

Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project

Communications Plan
July 2009 - March 2012

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greater manchester
biodiversity project

www.gmbp.org.uk

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Introduction

The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project (GMBP) is a partnership that is responsible for coordinating the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans. Since 2006 it has directed its work priorities through a Business & Communications Plan.

In 2008 a new Memorandum of Agreement between Natural England (NE) and the GMBP was written that included a new requirement to create a separate communications plan. The purpose of this document is to meet that requirement and provide a specific focus for communication around the GM BAP for the next three years.

Objectives

The communication plan emphasises the importance of good communication in successfully implementing the GM BAP. It is an essential aspect and will play a key part in maintaining and creating relations between the partnership, the public and funding bodies.

The objectives of the communications plan are to:

1. Inform partners of the GM BAP progress;
2. Inform the general public and policy makers about the GM BAP and biodiversity issues;
3. Improve representation in the GMBP from all sectors;
4. Ensure that the GM BAP plays a full part within the broader UK BAP framework;
5. Fulfil the GMBP's legal and ethical obligations on reporting

In order to meet these objectives, we need to be clear about our target audiences, the messages and information we want to convey and the mechanisms for doing so.

Audiences

The GMBP is a broad and dynamic partnership of organisations and individuals concerned with conserving biodiversity in Greater Manchester. Specific audiences can be identified within the broader partnership, these include:

- ◆ BAP framework partners
- ◆ Technical and steering committees
- ◆ Wider partnership
- ◆ The general public
- ◆ Private sector

BAP framework partners are those involved in the BAP framework and process at national and wider regional levels, for example the North West Biodiversity Forum (NWBF), the England Biodiversity Group and the UK Biodiversity Partnership.

Technical and steering committees consist of representatives from the wider partnership who contribute to the BAP delivery and management of the partnership including organisations such as; Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Natural England, the Environment Agency, The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside and the ten local authorities of Greater Manchester. Many of which are also funding partners of the GMBP.

Wider partnership includes members from other organisations that have interests in biodiversity, as well as, members from the technical and steering committee. These include,

local universities, major landowners, local conservation groups, such as the South Lancashire Bat Group, Manchester Birding group, Lancashire Badger Group, Pennine Edge Barn Owl Group and South Manchester Amphibian and Reptile Group, as well as conservation volunteer groups.

The general public are an important target audience to engage and inform about the work of the GMBP and biodiversity issues.

The private sector includes all organisations in Greater Manchester. They are also an important audience to engage with and make them aware of biodiversity, and how their company could get involved in projects to benefit them and biodiversity.

Our messages

It is necessary to communicate why the GMBP and the GM BAP is needed. This means that we should take every opportunity to:

1. Promote why Greater Manchester's biodiversity is important
2. Describe the threats to Greater Manchester's biodiversity

It is important to communicate these messages to audiences that are not already directly involved in conserving biodiversity. Beyond these basic messages, we are mainly concerned with communicating the content, structure, delivery and progress of the GM BAP. To do this we must:

3. Publish the targets and proposed actions of the GM BAP to ensure that they are understood and 'owned' by relevant partners;
4. Report successes against the GM BAP;
5. Report failures against the GM BAP; and
6. Invite opinions and assistance with the future development of the BAP.
7. Attract funding support from the private sector.

These messages are aimed more at the BAP framework partners and the technical and steering committees. However, some messages are relevant for all target audiences.

Delivery mechanisms

The GMBP has already had considerable success with leveraging a variety of communication devices. For example, traffic to the GMBP's website – the official website of the GM BAP – has grown from a level of under 10 visitors/week in 2006 to between 300-400 per week by June 2008.

Main methods of communication:

- ◆ The GMBP website
- ◆ Partnership events/campaigns
- ◆ Reporting to funding partners.
- ◆ The Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)
- ◆ Media (e.g. local press and radio)
- ◆ Communication channels of our partners
- ◆ Representation (e.g. meetings and networking)
- ◆ Promotional material (Both print & online such as, leaflets, flyers, newsletters & display stands)

The GMBP website

The GMBP website went live in 2006 and is maintained by the LBM, who is able to quickly and accurately update information, create new web pages, add images and other content. It provides a hub of information and can act as a portal to partnership websites, advertising events, funding possibilities, as well as, the work of the partnership and progress of the action plans. It also hosts the GM BAP. It is therefore an important resource for disseminating the work of the GMBP and increasing the links between the partners and the wider audiences. The Biodiversity Newsletter will also be available from the website, its main aim is to inform the partnership of what is happening across Greater Manchester and is important to aid communication between the different organisations and groups.

BARS

BARS has been used to fulfil the obligations of the 2005 and 2008 UK BAP reporting rounds, it is fundamentally a national reporting mechanism but can be used at a local scale. The Partnership has been successfully using the system to record the progress of the BAP more systematically so that progress on the GM BAP is routinely picked up through reports run on BARS. Developing this local use of BARS within the Partnership is an important delivery area. Recording progress against actions rather than targets is important because automated reports on BARS *only* report against actions – not targets. So unless progress is recorded against actions, the GM BAP can appear as if no progress has been made outside of BARS.

Media

This is an important area of communication that could be developed further to help promote the GM BAP and the GMBP. Local media press has previously been used to promote projects, such as the North West Lowlands Water Vole project. There has also been national coverage through Manchester City Council's links with the BBC's Breathing Places that provides coverage of events, such as the Tree-Athlon.

Partners communication channels

There is considerable potential to use the communication channels of our partners to deliver some of our messages to our target audiences. Of particular interest are the following:

- ◆ Newsletters, websites or events of Partners such as Local Authorities, the Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- ◆ Developing links with the new Local Record Centre in Greater Manchester.

Representation

Representation and advertising the value of the work of the partnership to members will become an increasingly important aspect of communication to consider. Meetings can provide an important networking opportunity, point of contact and a way to promote the BAP and the work being implemented.

Promotional material

This can cover various communications through printed and electronic material. Display stands and presence at events can be an important communication tool to relevant sections of the Partnership and the wider public. Simple flyers either printed or online may also provide good advertising for direction to the website, which is easier to keep up-to-date, and can be taken to events and meetings, or emailed for circulation between partners. The relevancy and cost of these materials would need to be considered and may be more significant at major events. However, utilising electronic forms of promotion can reduce costs considerably.

Delivery & Implementation Matrix

This matrix cross-references the most appropriate delivery mechanism with the type of communication required. It also identifies the target audience, how it can be resourced and time-based targets.

		Communication					
		Activity	Responsibility	Audience	Barriers	Targets	Time frame
Delivery mechanism	GMBP Website & Biodiversity Newsletter	Site updates and news items. Review statistics and development of additional material inc. a newsletter.	LBM, Steering & Technical	ALL	Staff time, communication and promotion of website.	One update per month (e.g. news). Biodiversity newsletter twice a year. Annual review of stats.	Ongoing, Review March 2010.
	Events	Three biodiversity events.	LBM GMBP Partners	GMBP Partners Public Private	Communication of relevant issues or themes, cost.	2 small events and 1 larger each year that promotes the GMBAP and raises awareness of biodiversity issues.	Two small events to be organised 2009. One larger event 2010.
	Reporting	Supply updated reports.	LBM	Framework, Steering & Technical		6 monthly updates to NE. Yearly updates to the Business and Communications plan and 3 yrs UK BAP	March and September updates. Reporting round 2012.
	BARS	Record and update actions linked to projects and targets.	LBM, GMBP Partners	Framework	Training and communication with partners to input or provide data.	Ongoing input. Annual review and update together with 3yr reporting.	Review update annually for September, and reporting round 2012.
	Media	Use to promote activities and issues.	LBM, GMBP Partners	Wider Public Private	Making most of opportunities, appropriate contacts.	2 lead stories and 2 minor stories in local media annually.	Ongoing. Look for new project opportunities.
	Partners	Utilise Partner communication tools.	LBM GMBP Partners	Wider Public Framework Private	Communication for contacts and deadlines, also relevancy.	2 articles annually. Preferably rotating through Partners	Review possibilities by Sept 2009. Ongoing.

	Representation	Communicate representation and value of work to wider audience	LBM GMBP Partners	Wider Public Framework Private	Staff time Communication Contact details	Utilise at least 2 events/meetings per year that are attended, as opportunities to increase networking and represent GMBP.	Ongoing
	Engagement	Convene a meeting with representatives from the 10 local authorities and local conservation groups.	LBM GMEU	Wider	Staff time, commitment from representatives.	Hold an annual meeting with local authorities and biannual meeting with local conservation groups to provide the opportunity to engage and share what they are doing and identify potential opportunities for projects.	November March & September each year.
	Promotional material	Produce relevant flyers or project leaflets and utilise display stand.	LBM GMBP Partners	Public Wider Private	Costs Staff time Relevancy	Use display stand at events and other opportunities. Produce promotional flyer and distribute where appropriate	Ongoing Dec 2009.
	Private Sector Communication	Identify ways to engage with the private sector.	LBM GMBP Partners	Private	Staff time, identifying appropriate contacts.	Research into 5 possible contacts within companies to approach. Identify appropriate method of contact.	August 2010

Abbreviations

LBM = Local Biodiversity Manager

GMEU = Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

Framework = BAP framework partners

Wider = Wider partnership

Steering & Technical = Steering and Technical groups

GMBP Partners = combination of the Steering & Technical groups and the wider partnership

Public = Members of the public.

Private = Private sector