earth have looked at authorities to rank work towards climate emergency.

Action: Hannah to circulate this link.

Point raised for group to be careful to link to the work of the energy group in ADEPT and keep to the Natural Environment aspect.

There was also a suggestion to look in a comprehensive manner at climate change – looking at 18 objectives – Surrey report a good example.

Action – For next meeting: update from the Energy group currently working clean growth position (Caroline McKenzie to join next teleconference) to link up with energy group.

Action – Hannah to circulate details of regional workshops.

Skills: How we take that forward? CIEM have considered the core skills and capabilities requirements for different types of group and drawing up this for local government officer in terms of the natural environment.

Action - Liz M to contact CIEEM to find out update on their work.

Discussion around LIS – emphasis around them may have weakened and whether there is time to influence them. Group will wait to see how ADEPT can be fed in. Ox CAM work continuing despite election. Variety of learning coming from process. – e.g. natural capital plan and measuring eco system services.

Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) Conference has a presentation on Ox Cam natural capital so far, useful to learn from the pilot.

DEFRA welcome ADEPT feedback on Natural Capital plan and evidence base.

25 Environment plan pioneers: these are due to come to the end in March/ April time and will provide learning points/ on the ground salient for Local Authorities.

ELMs: there is ongoing work but it is caveated with new government legislation. There will be a useful role for this group to feed into the development when we know more about roll out.

Glover Review: there will be a response to the Glover Review from the new government. It was an independent review so there will be a continuing duty to respond. Group agreed to deal with this response on the work programme, as and when there is a response. If there isn't a timely response then ADEPT may highlight this to government.

Evidence Base: this is covered under the Natural Capital item. OxCAM will share good practice but also it will be useful to share evidence from elsewhere in local government with DEFRA.

Health and Wellbeing of the sector: CIEEM has raised health and well-being with a focus on mental well-being, Natural England have mental health advocates. Public Health England has recently been engaged in discussions about public perception of health concerns around 5 G / place-based making agenda. Local Government to have representation on ADPH.

Action: Hannah to circulate any information. LS to circulate to details of Public Health/ Local Authority Workshop on Place Based planning for PH outcomes.

Concern raised to check Heritage outcomes. Group members to ask Historic Environment teams to highlight what they believe the priorities. Concerns have been raised around impacts of large-scale tree planting on preservation of historic environment and also perceived lack of government consultation or consideration of Historic Environment in new legislation. Reports of less checking of historic environment for Countryside stewardship (HEFER). Also climate change extreme weather events will wash away unrecorded historic environment assets.

Action: Group members to ask Heritage Teams about Heritage priorities and to contact Chair of ALGAO for priorities.

The Joint national task force will be a LGA task coming up. It seems to be more focussed on initially waste but will probably be a cross Whitehall group on climate change.

When the work plan is circulated the group can dovetail into that.

ADEPT Environment Board raised the issue of Plant & Animal diseases. These will have significant environmental damage. Currently public safety aspects are being highlighted. In terms of Environmental damage we need to assess which trees are affected and have a grasp on what it means with ADEPT members. What is the impact of ash dieback? The loss of trees dying will impact on climate change targets and offset new tree planting.

4. Proposed approach for group meetings

The group agreed and welcomed the proposed approach of bimonthly teleconference meetings and an annual face to face meetings. Dates for future meetings are to be set well in advance including the timing of the first face to face meeting.

It would be useful to link into the Environment Board timescales. DEFRA (Adam) is happy to host the face to face at Noble House.

Action: Liz M to send round google poll for biannual meetings– next one January and also additional December conference.

Face to Face meeting agreed for March which can be delayed to May if new government policies not clear.

5. Group membership

The group discussed and identified additional members for the group to be invited to join meetings when appropriate. Setting agenda topics in advance to focus on 2 -3 items was agreed to be helpful and would also assist inviting relevant experts.

- Sector Heritage Connections to ALGAO (Nominate someone to sit on the group and dial in to the agenda or come to the face to face meeting for hour.

Action Liz M to contact Chair of ALGAO for representative.

- RTPI or POS representative

Action: Liz M to talk to Sarah Platts POS president as a standby for meetings

- DEFRA specialists could feed into one off meetings e.g. Net Gain.
- Set agendas for the next 3 meetings and then invite people as we need.
- Focus on one or two topics per teleconference. Face to Face meeting to cover whole agenda.
- Next meeting to do more forward development work.
- One additional teleconference in December to focus on development work priorities to be held after 12th December so we know what party is in with what manifesto.
- Action Liz M to send round a doodle poll for that.

AOB:

- Good that group is re energising.
- Becky Waite covers Environment Bill implementation and represents that area. Group agreed that DEFRA representation is really valuable.
- Hannah – to put a call out for new members once working group has firmed up the agenda.