

SEM LEP

South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership

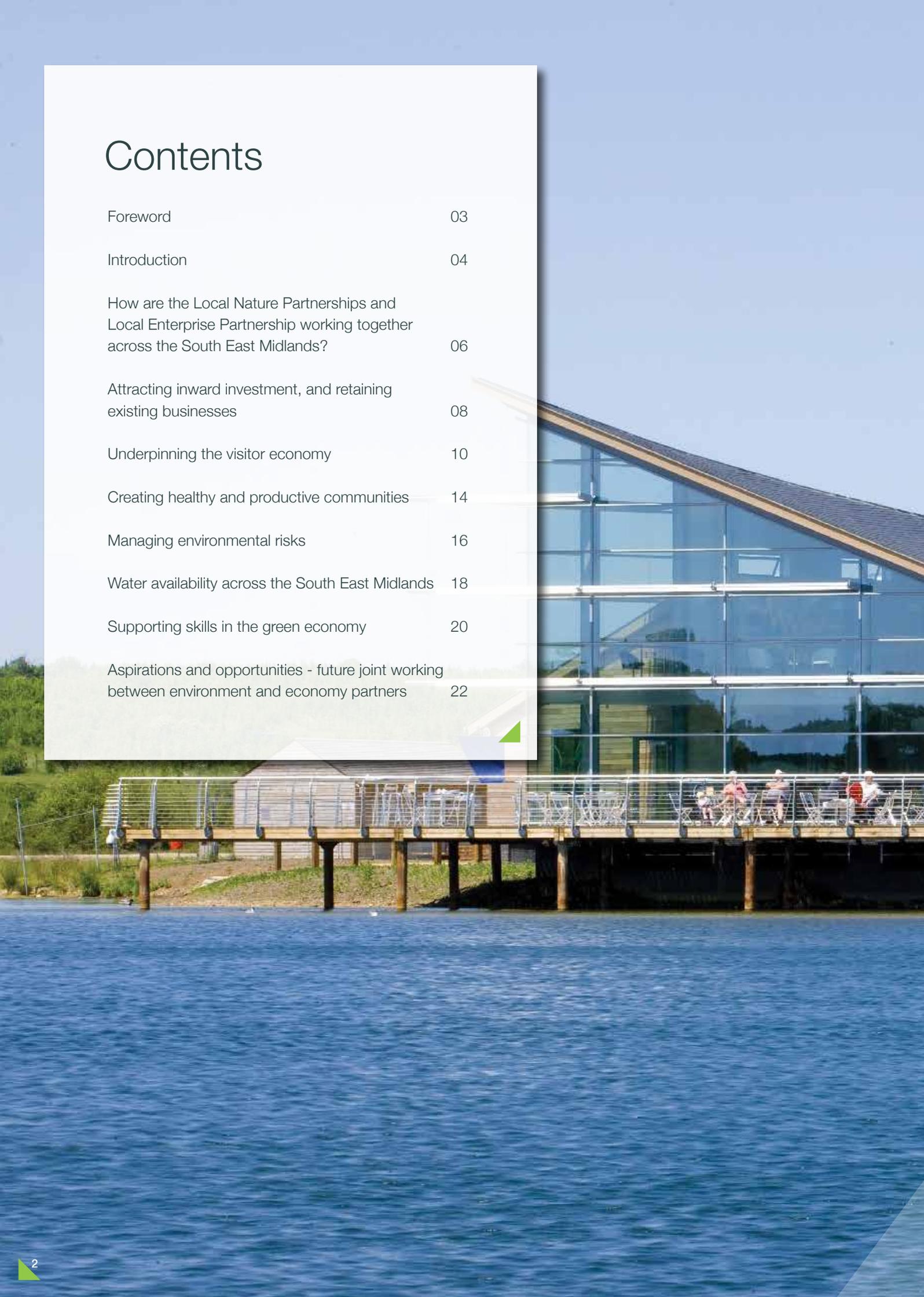


It's the **economy**, naturally

The relationship between the environment
and the economy in the South East Midlands

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Foreword



The natural environment is a fantastic asset for the South East Midlands; from the designed urban green networks in Milton Keynes, to the rural Rockingham Forest, Whittlewood Forest, Greensand Ridge and the Chilterns, to the network of rivers and waterways that link the urban and rural areas. This green network underpins the economy; it attracts businesses and investment, provides recreation and relaxation space for healthy and productive communities, attracts tourists and visitors and provides the classroom for developing skills in the green economy.

Understanding the role of the natural environment is vital if we are to deliver our aim of creating the right environment for businesses and social enterprises to grow. It is a great selling point as we promote the South East Midlands as a prime location for businesses, investors and visitors.

This booklet provides an overview of the role of the natural environment in delivering our economic priorities. It provides a basis of shared understanding between the environmental and economic sectors, and shows how the key partners; the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Nature Partnerships can work together for the benefit of the economy, the environment and the local communities.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Geary". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large, sweeping 'G' and 'y'.

Councillor Andrew Geary,
SEMLEP Board Member and Leader,
Milton Keynes Council

Introduction

The environment has a leading role in supporting sustainable economic growth and the quality of life. The natural environment of the South East Midlands makes it an attractive place to live, work and visit, and is also part of the infrastructure needed to support economic growth.

This booklet shows how the environment and economy of the South East Midlands depend on each other, and that the environment is an enabler of economic growth. It shows how economic and environmental improvements can be delivered together.

The key local partnerships involved in making this happen are the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership, and the four Local Nature Partnerships that cover the South East Midlands area.

What is the South East Midland Local Enterprise Partnership?

The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership is an economic development partnership, one of 39 such established in England by the Government. The creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships is a coalition agreement commitment. These Local Enterprise Partnerships will play a central role in determining local economic priorities and drive economic growth and local job creation.

The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership is operated jointly by the private and public sectors in the area, to promote the South East Midlands as a prime growth location for business, investors and visitors. It focuses on private sector growth and inward investment. The purpose of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership is to create the right environment for businesses and social enterprises to grow.

What is the relationship between enterprise and the natural environment?

The natural environment provides 'natural capital'; the elements of nature that produce value such as the stock of forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans. Natural capital underpins all other types of capital and is the foundation on which our economy, society and prosperity is built. Therefore, for the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver its economic ambitions, the role of the natural environment needs to be understood and reflected in decision making. Local Nature Partnerships can provide the environmental expertise and understanding to make this happen.



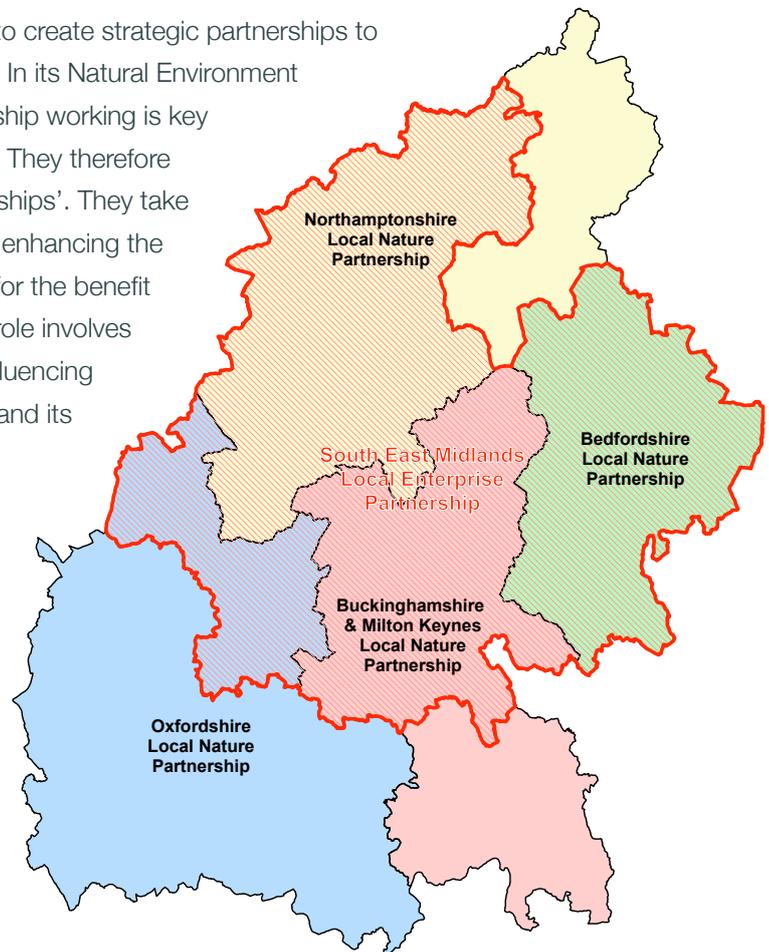
What are Local Nature Partnerships?

Local Nature Partnerships are a Government initiative to create strategic partnerships to drive positive change on the local natural environment. In its Natural Environment White Paper, the Government recognised that partnership working is key to delivering improvements to the natural environment. They therefore encouraged the development of 'Local Nature Partnerships'. They take a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities of enhancing the natural environment, and identify ways of managing it for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. A key part of this role involves being a local champion for the natural environment, influencing decision making, and relating the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes.

Local Nature Partnerships are encouraged by the Government to work together with Local Enterprise Partnerships, in light of the value of the natural environment in delivering economic outcomes.

Across the South East Midlands, there is a strong track record of local environmental activity and leadership, and an outward looking approach by the environmental sector.

There are four Local Nature Partnerships covering the South East Midlands area; the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership, the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Local Nature Partnership, the Northamptonshire Local Nature Partnership, and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.



Local Nature Partnerships and the South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership
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How are the Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnership working together across the South East Midlands?

The Local Nature Partnerships from across the South East Midlands have been working together with each other to share information and best practice, and develop cross boundary projects. They have also been working with the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership through its 'Green Economy' subgroup, to develop this booklet. This booklet provides a platform of shared understanding between the Local Nature Partnerships and the Local Enterprise Partnership, showing the relationship between the environment and the economy. This relationship is explored and illustrated through local data and examples.

'Creating the right environment for businesses and social enterprises to grow' is the purpose of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership. An attractive, functional natural environment is indispensable in making this happen, and there are a number of ways that the environment underpins the priorities of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership.

This booklet shows what the environment can do to help the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership achieve its aims, by highlighting the key things that the environment provides and supports. These are;

- Attracting inward investment and retaining existing businesses
- Underpinning the visitor economy
- Creating healthy and productive communities
- Managing environmental risks through greening our businesses
- Supporting skills in the green economy.

Actions

In recognition of the interdependency between the environment and the economy, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Nature Partnerships will seek 'win win' solutions identified as a series of actions, as illustrations of their commitment to actions that benefit both the environment and the economy, and take account of environmental considerations in decision making and priority setting. This will help the Local Enterprise Partnership in its strategic focus and direction, and ensure that, by taking environmental considerations into account, decisions are made on the basis of sound environmental evidence.



Case Study

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway is a locally, regionally and nationally significant new environmental infrastructure project. It will provide the 26km missing link between the main UK canal network and the Fenland waterways, linking the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes to the River Great Ouse at Bedford. It will accommodate broadbeam boats that can be up to 4.2m wide as well as traditional canal narrowboats.

For most of the route, the waterway will be located in a green corridor that delivers a wide range of economic, tourism, recreational and place-shaping benefits. With 50% of the UK population living within two hours drive of the route, there will be opportunity for iconic tourist attractions as well as spaces for events and festivals. Features include a 30m boat lift at Brogborough Hill, a similar scale structure to the Falkirk Wheel, and a possible 11m lock, which would be the deepest in England, between the Grand Union Canal and Willen Lake.

A recent study identified a range of economic benefits and attractors, including:

- Job creation – between 2,900 and 3,400 person years in the construction and between 500 and 900 additional jobs in businesses and other organisations attracted to re-locate to the area with an additional £35-70m annual Gross Value Added (GVA).
- Commercial development opportunities - particularly relevant to employment sites or mixed use sites. Some facilities, such as marinas, need to be optimally spaced by boat cruising time, but most do not. Waterfront locations have been shown to raise the value of properties close to them, in the case of residential properties by up to 20%. These effects can support the sustainable development of an area by increasing its desirability for new residents and businesses.
- Tourism and recreation - attracting private boaters, boat hirers and marina users is expected to generate around £4m GVA per year while visitors to the Waterway are expected to make 600,000 to 950,000 annual trips, generating between £16.6m and £26.5m GVA per year.
- Place shaping - The Waterway will create a positive identify and sense of local pride in the area, creating a significant linear open space and ecological.
- Additions to the walking, cycling and horse riding network - providing opportunities for exercise, health and well being; the towpath for part of the route will be designated as Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 51, moving the cycle route off-road.
- A navigable waterway.



Artist's impression of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway at the A421, near Bedford

Attracting inward investment, and retaining existing businesses

Commercial property with an attractive view or access to green space is worth more. A survey of real estate developers and consultants across Europe found that 95% of respondents believe that open space adds value to commercial property and that they would be willing to pay at least 3% more to be in close proximity to open space. Respondents rated access to open space as the 5th most important criterion when selecting commercial property, after location, cost, public transport links and amenities, but before prestige of address and building aesthetics. (Gensler, 2011)

This is also true for the SEMLEP area, where a high quality environment is one of the strengths of this area. For example, in Central Bedfordshire, businesses are surveyed annually. They are asked to identify the best things about their current business location. The 2012 survey identified the environment as the third most cited positive aspect, after transport links and accessibility. (Central Bedfordshire Council, 2012)



Artist's impression of Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone

Action: We will ensure that enhancement of the local environment is promoted as part of development and improvements to commercial property.

Case Study

Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone

The Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone in the centre of Northampton was launched in August 2011 and is one of 24 Enterprise Zones awarded nationally by the government. Enterprise Zones have been established to kick start economic growth in key locations around the UK through Business Rates Relief for businesses and a simplified planning process. The Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone, backed by SEMLEP and Northampton Borough Council, will see 120 hectares of land developed creating 242,800 square metres of high value industrial floor space. This will in turn create up to 1,400 new jobs by 2015, attracting an estimated £100 of private sector investment into the area.



Artist's impression of the University of Northampton Campus in the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone

The Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone is positioned in close proximity to the River Nene which runs through the centre of Northampton Town Centre. It also sits adjacent to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area, protected under European law for the internationally important numbers of overwintering birds which make this part of the Nene Valley their home.

The regeneration of the Waterside through improved green infrastructure, sustainable transport and construction, will underpin the unique setting of the Enterprise Zone and its attractiveness to investing businesses.

This green setting will support the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone's aim of targeting advanced technology, high performance engineering, business and professional development and new start-ups. Part of this will see the construction of an Innovation Centre to house up to 55 small businesses developing the technologies of tomorrow.

As part of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone the University of Northampton will relocate to a new £330m campus alongside the river. This state of the art facility will help them deliver on their mission of being the number one university for social enterprise through a co-ordinated programme to develop projects regionally, nationally and internationally.

The Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone falls within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (nenevalley.org), one of the government's 12 national flagship landscape scale nature conservation areas. The Nature Improvement Area will see an additional £11m of investment into the Nene Valley to improve green infrastructure, access and wildlife habitat along the River.

Underpinning the visitor economy

The South East Midlands has a wealth of historic and environmental attractions, from historic buildings, parks and gardens, to country parks, rivers, forests and canals, and outdoor activities. These are integral to the success and development of the visitor economy. Tourism provides 7.1% of total jobs across the South East Midlands, so is a big employer, but with potential to expand. (Office for National Statistics, website, 2012).

Promoting and protecting the natural and historic attractions that draw tourism to the area is essential as we develop the visitor economy as one of SEMLEP's showcase sectors.

There is a clear opportunity to strengthen the visitor economy related to the natural environment across the South East Midlands. Data mapping spend by visitors to the natural environment shows comparatively low spend levels for the South East Midlands compared to other areas of England, as the map to the right shows.



Expenditure by visitors to the natural environment (Natural England, Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Spatial Report 2009-2011, published 2012)

Action: Through the focus on the visitor economy as a showcase sector for SEMLEP, we will protect, enhance and promote the natural and historic environmental assets that support the visitor economy as part of developing the visitor economy as a showcase sector for SEMLEP.

Case study

Wendover Woods

Wendover Woods is a 325 hectare open access woodland site managed by the Forestry Commission near to Aylesbury.

Over recent years, the forest has grown in popularity and now receives over 330,000 visitors each year. The population of the area surrounding Wendover Woods is likely to grow significantly by 2026, with the anticipated building of over 15,200 new homes in Aylesbury Vale and Dacorum. The forest is also situated in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and this designation will continue to draw additional visitors to Wendover Woods, with over 5.5 million people living within one hour's drive of the site. Wendover Woods has a particularly diverse visitor profile, attracting families and schools from North London as well as the local towns and villages. A family visit to Wendover often includes all generations, as there are opportunities for exercise to suit all ages and abilities.



A project is underway to expand the site, providing social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits to the surrounding growth area, and ensuring that local people continue to have the opportunity to interact and understand the natural and historic environment around them. This involves;

- Extending the existing 325ha Forestry Commission Woodland to 500ha.
- Increasing recreation and leisure provision by providing informal outdoor recreation, walking, cycling, horse riding, play and picnic areas.
- Creating a new visitor centre to attract and welcome more visitors.
- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity habitats and species and heritage of this prominent escarpment landscape.
- Providing an exemplar of sustainable design through the building of a new visitor centre and facilities.

This will strengthen the range of benefits that the project currently provides, encouraging people of all ages to enhance their physical and mental health and wellbeing; and conserving and enhancing the surrounding woodland, its associated biodiversity and other designated sites and heritage.

It will also have a positive impact on the wider visitor economy; the provision of visitor facilities at Wendover Woods Forest Centre is a sustainable rural tourism and leisure development, benefitting numerous local rural businesses. Not only will the businesses based on site benefit from the facilities, but, in the Forestry Commission's experience, local pubs, Bed and Breakfasts, rural shops and food suppliers also benefit from a vibrant and thriving Forest Centre in the vicinity.

Growing greater places together...





Wendover Woods



Creating healthy and productive communities

Attractive, accessible green spaces provide multiple health and economic benefits through reduced stress levels, increased opportunities for formal and informal physical activity and recreation, reducing days lost to industry through illness, and improving productivity. Access to high quality green spaces can enhance motivation, and can help in attracting and retaining motivated people. It can also improve public health; urban planning as a mechanism for environmental control influences health in a systematic way (Barton et al, 2009). Creating attractive, green places where people want to live and work is therefore essential if we are to create the right environment for businesses and social enterprises to grow.



Artist's impression of Bicester Eco Homes

Action: We will demonstrate and promote best practice in sustainable design and construction of housing and commercial developments and redevelopments, and will ensure provision of a network of high quality, accessible natural green spaces within development.

Case Study

Eco Bicester Project, Bicester Oxfordshire

In July 2009 the Government identified Bicester as one of four potential locations in England for the development of eco towns. A site on the north western edge of the existing town has been identified for an eco development of 5,000 new homes, employment and community facilities. It includes a requirement for forty per cent green space and a net gain in biodiversity as set out in the Planning Policy Statement on Eco Towns (July 2009).



Masterplanning of the site continues following the approval of the first phase of development in August 2011 by Cherwell District Council. The first phase of the development has been masterplanned. The design strategy for the delivery of the first phase of the development was borne out of the landscape and aims to deliver environmental improvement as a means of creating a character rooted in the 'place'. This idea becomes even more important now that we are facing very difficult economic circumstances - landscape is one area where low cost investment can achieve a wide range of economic benefits, especially in a recession.

A masterplan for the whole site is being developed and comprises an area of approximately 345 hectares (800 acres) incorporating the natural features (for example, watercourses and hedgerows) and existing topography. Strong green links will be necessary to promote the nature conservation of the site and encourage wildlife within the proposed development and the surrounding countryside by allowing nature to penetrate right into the town. The green infrastructure will be strategically planned and deliver a network of green spaces and environmental features.

This use of green spaces in urban planning delivers multiple benefits to the area, as well as improving its desirability as a location for communities and businesses, it will encourage people to re-think their transport habits, to rely less on private car use and consider car clubs, bike use and a high frequency bus service. Connecting the new community to the land is fundamentally important, allotments and community gardens, open farms, community orchards, and farmer's markets may provide access to locally produced food. This in turn could create local employment for local people, and enable and encourage sustainability, accommodate climate change and consciously contribute to an ecological balance and enable and encourage more sustainable lifestyles.

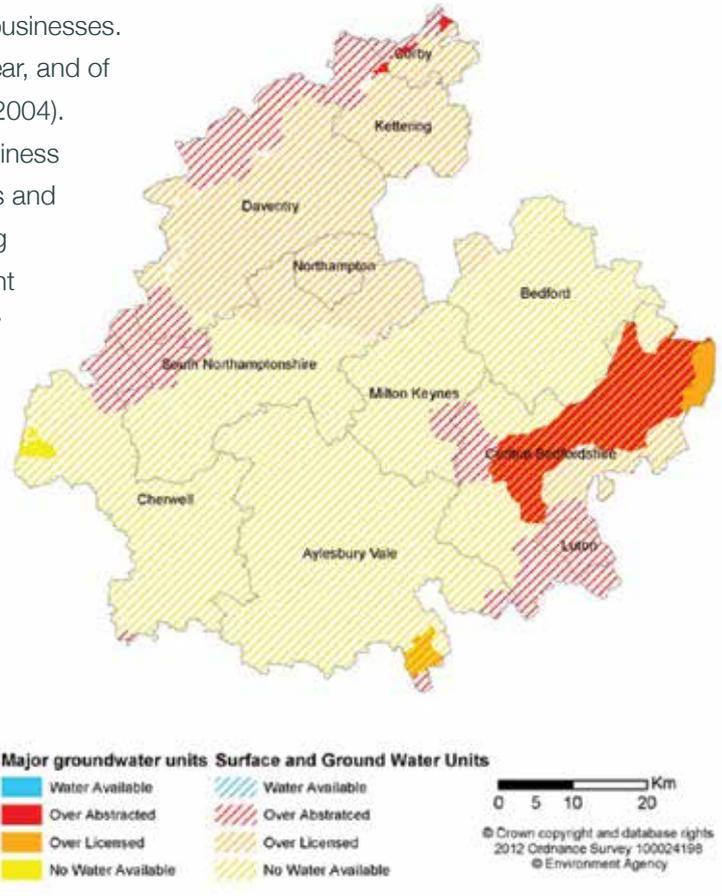
Managing environmental risks

Flooding and environmental disasters are a real issue for businesses. 1 in 5 businesses are affected by major disruption each year, and of these, 1 in 10 will go out of business as a result. (ODPM, 2004). Extreme weather is by far the most common cause of business disruption, above IT loss, loss of staff, telecommunications and utilities failures. This highlights the importance of managing environmental risks to businesses. (Chartered Management Institute, 2012). The natural environment has a role to play in managing these environmental risks through flood management, improving water quality, and reducing urban temperatures.

In the South East Midlands, over 13,700 properties are at high risk of flooding. This represents 1.6% of all residential properties and 4.6% of commercial properties across the South East Midlands. Annual damage to homes is expected to exceed £5million/year by the 2080s. (Environment Agency, 2012)

Investing in green technologies can be a cost effective solution to this problem. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) are a cost effective method of delivering drainage. In particular, the capital costs of traditional drainage are more than double the capital costs of SUDS, annual maintenance costs are 20-25% cheaper for SUDS, and SUDS cost around half of what a traditional drainage system would cost over a 60 year life span. (Duffy et al, 2008)

Water resources are also currently under pressure, and this pressure is likely to increase. The South East Midlands gets 25% less than national average rainfall. There is nowhere in the South East Midlands where more water is available for further abstraction, and some areas are actively over-abstacted.





Sustainable drainage in Upton, Northampton

Growing greater places together...

Water availability across the South East Midlands

Across the South East Midlands, the temperature is likely to increase throughout the year, with an increased likelihood of prolonged hot periods and higher peak temperatures. Summer mean temperatures are likely to increase by between 4.5 and 4.9°C across the South East Midlands by 2080. The temperature of the hottest day in summer will increase by a greater amount, with mean daily temperature increases likely to reach 6.2°C. Heat waves (3 day periods where the daytime temperature exceeds 30°C, and night time temperatures remain above 15°C) are likely to become more frequent. Currently, the likelihood of heat waves across the area is low to zero. By the 2050s, we are likely to experience them every 2-3 years, and by the 2080s, they are likely to happen twice a year, and are more likely to last two weeks or more. (UK Climate Projections Weather Generator, 2012). These will have a real implication on productivity; the financial cost of lost staff time across the South East Midlands as a result of overheating is expected to increase by £385 million/year by the 2050s, and by £1,282 million/year by the 2080s. (Based on data for Central Bedfordshire Climate Change Adaptation Evidence Base, 2012 and Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Profile for South East Midlands, 2012).

Action: We will promote investment, research and development in green technologies, and support businesses who want to implement these technologies.

Incorporating green technologies into commercial buildings not only makes them more visually attractive, but also results in cost savings. For example, green roofs provide insulation, leading to lower heating and cooling costs for buildings. Using sustainable approaches to heating and cooling will become increasingly important in a changing climate.



Linear Parks and Water Management systems in Milton Keynes

Case Study

Flood risk management in Milton Keynes

A system of linear parks protect the flood plains and tributaries of the Great Ouse river and incorporate a number of balancing ponds which help manage surface water run-off and mitigate flooding in and around Milton Keynes. The surface water generated as a result of development within Milton Keynes has been attenuated via one of a number of attenuation lakes, prior to discharge into the watercourse network. The lakes were designed to avoid increasing flood risk through development. The lakes have, subject to certain conditions being met, a capacity sufficient for the long-term development of Milton Keynes within the drainage area. The design standard was the 1947 flood that was, and remains, the most severe on record. (Milton Keynes Water Cycle Study, December 2008)

Willen Lake is one of the largest (400,000 m²) purpose-built stormwater balancing lakes in the UK. The lake is designed to take surface run-off from Milton Keynes, the largest of a number designed to do so. The lake has capacity for an additional level increase of 1.3 metres, equivalent to a once in 200 years event.

Willen Lake was constructed along the course of the River Ouzel which was re-routed to the east of the lake. Most of the time the lake receives its water from the two surface water sewers that carry run-off from Milton Keynes. However, when the flow in the River Ouzel reaches a critical level, the majority of water is diverted into the lake to prevent fluvial flooding from the River Ouzel. As the system is finely tuned, it is only the more severe storms that tend to activate it and in some drier years the lake's stormwater retention capacity goes unused. As soon as river levels start to subside, the excess water is drained from the lake back into the River Ouzel.

Although the lake's principal function is to prevent floods, its design was strongly influenced by the potential to fulfil other purposes. The Lake and its surrounds are managed as one of Milton Keynes' public open spaces. The South Basin provides the main water sports facility in Milton Keynes and attracts more than a million users each year. The North Basin, by contrast, has been zoned for nature conservation and low key recreation. (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, 2004)



Supporting skills in the green economy

Increasing skill levels has been identified as a specific outcome that SEMLEP wants to achieve. Despite the recession, the green economy is showing strong growth, and the SEMLEP area is well placed to take advantage of this upward trend. Taking this opportunity relies on our developing skills in the green energy and research and development sectors, and taking advantage of Government financial incentives such as the 'Green Deal'. The Green Deal will provide an opportunity to significantly improve the energy efficiency of local homes and businesses. It offers an opportunity for local authorities to help drive economic growth, unlocking investment and supporting and creating new jobs. DECC estimate that the Green Deal will create 100,000 new jobs in the UK by 2015 and up to 250,000 jobs when it reaches its peak. (DECC, 2010) These will mainly be in the environmental goods and services sector focusing on energy efficiency technologies and domestic refurbishment.

The farmed environment is an important part of the natural environment that people value. There is an identified need for more skills in land management, reflecting the need to deal with new technologies and meet the challenge of climate change. So building our skills across both traditional and sustainable technologies elements of green skills is a big opportunity for SEMLEP.

Action: We will promote skills in green technologies and sustainable land management as a key part of SEMLEP's enabling activities in the skills sector, and underpinning the opportunity to grow the green economy.



Case Study

Incuba Centre, Dunstable

Central Bedfordshire College has been developing a new enterprise facility and low carbon technology demonstrator space in sustainable construction. The Centre will provide approximately 2,000m² of new build BREEAM 'Excellent' rated space, with specialist facilities, start up advice and support, and accommodation for business growth demonstrating state of the art renewable energy technologies, low carbon construction and energy efficiency. The new Centre will offer business development opportunities and office accommodation for those working on developing ideas in the renewable energies field.

The Incuba Centre is estimated to deliver 125 new direct jobs and support over 200 local businesses to start or grow by 2016. It will be a place for enterprise and education – supporting existing businesses to grow and develop, as well as offering training support and start up advice to local potential businesses. With a focus on developing a low carbon sector, the centre will also provide advice around energy savings and how local businesses can be more energy efficient, reducing their energy costs along with reducing CO₂ emissions throughout the area.



Aspirations and opportunities – future joint working between environment and economy partners

The Local Nature Partnerships are committed to ongoing joint working. Although there are four Local Nature Partnerships covering the South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership area, we will work together to provide the Local Enterprise Partnership with co-ordinated environmental engagement and specialist advice.

The key opportunity is that the Local Nature Partnerships are engaged by the Local Enterprise Partnership as they develop further priorities and delivery strategies. This will ensure that collaborative working enables the delivery of win-win solutions for the environment and the economy.

The Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Nature Partnerships will therefore work together as the Local Enterprise Partnership develops its European Investment Strategy, and as it is involved in other initiatives, such as the City Deal.

By working together on these and other initiatives, the positive dialogue between the environmental and economic sectors will maximise the opportunities to improve the local environment and economy in tandem.

In addition to working together on specific projects and activities, mutual representation on the governance structures of Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships is being, and must continue to be developed. As Local Nature Partnerships develop their governance structures, they will seek to ensure that the Local Enterprise Partnership is represented. Local Nature Partnerships are represented on the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership by the board member leading on the 'green economy', and by representation on the green economy showcase sector group. Mutual involvement in governance structures means that enhancement of the environment and economy can go hand in hand.



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Wendover Woods; Forestry Commission
Bicester Eco Homes and Eco Town; Cherwell District Council
Grosvenor House Green Wall, Luton; Luton Borough Council
Linear Parks and Waterway Management Systems and Willen Lake North, Milton Keynes;
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Bedford College
Central Bedfordshire Council
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Contact details

Email: info@semlep.com

Phone: 01234 436100

Web: www.semlep.com

Address

Cranfield Innovation Centre
University Way
Cranfield
Bedfordshire
MK43 0BT

