

Sustainability Group - Terms of Reference

Primary Purpose

The Group will provide expert advice and information to assist in the production of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) for the emerging Caerphilly Local Development Plan.

Objectives

The Working Group will:

- Assist in the development of the methodology for the SA/SEA.
- Assist in the identification and quantification of Sustainability Objectives and monitoring criteria.
- Assist in the development and revision of the Assessment Framework against which the LDP policies and implication will be assessed.
- Consider the assessment of the plan implications and make recommendations to the LDP Focus Group/LDP Stakeholder Panel for amendments to the LDP based on environmental and sustainability grounds.
- Make recommendations on consultation matters to the LDP Focus Group.

Mandate

The Working Group is an advisory Group, without decision making powers and as such will only operate successfully if the aim of producing a coherent and balanced SA/SEA is maintained, and compromise and consensus building are achieved. Therefore Members of the Group will need to:

- Be able and willing to make decisions and recommendations on behalf of their body at the meetings in respect of the SA/SEA.
- Be committed to working toward producing an SA/SEA that will assist and inform the plan making process.
- Work with the group, accommodating views that are different from their own, seeking consensus and accepting compromise to reach agreement on the issues before the group.
- Be open minded and consider the whole picture, not seeking to promote sectional interests.
- Buy into the improved SA/SEA and support and encourage its appropriate implementation.

Composition

The Working Group will comprise of the following 29 members:

Council Representatives:

- Landscape

- Ecology
- Conservation (Buildings)
- Energy
- Sustainability
- Building Control
- Economic Development
- Research Officer
- Leisure
- Highways
- Housing
- Education
- Environmental Health (Pollution)
- Health Improvement
- Waste Management
- Community Safety
- Waste Strategy

External Representatives:

- Countryside Council for Wales
- Environment Agency
- CADW
- Welsh Water
- British Telecom
- Welsh Development Agency
- Farmer Union of Wales
- Health Authority
- Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)
- Police
- Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust
- Forestry Commission

Substitutes

It is accepted that some members may not be able to make every meeting. A representative may be sent in place of the original member subject to two requirements, both of which need to be satisfied:

- The substitute is fully aware of the outcomes of previous meetings and is in a position to actively participate.
- The substitute complies with the requirements of the Membership mandate.

Where no suitable substitute is possible, any input the member wishes to make on the information before the Group should be submitted to the Council, in writing, to arrive no later than 3 days before the date of any meeting, in order for the information to be reviewed and presented to the Group as appropriate.

Chairman

The group meetings will generally take the form of a facilitated discussion. Whilst it would not normally be the case that such meetings would require a Chair, the SA/SEA (in conjunction with the LDP) is being produced within a very strict timescale. Consequently the meetings will need to have a mechanism for resolving issues that cannot be agreed by mutual compromise.

Consequently the meeting will be chaired by the Principal Planner (Countryside), with the Vice-Chair being the principal Planner (Strategic and Development Planning).

Quorum

The Working group is not a formal decision making body. As decisions will not be made at the meetings it is not necessary to have a quorum limit.

Frequency

The Working Group will meet as and when required. This may result in long periods where meetings are not necessary, and periods where a number of meetings are required. In order for members to have the necessary time to include meetings into their schedules, dates for meetings will be set for at least 6 months in advance of each meeting.

It may be necessary, due to unforeseen circumstances, to call a meeting at relatively short notice (precluding the 6 month advance notice). Special Meetings will only be called where the need for the meeting is urgent and where the outcomes from the meeting are required to ensure compliance with LDP Delivery Agreement. Where a Special Meeting is called, members will be afforded the maximum amount of notice that is possible within the timeframe allowed.

Information

Information for each meeting will be sent to members of the Working Group to be received no later than 14 days prior to the date of the meeting.

In order to ensure that the meetings are focussed, and to achieve the outcomes necessary and within the timescale laid out by the Delivery Agreement, a schedule of outcomes for each meeting will be included in the meeting documentation.

Resolving Disagreement

The Group is advisory only in nature and will assist in the production of the SA/SEA. However the decision making process for content of the document will rest with the Planning section of the Council. The Meeting Chair and vice-chair will, therefore, be responsible for considering any issues where a consensus view is not possible, and determine the appropriate action for the SA/SEA. For such issues the Meeting Chairs will report the decision back to the next meeting of the Group.

Reporting Mechanism

A record of the discussions and agreements from each meeting will be produced and will be made available for public inspection on the internet . All records will be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee as part of the process.

Any recommendations for changes to the LDP document, or for consultations on the SA/SEA document will be reported to the LDP Focus Group for decision-making.