

State of the Environment Task Group Terms of Reference

Background

The State of the Environment (SoE) Task Group is a sub-group of the Environment Theme Group (WPEG), which is itself one of a number of theme groups established by the Worcestershire Partnership.

Purpose

The purpose of the group is to collate and electronically publish environmental data, on an annual basis, in order to build up a picture of the overall condition of Worcestershire's natural and historic environment. This data will then be used to inform the priorities of the Worcestershire Partnership Environment Group and the County and District Local Strategic Partnerships and can provide information for policy evaluation and performance monitoring of environmental objectives, and seeks to influence Sustainable Community Strategies, the Local Area Agreement and Local Development Frameworks.

Definition of 'Environment'

The SoE group reports on a number of 'themes', which are 'biodiversity'; 'cleaner and greener'; 'climate change'; 'historic environment'; 'landscape/land use'; 'waste'; 'water'; and 'public behaviour/perception'. Within each theme there are a number of indicators to monitor specific aspects of that part of the environment. These indicators are reviewed annually, and are only changed if they have become of no use or the data has become unavailable. This ensures consistency and allows for year-on-year comparisons between datasets and the full SoE report.

Aims

Task Group members will work in partnership to:

- Undertake research (and identify further research needs) to provide data to inform the indicators, and publish the data annually on the SoE group's dedicated website
- Where available, provide data at both county and district level and provide comparisons between county, regional and national performance;
- Peer-review the data for all indicators on an annual basis;
- Critically assess all indicators for their continued suitability for inclusion in the SoE report on an annual basis and consider proposals for additional indicators as and when put forward;
- Co-ordinate publicity to communicate the headline findings of the SoE report to WPEG, Partners and the public;
- To identify shared objectives that can help influence and contribute to wider agendas.

Membership

Membership is formed of representatives from across the environmental sector. Members have responsibility for providing annual updates for specific indicator(s), together with full background information to support and expand upon the headline findings.

Governance

- Meetings will occur quarterly and be of an informal, collaborative nature with no requirement for formal voting arrangements.
- The group will agree on a chairperson who will normally hold office for a calendar year.
- Working Groups may be set up for specific task and finish purposes at the discretion of the Task Group.

Reporting arrangements

The SoE Task Group will provide regular briefings to WPEG via its representative (normally by the Task Group chairperson. 2009/10 Chair is Ben Horovitz).