

## National LAF Conferences 2013 – 14

### Workshop: Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships

Bristol Conference:

Tom Butterworth, Senior Advisor, Natural England

Durham Conference:

Rob Aubrook, Natural England

#### Speaker's Summary – Bristol Conference

The workshop on the Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) started with an introduction to both these partnerships. The group then explored the engagement between the LAFs and the LNPs and the LAFs and the LEPs in turn identifying the opportunities for joint working and shared objectives. The LEPs are in the midst of writing their Strategic Economic Plans and through the workshop we identified engagement with the delivery of these plans as a major opportunity for the LAFs. The LNPs on the other hand do not have plans that they have been asked to create and so the value of engaging differs from area to area.

We heard of some great examples of positive engagement and shared working with LNPs and with one or two LEPs but it was also evident that for most LAFs engagement was proving difficult. This seemed to be largely due to a lack of time in the LAFs and any future work to share ways of working across the LAFs with regard to LEP and LNP engagement would be welcomed.

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#### Summary

The previous Defra minister, Richard Benyon, encouraged LAFs to engage in more dialogue with LEPs and LNPs in his letter to LAFs last year.

LEPs and LNPs are about:

- interaction between people and the environment and how the environment contributes to the economy, and
- what the LAFs can do to help the LNP/LEP and the converse

Are LNPs automatically getting a LAF member on their board?

## **LNPs - Overview**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/local-nature-partnerships>

LNP's emerged as part of the Natural Environment White Paper 2011 and in many cases replaced biodiversity action groups. They have a broader remit, than simply supporting nature, and have localism at their core.

- LNPs are partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people;
- LNPs work strategically to help their local area manage the natural environment; &
- they aim to ensure the value of the environment, and the services it provides to the economy and the people who live there, are taken into account in local decisions.
- Partnerships of local organisations: Wildlife Trusts (WT) a key partner (often lead, or chair LNPs)
- Defra network is engaged with all LNPs
- Set up to help manage natural environment
- NOT FUNDED
- 48 across England
- ± follow Local Authority (LA) boundaries in South, less so in North
- No requirement to set one up, to report – or deliver!
- Have evolved along similar partnership lines to Local Biodiversity Partnerships but actually have a broader remit – *all environmental issues not just biodiversity and wildlife*, although there is a risk they will revert to this remit

LNPs came in through the localism agenda. The Northumberland LNP members include NE, EA, FC, local authority, planners, RSPB, wildlife trusts, landowners, tourism and hoping for a health board member. This was all determined by local people rather than Defra.

LNPs support health and wellbeing, wealth (hence link with LEPs) and nature.

Most of the funding comes through the EA and NE. Mostly based on goodwill, so funding is limited.

Charged with engaging with LEPs and in some cases this is working; in others it is proving very different. In other words relationships with LEPs are mixed.

There is a recognition that greater support from Defra is needed.

The role of the LNP is not yet clear. They are strategic bodies ie there to influence rather than do. Rob's take on it was that they need to build up a greater

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representativeness. Grass roots communities, LAFs etc should be able to have input.

LNP needs credibility based on local interest and needs to be diverse - and have a unified set of actions, taking on a wider role and engaging strategically

There are 48 LNPs across England and the map of each LNP area can be found on the Defra website (there is overlap in places, mainly in the north). They are a self-supporting strategic partnership to facilitate strategic thinking and exist to advise and take on board local needs. LNPs have no requirement to deliver or report upon progress as they have no government funding, so engagement is locally dependent. However, there is a project to track how far they have moved in the first year.

Their aims are set out within the presentation overheads.

They have 3 key engagement areas:

1. Local Authorities in relation to strategic planning (LNPs are referenced in the NPPF) - local authorities should engage with LNPs during strategic planning, that is not specific individual applications.
2. Health & Well-Being Boards have been asked to engage with LNPs & LEPs at a strategic level - LNPs were mentioned in initial guidance. However, they are not obliged to do so.
3. Local Enterprise Partnerships - LNPs and LAFs were mentioned in the guidance from government on developing the plans for the Structural Investment Fund.

The Defra website has a link to all LNP's and contact details to provide people with a link to their local partnership. LNP's are still evolving; and LNPs need to broaden their focus wider than biodiversity.

### ***Examples of LNP work***

- Mapping resources, including wildlife and access to greenspace to enable them to feed in to LA plans
- Engagement with LEP
- Produced ecological network maps
- Identified supporting Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)
- Written State of Natural Environment report

National Planning Policy Framework states **LA** should look to engage LNP for strategic planning purposes; delivery being a lower priority, planning higher.

**H&W boards** should engage with LNPs (and LEPs).

All struggling to exist (as no funding)

Some LAFs sit on their LNPs or have links to their LNPs. Uncertainty as to what LAFs could/should bring to LNPs.

Natural England could help here, bringing body of evidence together to help LAFs with their "good for people, good for the environment" messages about access to LNPs.

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### *LEPs - Overview*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-economic-growth-through-local-enterprise-partnerships-and-enterprise-zones>

<http://www.lepnetwork.org.uk/>

- LEPs were established by government
- There are 39 in England
- The make-up, geography and priorities of each varies across the country
- LEPs are local business-led partnerships, seen by government as the powerhouses to drive local economic growth and development
- They aim to change the relationship between regulators and businesses locally, working with local authorities to coordinate the use of planning functions and align adopted local plans to enable growth.

LEPs don't necessarily follow administrative or LNP boundaries and governance varies locally. If you want to investigate your local LEP Google 'LEP network' and there are maps and contacts available.

Don't have a confidence that LEPs are committed to engagement with the rural economy. Response received: thanks very much and if we are considering anything relevant we will contact you.

LNP having great difficulty influencing the LEP, just like the LAFs are with the LNPs (access barely figures in the LNP)

LEPs replaced the Regional Development Boards. Their remit is simply to create jobs and wealth. It is all about jobs.

Main focus of LEP is employment, based on Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) to drive growth, Innovation, Skills and Resources. And European Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF) funding (Obj 6) 7 year programme

39 LEPs across the country – mix of business leaders and local authority leaders. Some tension between strategic plans

LEPs have significant control over European and Government spending.

The environmental aspect of LEPs is mostly about carbon reduction rather than other environmental issues.

LEPs are made up of a board and an executive organisation that supports them.

- Local self-selecting groups and boundaries
- LEPs set up before LNPs
- To drive economic growth, jobs and development in whatever area they set out in their plans
- LA should be part of them but not leading

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- Business led
- 39 in England
- NOT replacement for Regional government
- Alignment sought between strategic LA plans and LEP plans
- LOTS OF FUNDING
- Funding held by LAs

### Potential Sources of funding

- City deals
- Enterprise zones
- Structural and Investment fund strategies
- £6bn in EU funding from 3 x EU pots
- Supporting:
  - Innovation
  - ICT
  - Small and medium sized enterprise competitiveness
  - Low carbon
  - Climate change adaptation
  - Employment
  - Skills
  - Social inclusion
  - Environmental protection
  - Sustainable transport

Visitor economy *may* be important but last 2/3 points best join up with LAF work and opportunity to influence spend.

These bodies are funded significantly by government and their role is to promote growth and jobs. They are accountable to the cabinet office. Each has its own strategy documents on their website covering:

### 1. City Deals

### 2. Strategic Economic Plans

This is the overarching plan to deliver jobs and growth. Each will have identified the industries they wish to take forward, which varies widely across the country. Popular at the moment are low carbon, agri-tech and environmental technologies. Local consultation about these plans, running through to 2030, are underway now so LAFs can influence these by providing advice and potential projects, which are more likely to be successful if they show they can help deliver the LEPS outcomes. LEPs will have identified 'business hubs' in the growth plan so LAFs need to identify access projects, supporting growth and jobs, that are tailored to fit the LEP outcomes, for example, improving the access or sustainable transport infrastructure to these hubs. The Natural England website gives advice on how to bid for funds.

### 3. Structural Investment Framework Strategies

See slide. This strategy has broader objectives as the money is from Europe and includes green infrastructure (where it supports growth and jobs).

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Comment: one LAF put in a bid to the local sustainable transport fund, but failed to show the economic value and were therefore unsuccessful.

Comment: the Ramblers website provides case studies illustrating the economic benefit of walking and greater access.

MENE being used to conduct an analysis of economic data, cut by LEP – to be disseminated when finished.

If business wants it – it's more likely to happen!

All **agreed** that the overview of what each organisation is and does was very useful.

### ***Interaction between LAFs and LNPs and LEPs. What can a LAF do for a LNP/LEP and vice versa?***

- LEPs – 39 across the country made up of industry leaders, LA leaders – designed to create growth and jobs- still in a formative stage. Local strategy for growth and jobs. Linked to LNPs.
- Tasked with producing two docs. European Structural development plan to be published March-April 2014. Strategic economic Plan with objectives for the next seven years.
- Members put forward by great and good . chair is nominated.
- LNPs – between 40 -50 early days , varied in constitution and goals made up of industry reps , Wildlife Trusts, Agencies, Tourist Boards etc.
- Not delivery organisations – out to influence. Strategic planning, partnership creating, co-ordinating.
- Connections to NIAs National Parks, ANOBs etc.
- No budgets or grant awarding facilities.
- LAFs need to engage to get access noticed and recognised as part of a regions assets and wealth creator. Need to engage with tourist economic arguments.
- Need to get message across that enhanced access helps small businesses like bed and breakfasts etc. not necessarily the big industries that LEPs think about.
- LEPs and LNPs sound like top down organisations created by defra from the great and the good – very little influence from the ground up.
- LAFs need to put LEPs and LNPs on their agendas to discuss. Find out where they are coming from and where LAFs can fit in.
- NE has a role to inform LAFs, LEPs and LNPs about each other's roles.
- Possible role for the LEPs and LNPs in the rewriting and renewing of the local ROWIPs

### **Question and Answers**

Q: Why did Defra evaluate the LNP's so soon after formation and is there going to be a second evaluation?

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A: Defra weren't looking at the effectiveness of the LNP, they were trying to gauge if the structures and levels of influence would work. No second evaluation is scheduled.

Q: Their LAF has been underwhelmed by LNP's - their LAF have tried to engage, but with little or no success. Tracking down who to contact has been difficult and when they did there is no LAF or ROW representation. Are LNP's obliged to report and are they held accountable?

A: LNP's are not held accountable as they are not charged by Government; there is no contact or budget allocated. LNP's choose their own responsibilities and priorities, and the local authority is advised to engage with the LNP not vice versa.

Q: What attitude do planners have about consulting LNP's?

A: LA's have less resource to consult other bodies for advice.

Q: Is the Wildlife Trust a supporter across the country?

A: Yes, most are supportive and some have the role of the facilitator or chair. National Improvement Areas have been identified to restore large areas for their conservation interest; Locally Identified Improvement Areas are on the second tier.

Q: Our LAF tried engaging, but were informed they have to be have a project. Each is different so different answers will come out.

A: keep trying the specific officer involved – they will be doing green infrastructure work so access should be covered.

Q: Our LAF is wholly in the national park. How does that work?

A: The National Park Authority may therefore be the key route into the LNP.

Q: Don't know much about them.... Does each county have one? What is their strategic view? How do we talk to them in a language they understand?'

A: RA outlined the work of the Northumberland partnership including the proposal for an NIA in south east Northumberland which he is co-ordinating. Describing access as an economic issue; blocks to development and major infrastructure. MENE stats are useful and described the influence Hadrian's Wall has on tourism and Northumberland.

Q: How do we get them to listen?'

A: RA suggested they need to invest in basic infrastructure, their Top Down Bottom Up approach (funding from Europe and mapping the area) meant they needed local knowledge to manage the three phases of their work, infrastructure – promotion – jobs.

Q: We need to put it on our next meeting agenda to learn more about these two groups in our own areas. Should we be talking to LNPs to introduce them to LAFs?'

Q: We need to come up with concrete proposals, a vision for a particular area, ROWIPs need to be re-examined, for example identify where tourism opportunities are, they could be improved as a regeneration tool.

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Q: A strategic investment plan could bring together a range of funding pots and shape a business case for investment, we should share with other LAFs experience.

### Discussion Points Made

- Our LAF has found that LNP's have fallen into administrative boundaries rather than landscape settings. They have a LAF member on their local LNP board and feedback is coming, slowly. It is thought that lack of funding is a hindrance. Access has been included as part of the LNP mapping exercise.
- There are no clear channels of communication with LEPs; there is no way to contact them.
- One LAF is trying hard to engage with their LNP with little success.
- One LAF member suggested they are a small local town LAF and engagement between them and a body covering a large strategic area appears to be problematic.
- *Action: Natural England to encourage LNPs to engage more fully with LAFs.*
- Speaker felt that the LNP's default setting was that they do not want access – just want to focus on wildlife, nature and biodiversity. Whereas his view was that it is about how all this interacts with people.
- The LNP was envisaged as a sister body to the LEP, but this is not working very well at present.
- LNPs are officially not a statutory body or statutory consultee.
- There was guidance from NE that LNPs should aim to have a LAF member on their board.
- Why would a volunteer want to get involved with LNPs who are not really interested in access? LAFs are better off focussing on RoWIPs.
- LEPs do have funding, but are only at the start of their 7-year programme, so effort at this point may not be worthwhile but building some contacts at this time may prove useful later.
- It could be useful to express things in economic terms eg £x million benefit to the economy locally and the value of access.
- Access is important but needs a hard business case e.g. Hadrian's wall path £7m economic contribution
- Partnerships with health would be beneficial. Need to explore health gains and local economic benefits of paths / access, inward investment, LAF understand the area.



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- Our LAF wants to attract people to live there ... make the area more attractive. LNPs are looking for investment in the natural world. LAFs have a unique selling point.
- LNPs/LEPs are not on the list of S94 bodies.
- DEFRA recommend LNP's that LAF should be represented on LNP boards
- Frustration but willingness to engage with LNPs
- Opportunity to develop access issues into the LNP agenda
- LNPs need to up their game in terms of engagement with LEPs – a need to engage with the community
- It's still early days, so persevere
- Reminders from Defra to LNPs re: the need for LAF input
- Reminders to LEPs not only to think about industry and commerce, but also community initiatives that can have economic benefit
- So for access not only show the projects, but the economic benefits and whether it provides jobs.
- LEPs need to produce a lot of jobs in a very short time.
- Building relationships and giving time to mature
- *Action: NE -Share evidence base what, access infrastructure delivers?*