

## **HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITIONS – CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE**

**Report By: Director of Environment**

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

- 1 To report on the Environment Directorate's contributions to the work of the Environment Ambition Group and Transport Wider Reference Group.

### **Financial Implications**

2. All expenditure is from approved budgets.

### **Content**

3. This report comprises the six-monthly update in accordance with the requirements of Strategic Monitoring Committee. Environment Scrutiny Committee last received a report on the Directorate's work in relation to the two ambitions most relevant to its work in June 2004. That previous report comprised a review of achievements and "measures of progress" set out in the Herefordshire Plan under the headings for the Environment and Transportation Ambitions. It was also reported at that time that a major review of the Herefordshire Plan is to be undertaken in 2004, leading to a new plan in 2005. Members were invited to the Herefordshire Partnership conference in November that formed part of the process for the review.
4. Strategic Monitoring Committee has agreed that you should receive reports setting out progress to date, work in hand and future timetables in relation to the work of relevant Ambition Groups. Notwithstanding that, this report concentrates upon those activities of the Groups which involve the Council and where value will be added through partnership working arrangements.
5. To a large extent the "measures of progress" for the two Ambitions, set out in the Herefordshire plan for which this Council is the lead organisation are duplicated in other monitoring reports presented to this Committee.
6. It needs to be recognised that the approach adopted through the Herefordshire Plan and Partnership is a "Local Strategic Partnership" which Government places significant emphasis upon. In order to make the present structure work, administrative and facilitation arrangements need to be provided for the ten Ambition Groups. In relation to those for the environment and transport, the Council contributes significantly to the resources required for these activities.
7. Since the last report the Environment Ambition Group has met on one occasion, although another meeting in the summer had to be cancelled at short notice.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from Bill Bloxsome, Conservation Manager on 01432 261783

Furthermore, this Group has a number of sub-groups most of which met to consider their action plans and joint projects. The Transport wider Reference Group has met twice, the first towards the end of June, was a special meeting called specifically to discuss parking policy. The second meeting was held at the beginning of November. A sub-group also met to discuss revisions to indicators that might be included in the state of Herefordshire report.

8. The Directorate also contributes to the work of the Housing Ambition Group, the Health and Wellbeing Ambition Group, the Crime and Safety Partnership and the Cultural Consortium. Of particular note is the work being undertaken by the Crime and Safety Partnership to develop policies in relation to liquor licensing.

### Activities

9. Over the past six months the Ambition Groups have had lengthy discussions with the Herefordshire Partnership Research Team about indicators in the State of Herefordshire report. This report is published annually and is intended to show trends reflecting the work of the various Ambition Groups. Its use is variable for the moment, reflecting the ease of collecting and utility of the information available. The purpose of the discussions upon indicators has been to identify ways to improve information in the report.
10. The principal activity of the Environment Ambition Group over the past 6 months has been to take forward the 'Herefordshire Climate Change' strategy. A great deal of information has been collated and a process developed for consulting the public on the issue. The aim is to produce a draft strategy by Autumn 2005 in order to commence implementation on 1st January 2006. It is important that this is seen as a Herefordshire Partnership strategy and that partners contribute to its implementation. The Environment Directorate already undertakes a number of initiatives aimed at mitigating our impact on climate change. It remains to be seen what further actions can be taken in support of the strategy when it has been produced.
11. Other areas of work which are being undertaken by or in association with the Environment Ambition Group, and in which the Directorate is contributing, include:
  - ◆ Assessing alternative markets for apples in order to retain Herefordshire's orchards, which are an important landscape feature, as well as having important economic and social benefits to the County. Inception report produced and meeting with Advantage West Midlands seeking funding to progress next phase in December 2004.
  - ◆ The review of the Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (HBAP). Draft going out to consultation in December 2004.
  - ◆ Lobbied for changes to the Single Farm Payment Scheme to include dual-purpose orchards. This appears to have been successful.
12. The Transport Wider Reference Group concentrates its activities primarily upon reviewing strategic issues relating to Transport. Progress towards achieving the Herefordshire Plan Ambition in relation to Transport is reported annually in the Herefordshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report last published by the Council in July 2004. The group is considering the following matters:

- ◆ The review of the Countywide Parking Strategy – its views upon the current strategy were sought by the Environment Scrutiny Committee Review Group and a report upon the issue will be considered by this committee in January 2005;
- ◆ The development of the next Local Transport Plan, which has to be submitted to Government by July 2005, will cover a range of issues, but the particular issues which the group is involved in relate to accessibility planning and freight transport movements.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be noted**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None identified.