

BIODIVERSITY WORKSHOP

TUESDAY 25TH JANUARY, 5.30-8PM, CROSS STREET CHAPEL

WOKSHOP 1 – COMMENTS ON THE STRATEGY

General comments

The Manchester Biodiversity Strategy is too long & wordy — the title should be more simple

Objective 1 – Species and habitat audit

- Species audit: Advice and guidelines are needed on how to do this properly.
 - Will it be voluntary?
 - Who will manage it?
 - Has there been any consultation with Manchester Leisure?
 - Are we concentrating on species that are native to North West?
 - If introduced to NW 100 years ago What is native? How is native classified? If it s not invasive is that a problem?
- Japanese knotweed & problem species = how are they going to be tackled, should there be an inclusion of guidelines
- Habitat surveys should be created for schools, Tenants & Residents , Friends of groups to complete
- There should be a section on area-specific species — what s important to Manchester
 - For example Cuckoo, trees, trees, robin, mayfly, fish
- Magpie should be include as a problem species
- There is no mention of tree species in Manchester — Manchester Poplar. Also the problem with poplar scab is not mentioned.

Objective 2 – best practice approach

- Of the 100 acres of allotments in Manchester, 25 are not let. Many allotments have hedges that need to be preserved. These are a wildlife haven. The allotments contribute to the wildlife corridors mentioned in the strategy.
- Parks are becoming barren grasslands with fewer flowers partly as a result of mechanised mowing and strimming. Can the argument for biodiversity be used to lever more funding to allow for more human care for parks?
- Parks need to be managed to promote biodiversity, with for instance wide borders with native flower species.

Objective 3 - Promoting Awareness of Biodiversity

- Provide information about the value of 'wild' or 'unkept' green spaces to the public who may think that the council isn't doing their job when they see this eg interpretation boards

- Access created where possible and education on boards at access/on paths to educate people whilst there

Objective 4 - Environmental Education

- Emphasis required on education
- Parris Wood Rural Studies Centre and other similar sites should be written into the strategy.
- Work with schools is good because it reaches the wider audience of families and friends through the pupils
- Need to work to get Biodiversity into the National Curriculum and into the Education for Sustainable Development agenda
- Promote horticultural education — skilled trainers are being lost due to the lack of interest

Objective 5 - Sustainable development agenda

- Encourage developers to promote and increase biodiversity
- Needs to link to waterways/energy strategies
- The strategy should mention the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and the role of biodiversity in mitigating climate change
- Much more is required on specific actions to prevent developers from destroying biologically diverse habitats. The strategy even states that the loss of habitats is the greatest threat to priority species. One problem is that the Planning Department has limited influence
- The strategy should state the legal requirements regarding environmental audits and the protection of biodiversity and whether this only relates to SSSIs and protected sites
- The Strategy should aim to ensure that the legal requirements are met and to increase the priority of biodiversity in the Planning Department
- Planning applications should be referred to Environmental Services to ensure that the Biodiversity (and green spaces/open spaces) strategies are being followed
- Aim to increase the priority of biodiversity with developers — in some cases developers agree with planning requirements but then ignore them
- This strategy should influence the forthcoming Local Development Framework (the replacement for the Unitary Development Plan)

Resourcing

- Has the cost of delivering the strategy been estimated?

- How is it to be funded? Is NRF to be used to lever other funding?
- Apart from one officer committed full time to delivering the strategy how much staff time is dedicated to it?
- What is the commitment to this strategy in other council departments and how is this to be encouraged?
- Can the section 6 agreement (development allowed on the condition of funding for green spaces) be used to advantage to increase biodiversity?

WORKSHOP 2 - WHAT GROUPS WILL OR COULD CONTRIBUTE AND BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING THIS

- People should be encouraged to report any sightings of specific species (the priority species?)
- Different kinds of community groups should be approached if they can help with this
- The Ramblers Association newsletter goes to 3,500 people in and around Manchester — they propose to encourage people to report any sightings of priority species through this
- Awards for Biodiversity hotspots is an excellent idea
- Records of species sightings are vital because developers and contractors use local bat groups/badger groups to find out if there have been any sightings (as part of their EIA requirement). But if the group is not active any wildlife will be disregarded.
- Worst developers should be named and shamed
- The RSPB is carrying out a national survey. They send record sheets out to all of their members. They should be able to provide bird data for Manchester
- University students could contribute huge amounts of data (Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, Manchester Uni)
- EN4M and Northwest Environment Link along with other Manchester wide groups can lobby for a legal requirement for environmental impact assessments on ALL planning applications
- Information is required on how small groups or individuals might feed information into a central point. Feedback should be able to be provided in a variety of ways
 - emailed forms
 - paper forms
 - website where information can be entered directly
 - reminder could be sent every 3 months
- Guidelines are required on the format that species audits are required in and at what scale/resolution, how to record the info and a template should be provided
- Information required on how the data is to be validated

- Training could be provided to groups on how to carry out species audits. Is the training that is currently available consistent?
- Cheshire has a biodiversity recording groups but their maps are misleading because they don't indicate areas where no surveys have taken place so it appears that wildlife only occurs in certain areas — the areas where surveys have taken place.
- We need to collate a list of local species groups (e.g. Bat groups, badger groups)

BARRIERS

- Lack of funding
- Lack of time
- Biodiversity is not taken seriously and has low priority at a high level in different sectors