

# ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE HEREFORDSHIRE PLAN AMBITIONS

**Report By: Director of Environment**

## Wards Affected

County-wide

## Purpose

1. To report on the Environment Directorate's contribution to the work of the Transport and Environment Ambition Groups.

## Financial Implications

2. All expenditure is from approved budgets.

## Background

3. The basis for the work of the two Ambition Groups derives from the Herefordshire Plan. This sets out 10 ambitions and the Transport and Environment Groups cover two of these.
4. The Herefordshire Plan, together with the Herefordshire Partnership, were subject to a major review which began in the summer of 2005 and it is nearing completion. All Ambition Groups were consulted upon proposals for change to both the Plan and Partnership. The responses of the two Ambition Groups are referred to later within this report.
5. The Herefordshire Plan, renamed the Herefordshire Community Strategy, is expected to be launched in May 2006, together with an Action Plan. The Action Plan will cover 3 years and include, amongst others, outcomes and targets that will be contained within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for the County. At the moment it is uncertain what other targets will be contained within the Action Plan. A new Performance Management Group will be responsible for delivering the Action Plan.
6. It is expected that the future role of Councillors and Scrutiny Committees in relation to the processes involved with the Herefordshire Community Strategy will be subject to further discussion in the light of emerging advice from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). It has however been agreed that Cabinet and the Strategic Monitoring Committee will review progress upon the three-year Action Plan and roll it forward on an annual basis.

## Transport Ambition Group

7. The Transport Ambition Group last met in November 2005 and more recently on 15th March, 2006.

8. The Ambition Group has provided input into a number of important projects and the development of strategic policy. These include the Widemarsh Street pedestrianisation scheme that has recently been approved by Council, development of the Edgar Street Grid, the Herefordshire Accessibility Strategy included in the emerging Local Transport Plan and wider input into the Local Transport Plan itself. Representatives from the Herefordshire Partnership have updated the group on the review of the Partnership and possible implications including development of the LAA. The Group has asked for a further presentation on the Community Strategy after the strategy has been launched along with its action plan so that the future of the Group can be determined.

### Environment Ambition Group

9. The main thrust of the work undertaken by this Ambition Group has been the preparation of the Herefordshire Climate Change Strategy. This was progressed through its Climate Change Working Group and the Environment Directorate has played a significant part in undertaking consultations, the Working Group and drafting the Strategy document.
10. Part of the process for its preparation included a major consultation exercise using the "Democs" approach (Deliberative Meeting of Citizens). Members were invited to participate in the process. This approach involves not only consultation but also awareness raising through the form of a game. A total of 53 "games" were played each with between 6 and 8 people, including some 'hard to reach' groups. It is understood that Herefordshire was the first Local Strategic Partnership to use this approach to consultation and advice has been sought from a range of other organisations upon its utility. A copy of the full report on the Democs process has been placed in the Members' Room.
11. A copy of the draft Climate Change Strategy has also been placed in the Members' Room. The Herefordshire Partnership Board has agreed a final draft, and it is hoped that all Board members will sign up to the document at its next meeting. An associated Action Plan has been prepared with the Strategy and the next task for the Environment Ambition Group is to promote this to other partnership groups and organisations in order that Climate Change is integrated into their activities.
12. A further task undertaken by the Environment Ambition Group is to commence the integration of the Herefordshire Biodiversity Plan (BAP) into the activities of other partnerships, including the work of this council. The BAP was reviewed and updated in 2005, and circulated at the beginning of 2006. A copy has been deposited in the Members' Room. English Nature has combined with Herefordshire Council to appoint a Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator who will work with other partners and groups involved in the BAP process to help them deliver the targets and feed information in to the West Midlands partnership arrangements. A report upon this will need to be considered by the Council in due course.
13. The Environment Ambition Group gave long and serious consideration to the proposed changes to the Herefordshire Plan and Partnership. The fact that considerable emphasis was being given to themes represented in the LAA left no obvious place for all the matters falling under the environment heading. Representations were made that the Environment Ambition Group be categorised as a delivery or other supporting group within any new framework.
14. In the event, it is understood that the Herefordshire Partnership Board took the decision to maintain the 4 themes originally proposed for the Community Strategy, based upon the LAA and comprising Economic Development and Enterprise, Healthier Communities

and Older People, Children and Young People, and Safer and Stronger Communities, rather than to include the Environment as an additional theme.

15. It is intended that a partnership group advising upon environmental issues will continue although it remains to be determined how the group will contribute.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the report be noted.**