

Somerset Nature Partnership (SNP)

Terms of Reference

1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

Local Nature Partnerships were a key Natural Environment White Paper commitment established in 2012. DEFRA's description of LNPs is below:

"The ambition for LNPs is that they will help their local area to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. To do this effectively they will need to be self-sustaining strategic partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people with the credibility to work with, and influence, other local strategic decision makers."

This paper sets out the role, remit and governance of Somerset Local Nature Partnership. This Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the LNP Board.

1.2 Role of Somerset Nature Partnership

Somerset NP will provide be a strong, strategic champion for the county's important and valuable natural environment. The SNP Board and Forum will together embed the value and importance of the natural environment into all decision-making processes, planning and policy decisions and provide leadership, coordinating delivery to achieve long-term strategic objectives to:

- Protect and improve the county's unique natural environment through a shared vision and strategy for the county
- Embed the intrinsic value of Somerset's natural environment into cultural, political and economic agendas
- Show leadership in bringing sectors and people together to realise economic, social, health and environmental benefits from an improved, coherent and resilient ecological network for Somerset
- Communicate and improve the economic, social and health benefits that the natural environment brings for everyone who lives, works or visits Somerset
- Natural solutions to climate change identifying carbon sequestration opportunities (respond to emissions in the air)

1.3 Geographical Area Covered

Somerset NP covers the four Districts in the rural county of Somerset (Somerset West and Taunton, South Somerset, Sedgemoor and Mendip)

1.4 Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this paper and the work of Somerset NP the following definitions are used for the below terms:

Natural Environment: includes all living and non-living things occurring naturally in the county (landscape, wildlife, geology, water, soil, urban green space) and natural processes (sometimes known as ecosystems services) including pollination, water purification, carbon sequestration, natural flood water management, air purification.

1.5 SNP Structure

Somerset Nature Partnership is a broad multi-sector coalition representing different economic, social, political and environmental interests from across the county all committed to the aims of the SNP. The structure consists of:

A Board: providing strategic leadership to improve and protect the natural environment of Somerset, reflecting the views of the wider Forum and the technical guidance of Somerset Nature

Officers Group. The Board will be made up of no more than 12 posts of cross-sector high level strategic leaders and advocates. The Board will have equal status to the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Board and the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Somerset Nature Officers Group (SNOG): providing technical guidance and expertise to inform and support the Board and the wider Forum, and taking forward priority initiatives.

SNP Forum: the wider partnership of environmental organisations, community groups, businesses, educational institutions and others committed to the aims of the LNP to protect and improve the natural environment of Somerset for the benefit of people, businesses and wildlife.

Task and Finish Groups: to be established as required by the Board to drive forwards priority initiatives.

2. Somerset NP Board

2.1 Purpose of the Board

Somerset NP Board will:

- Build a strong and effective LNP capable of achieving the agreed aims of the Partnership
- Celebrate and champion Somerset's natural environment
- Work with all local partners in relation to the Climate and Ecological Emergency declared by all local councils in Somerset
- Provide strategic leadership for Somerset's NP
- Work with Somerset NP Forum and Somerset Nature Officers Group to identify strategic priorities that will achieve the greatest positive impacts for the natural environment enabling communities and sustainable businesses to thrive.
- Set the strategic vision and priorities for the Somerset NP to deliver a high quality resilient natural environment that supports sustainable growth and community wellbeing.
- Ensure the vision and priorities are articulated in a published Action Plan
- Ensure Somerset NP is adequately funded through cross-sectoral support to achieve the aims.
- Proactively advocate the vision and priorities and embed in local decision-making processes
- Strengthen the evidence base needed to improve cross-sectoral working
- Promote the active involvement of communities and businesses in celebrating and improving the quality of their local environment
- Hold quarterly meetings as a minimum sharing board papers with the Forum for comment in advance of meetings.
- Hold an annual Forum meeting to consult on strategic priorities and opportunities.
- Ensure that the Somerset NP is fit for purpose.

2.2 Membership of the Board

The Board will be made up of between 8 to 12 members requiring a minimum of 8 members to be quorate and will have high level cross-sector representation including:

- 1 annually elected rep from the Forum
- 1 Academic
- 1 utility company
- 1 local authority
- 1 Heart of South West LEP
- 1 DEFRA family (Natural England / Environment Agency / Forestry Commission)
- 1 water catchment (SRA / IDB / Catchment Partnership)
- 1 Environmental organisation (RSPB, SWT, NT, WWT)
- 1 chair/host organisation rep (currently SWT)
- 1 Priority landscape (AONB / National Park)

- 1 Health Rep – Public Health/ CCG/Health and Wellbeing Board
- 1 farming / landowner (NFU, FWAG)

The importance of a strong and effective relationship with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership is acknowledged and will be developed through a Compact. These Terms of Reference will be amended to reflect this as required.

2.3 Establishing Somerset Nature Partnership

- The initial Board will be established through inviting the relevant 'sectors' (as listed above) to nominate a Board member.
- Composition of the Board will be reviewed at the first Board meeting and will be reviewed as required.
- Where further nominations are made, or requested, the nomination must be agreed by a Board vote (see voting below). Essential criteria for nominees are listed below.
- Board members will be appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for further terms of three years.
- All Board members have voting rights and must have the power to make decisions on the day representing their sector (delegated authority) where appropriate.

2.4 Essential Criteria for Board members

All Board members must be able to demonstrate experience and expertise in the following areas:

- Operating in a senior position relevant to Somerset's natural environment and/or relevant social/economic sectors
- Operating at a strategic level with relevant national, regional and/or local stakeholders
- Ability to act as a good team player furthering the interests of Somerset NP and able to lead on initiatives on behalf of the LNP
- Strong and effective communication skills
- Successful track record of influencing and negotiating skills

In addition, all Board members must have sufficient time, commitment and energy to take on the Board role to enable Somerset NP to achieve its aims and objectives. All Board members should bring resources to support the SNP or help align existing resources to achieve SNP objectives.

2.5 Role of Board Members

Somerset NP Board members will drive forwards the SNP strategy and achieve successful delivery of its aims and objectives by:

- Where representing their sector, members must attend Board meetings and behave in an open and accountable manner for the benefit of the SNP as a whole; having shared and discussed Board papers with others within their sector in advance of Board meetings and sought agreement to make decisions.
- Using their knowledge, skills, contacts and influence to develop and implement the LNPs Strategy, Action Plan and Fundraising strategy.
- Acting as Champions for Somerset NP and the natural environment, pro-actively building support for achieving the aims and priorities of the SNP
- Influencing relevant strategies, plans and funding mechanisms to further the SNPs strategy and aims
- Influencing decision makers, at all levels to further the SNPs strategy and aims
- Representing the SNP at appropriate meetings and events, acting as a spokesperson for the SNP when appropriate.
- Promoting SNP activities, events and communication tools

- Where appropriate, reporting back to their sector organisations and the wider SNP Forum on the discussions and outcomes of SNP meetings, seeking agreement and securing support to deliver the SNP strategy
- Acting as a lead for a task and finish group in an area of specific knowledge, expertise and/or interest, as required
- Ensuring effective communications between the Board, the Chair, Somerset Nature Officers Group and the wider SNP Forum.

2.6 Accountability

The Board is accountable to the Somerset NP Forum. The Board will consult the Forum on the Action Plan and strategy (and any revision of this) through an annual Somerset Nature Partnership event to discuss and approve strategic priorities, review work delivered, and discuss financial information. This information will also be placed on the Somerset NP website.

Somerset Nature Partnership comprises a wide range of organisations from private sector to local government. As such, whilst comments made on behalf of Somerset Nature Partnership are representative of the Partnership's view as a whole, the comments made will not necessarily be consistent with the views of individual organisations represented on the Partnership. Any individual organisation on the Somerset Nature Partnership may reserve the right to disassociate themselves from any particular comments put forward on behalf of Somerset Nature Partnership from time to time, subject to their declared interests.

This is in particular reference to planning related matters but may also be used in other circumstances.

2.7 Other Operational Arrangements

The Chair will:

- Be appointed by the Board for a period of three years and be reappointed for only one further term of three years.
- Be key in developing a strong, effective and influential LNP.
- Be a champion for Somerset's LNP at all times and pro-actively build support for the aims and priorities of the LNP.
- Lead on the agreement and delivery of the LNP Strategy and Action Plan
- Represent the LNP at appropriate events, meetings or functions, or make an appropriate delegation if unable to attend in person.
- Act as spokesperson for the LNP where appropriate.
- Fulfil his/her duties free from political bias and influence.

Meeting frequency / attendance / voting

- The Board will meet a minimum of four times a year to set and review progress to LNP Strategy and Action Plan
- Where members miss two consecutive Board meetings the Chair may request their sector to nominate a new member
- Board members should make every effort to attend meetings and to not send a delegate or substitute. If a substitute does attend it will be as a non-voting member.
- The Quorum for meetings will be 8 members. Board decisions will normally be reached by majority consensus (if there is no majority then the Chair has a casting vote).
- The Chair has discretion to invite attendance by others for specific agenda items.
- The Chair of Somerset Nature Officers Group will attend in an ex-officio capacity (with no voting rights)

2.8 Administrative support for the Board

The success of Somerset Nature Partnership will depend on the commitment and support from all Forum and Board member organisations and will require, as a minimum, administrative support to organise meetings, coordinate Task and Finish Groups and prepare agendas. In addition, Forum and Board members will be expected to contribute to developing papers and taking responsibility for actions to be delivered.

Board members will identify a resource to provide appropriate Secretariat support, this support will need to be offered by organisations within the Forum or funding approved for the resource to be hosted by the Wildlife Trust. As a minimum, resource required will be one day per month to arrange meetings, write and circulate papers, and ensure effective communications between the Board, the Forum and Somerset Nature Officers Group.

Additional resource will be required to arrange the annual meeting for the Somerset Nature Partnership.

Meeting agendas and papers

- The Secretariat will circulate papers to Board members at least one week before meetings.
- The Board Chair will be responsible for agreeing meeting agendas and minutes for circulation.
- Agenda items may be notified by any member at least ten working days before the meeting. Additional items may only be tabled at meetings at the discretion of the Chair.

Financial Management

- Any Somerset NP funds will be managed by Somerset Wildlife Trust on a pro-bono basis.
- If the Somerset NP is responsible for funds a financial report of the SNPs work will be prepared annually by the Secretariat and approved by the Board. A summary of this will be included in the annual report given at the SNP annual meeting.

Review of these Terms of Reference

- Terms of Reference to be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

3 Somerset Nature Officers Group

3.1 Purpose of Somerset NOG

- To maintain and strengthen contacts between partner organisations, and other key sectors, to co-ordinate the delivery of nature's recovery in Somerset.
- To disseminate information to partner organisations about potential threats to, or opportunities to promote, nature in Somerset. This includes updates on Legislation, National Policy and Local Policy.
- To support the Local Nature Partnership in the development and delivery of a Biodiversity Strategy for Somerset including providing advice and intelligence to the LNP Board and oversee monitoring of the LNP Action Plan and supporting Task and Finish groups.

Full Terms of Reference available on request.

4 Somerset NP Forum: Purpose of Somerset NP Forum

The LNP Forum provides opportunity for any individual, business, group or organisation with an interest in Somerset's natural environment and the work of Somerset NP to contribute to the development and implementation of a shared Vision and Strategy for Somerset.

The Forum will contribute to the development and delivery of the priorities within the Action Plan. Board members will be responsible for communicating with their Forum sector representatives to seek their views and comments. The Forum will be invited to attend an annual meeting to collectively review progress and determine future strategy.

5 Somerset County Council Climate Strategy

Somerset NP has agreed to function as the workstream for the Natural Environment to develop Somerset County Council's Climate Change strategy. This work will require the SNP to determine strategic priorities for the county and develop an Action Plan focusing on natural solutions to climate change; adaptation and mitigation. Combining these Boards avoids duplication of effort and conflicting priorities and ensures resources are used strategically to achieve the greatest impact. Somerset County Council will provide Secretariat and administrative support to Somerset NP to achieve this function.

6 Funding the Local Nature Partnership

In order to achieve objectives the LNP will require some resource and funding, in addition to basic secretariat function. This will be for development and writing of reports, arranging consultations and meetings and driving forward strategic objectives. To ensure there is funding available the LNP will establish the following processes:

- 6.1 SNP Forum members will commit to payment of an annual subscription of £100 for organisations and £25 for individuals.
- 6.2 SNP Board members each represent a sector, with the exception of the position of chair/host organisation. Each sector will make an annual contribution of £1,000 to be discussed and agreed within the sector.

These funding arrangements will be reviewed at least annually to ensure Somerset NP has sufficient levels of funding to operate effectively.

ⁱ *An overview of the Local Nature Partnership role*, April 2012, DEFRA

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192580/local-nature-partnerships-overview120402.pdf