

## **EAST SUSSEX GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - June 2014**

### **1.1 Environment Strategy for East Sussex (2011)**

The East Sussex Environment Strategy, adopted by the East Sussex Strategic Partnership in 2011, highlighted that our local environment is both an essential asset to protect and a resource to utilise and develop. With respect to Green Infrastructure (GI), the partner organisations that developed the Environment Strategy agreed to the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance key biodiversity sites, halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity, and further develop and restore large scale habitats;
- To create well planned green infrastructure that supports the landscape, habitats and wildlife;
- To ensure that 90% of the population of the county has access to a natural greenspace within 5 minutes of their home, to provide the opportunity to be active outdoors on a regular basis.

Achieving these objectives will be an important contribution to the future economic prosperity of the county and the health and wellbeing of our residents.

The Landscape and Biodiversity Group was established to help deliver these objectives. Members of the group include:

- (a) Environmental agencies including Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- (b) Some of the key organisations that own and/or manage GI assets in the county, Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission and The National Trust.
- (c) Local Authorities in East Sussex and West Sussex County Council.
- (d) The High Weald AONB.
- (e) South Downs National Park.

### **1.2 Objectives and outputs of this GI study:**

The Landscape and Biodiversity group identified that a key need to help improve the existing GI and develop new GI in the county was to:

- improve our collective understanding as to what already exists and what condition it's in;
- develop guidance that assists Local Authorities to develop consistent strategies and policies to implement measurable improvements to GI.

To this end, the outputs of this GI study are:

- (a) Baseline maps of all GI assets, their current functions and the potential functions that these provide at strategic (county) level. The mapping is held by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre.
- (b) Identification of the opportunities for measurable improvements to the functionality of GI assets across East Sussex.
- (c) A practical guide, which builds on existing national guidance, on how to prepare a GI strategy, to enable local planning authorities to meet their planning policy requirements with regard to GI.

### 1.3 Key Steps taken in the development of this GI study

- a) A review of best practice guidance and case studies across the UK.
- b) A review of relevant case studies in East Sussex using Wealden District Council as a pilot study.
- c) Production of a comprehensive set of maps bringing together all available datasets.
- d) Assessment of the key functions that the mapped GI assets currently fulfil.
- e) Mapping of the potential to enhance the multifunctional benefits provided by the above assets.

### 1.4 Conclusions from the mapping exercise

- a) East Sussex as a county supports a wide range of GI assets, many of which provide more than one function or are truly multifunctional and which underpin a number of social, economic and environmental benefits.
- b) The mapped datasets can be used at district and parish levels where more detailed analyses of GI assets and their potential to provide a range of benefits may be required.
- c) Identification and mapping of GI opportunities will depend on the pressures for change and particularly growth at a district and parish scale. The maps produced for this study can be used at a range of spatial scales to inform more detailed assessment of opportunity.

### 1.5 Potential next steps:

This GI study addresses some of the key information that is needed to make progress in delivering the objectives of the Environment Strategy. The recommended next steps, to be considered by the Landscape and Biodiversity group, include:

Actions	Why
a) Map out existing networks, partnerships and projects working on GI in East Sussex.	To ensure co-ordination of resources and effort and avoid duplication between agencies.
b) Use the guidance and mapping to inform GI policies for Local and Neighbourhood Plans	To ensure consistency of approach and assist with cross boundary working.
c) Identify opportunities from new development for the enhancement of existing and creation of new GI.	To ensure that new development complies with national policy requirements for the provision of open space, health, biodiversity, water quality and flood management.
d) Develop design briefs for key development sites, once Local Plan allocations have been determined.	To ensure that existing GI assets are conserved and enhanced and incorporated effectively into new developments.