

HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITIONS – PROGRESS TO DATE

Report By: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To update the Committee on progress towards the Ambitions of “protecting and improving Herefordshire’s distinctive environment” and “developing an integrated transport system for Herefordshire”, and identifying how the Council’s work might be integrated more effectively with the Herefordshire Plan.

Financial Implications

2. No direct implications

Background

3. The Herefordshire Plan is the Community plan for Herefordshire which focuses on the next 10 years and beyond. The Plan outlines the joint vision of the communities and organisations of Herefordshire. As such it presents ten ambitions; the work of the Environment Directorate impinges directly or indirectly on many these although two relate to particularly major aspects of its activities. These are ‘protecting and improving Herefordshire’s distinctive environment’ and ‘developing an integrated transport system for Herefordshire’.

Partnership Arrangements

4. The implementation of the Herefordshire Plan is supported by a comprehensive partnership including over 100 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors and has just been through its third review. Core partner organisations include the Chamber of Commerce and Business Link, Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, Learning and Skills Council, Voluntary Sector Assembly and West Marcia Constabulary. The Partnership is led through ten Ambition Groups which take responsibility for delivering each ambition in the Herefordshire Plan. A Management Group and Board of senior officers from the core partner organisations support the Ambition Groups.

The Cabinet Member within whose remit the Environment Ambition falls is Councillor Phil Edwards and the Transport Ambition Group’s Cabinet Member is Councillor Mike Wilson.

Protecting and improving Herefordshire's distinctive environment

5. An Environmental Strategy has been produced and an Action Plan is drawn up annually. The Ambition Group has recently reformed its membership and terms of reference in order to become more effective and an Environmental Co-ordinator has been appointed with the same aim.
6. The Directorate's activities and role in relation to this Group, in particular over the past twelve months comprise:
 - Providing 3 representatives to the reformed Group.
 - The Cabinet Member for the Environment and Director of Environment now attend the Group.
 - Contributing towards the costs of the Herefordshire Partnership Environmental Co-ordinator who facilitates the Group and its work is employed by the Council and works in the Environment Directorate.
 - Promoting the recent debate on GM crops
 - Assisting with the development of a Climate Change Strategy for Herefordshire.
7. Because of the range and breadth of aspects covered under the ambition, four topic groups have been established. They cover:
 - Built and Historic Environment
 - Natural Environment
 - Sustainable Land Use
 - Environmental Resources

Each topic group works in a slightly different way, for example the former Agricultural and Forestry group has combined with the Food and Drink sub-group of the Business, Economic and Tourism Ambition Group to form the Sustainable Land Use group.
8. The form of the Action Plan for the Ambition Group is presently being reviewed. Currently it comprises a list of projects being undertaken either jointly or independently by the various organisations represented on the Group. Consequently it is a long list of projects which are being undertaken or lead by member organisations. The review of the form of the Action Plan is to try to focus the work of the Ambition Group upon actions that it specifically wishes to progress as a body in accordance with the overall ambition rather than simply those of its constituent organisations. Promoting the GM debate and the development of a Climate Change Strategy are examples of such a jointly agreed actions. Each sub-group will develop an action plan for themselves that, together, will form the Environment Ambition Group's Action Plan.

9. Two important and related issues currently arise in relation to the Directorate's involvement with the Environment Ambition Group. The first is the level of staff resources it is able to commit to both the meetings of the main and subsidiary groups, and then to pursuing actions and projects arising from their Action Plan. The second is making financial resources available to contribute to such actions and projects. Herefordshire Council is an important player in this ambition group. If partnership working is to be effective there needs to be greater attempts to align the strategy and actions of the Council with that of the Ambition Group

10. Objectives, measures of success and actions highlighted in the Herefordshire Plan under this ambition, and achievements in relation to them are as follows:

- Objective - A balance between development and the environment:

Measure - More new housing built in brownfield sites

Achievements – % houses built on brownfield sites:

1997/8 - 33.6%

2002/3 – 61.8% (BVPI 106 Target 45%)

- Objective – Protecting and improving our natural and historic heritage

Measure – (none)

Achievements – Biodiversity Action Plan: prepared

- Landscape Character Assessment: prepared and related draft Supplementary Planning Guidance published.

- Objective – Building environmental commitment at work and at home

Measure – Organisations making a commitment to environmental management

Achievements – Herefordshire Council has introduced Good Environmental Management and achieved ISO 14001; no central record held of registrations to ISO 14001, however a number of local businesses are known to have shown an active interest.

- Objective – Support sustainable farming and the rural economy

Measure (none)

Achievements – established joint working arrangements with the Business, Economic and Tourism ambition group to develop a joint approach.

- Making effective use of resources and cutting waste

Measure – An increase in the amount of domestic waste recycled

Achievement – doorstep recycling introduced in Hereford, Leominster, Bromyard, Ledbury and the rural round comprising Credenhill and surrounding villages.

Developing an integrated transport system for Herefordshire

11. The Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 2001/2-2005/6 sets out the detailed action plan for working towards this ambition. It was prepared and submitted to Government in 2000 following wide consultation with organisations within the Herefordshire Partnership and the general public.
12. Transport Wider Reference Group is the leading group for this ambition. It forms the main strategic level consultation forum in relation to transport issues in the County. Over the past year, the work of the group has concentrated upon the Hereford Transport Review (Local Multi-Modal Study) that was completed earlier this year and considered a long-term strategy for improving transport in Hereford. The group has endorsed the formation of a Multi-Agency Implementation Group to take forward the recommendations from this study and feed into the review of the Local Transport Plan and Unitary Development Plan, as appropriate. The group has also been involved in considering the transport implications of the Edgar Street Grid Study.
13. Detailed progress with delivering improvements to transport within the County in accordance with the above Ambition is set out in the Herefordshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report July 2003 (copies of this document were circulated to all Members). Improvements introduced during 2002/3 include:
 - 5 rural footway and 7 disabled access improvement schemes
 - 12 cycle route network improvements and new parking facilities
 - 13 new bus shelters
 - Public transport website (www.herefordshire-buses.tbctimes.co.uk)
 - 17 low cost safety schemes
 - Highway Maintenance of over 190km of county roads
 - Progress on Rotherwas Access Road, Roman Road and Bridge Sollers Replacement
 - Continued investment in bus service and community transport provision including the new Wyes Moves bus service developed in partnership with the South Wye Accessible Transport Group.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Members note the content of the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None Identified