
**ESSEX BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP REPORT –
FUNDING REQUEST**

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request funding of £2,000 towards the Essex Biodiversity Partnership, 2002-2003.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Essex Biodiversity Partnership (EBP), consists of Essex Local Authorities, Essex Wildlife Trust, English Nature, the Environment Agency and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- 2.2 The Partnership was established in 1995, and in 1997 launched the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan, a long-term nature conservation strategy for Essex, developed by the partnership members.
- 2.3 The Partnership has suffered from a lack of financial and, to some extent, resource commitment to Biodiversity. The lack of secured funding also led to the Biodiversity Officer leaving in July 2001, reducing the potential for progress.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The Biodiversity agenda has become prominent, through Agenda 21, sustainability, Quality of Life indicators and now through Community Strategies. Under the Local Government Act 2000, local authorities have a duty to consider biodiversity within Community Strategies. The emerging Thames Gateway South Essex Strategy has identified the Environment as a key priority, and the EBP and the Biodiversity Action Plan will feed into this.

4 FUNDING

- 4.1 The EBP have submitted requests for funding to Essex County Council, the Essex Local Authorities and other Partners.
- 4.2 Essex County Council currently provide £4,500 (2001/02). The EBP has requested additional monies of £50,000 per year for five years, which would provide security of funding, and the potential to make a greater impact on Biodiversity issues in Essex.
- 4.3 In addition, Essex Wildlife Trust has submitted a bid to DEFRA for up to £50,000 (matched funding) for the costs of two Project Managers and equipment.

- 4.4 Both projects proposals expect a decision in February 2002, for commencement in April 2002.
- 4.5 English Nature has agreed to increase their £4,000 contribution to £6,500, subject to a Biodiversity Officer being recruited.
- 4.6 Essex Local Authorities have been asked for funding support of £2,000 per authority. The following Authorities have responded to date:

Harlow	£2,000 agreed
Brentwood	£2,000 agreed
Colchester	Nil – they want their funds to go purely into their own Biodiversity projects
Uttlesford	Nil – they do not have a Countryside Project Officer, but do send representatives to the Partnership meetings.

5 ROCHFORD

- 5.1 Rochford's link to the Biodiversity Partnership was through the Head of Planning Services and the Local Agenda 21 Officer. The Local Agenda 21 Strategy and Rochford Biodiversity Action Plans aim to integrate the development control process and environmental management issues.
- 5.2 In 1999 – 2000 the District Council agreed funding of £1,500 to the Biodiversity Partnership. However, the District Council has not benefited directly from any schemes supported by the EBP.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Should funding from ECC and DEFRA be forthcoming, the Partnership will be in a stronger position to recruit Project Officers, provide a secure platform on which to develop Partnership initiatives and implement the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 6.2 Biodiversity can provide important mechanism for engaging the public locally. Nature conservation and wildlife protection are increasingly of interest to the community.
- 6.3 The Biodiversity Partnership could provide a useful contributor to the development of Rochford's Community Plan. The Community Plan requires consultation with a wide range of organisations, including environmental agencies. Whilst the Partnership operates at a County-wide level, the Community Planning Officer could work closely with the Partnership to maximise their contribution in Rochford, to the Local Plan, to Thames Gateway South Essex and to the Community Plan.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A request for £2000 is not realistic, particularly given the lack of any action in the Rochford District to date. A contribution of £1000 in 2002/03 would be justified to maintain Rochford's involvement in the project and to be able to influence work/actions taking place in the district if the £100,000 bids are successful.

8 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

- 8.1 That a contribution of £1,000 be made to the Essex Biodiversity Partnership towards the implementation of their action plan in 2002/03, subject to Essex County Council agreeing to support the Partnership project for the next five years and that a report be made on progress at the end of the financial year.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:

Biodiversity Action Plan

For further information please contact Helen Drye on:-

Tel:- 01702 318167
E-Mail:- helen.drye@rochford.gov.uk