

Name of group: GreenSpace East Midlands Steering Group

Members of steering group:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Representatives of the Working Groups: Funding; Community Involvement and Training.
- Representatives from the County Forums (sub-regional forums): Nottinghamshire Parks Officers Group, Leicestershire Parks, Open Space and Countryside Network and Derbyshire Greenspace forum (where there is no county forum, one member organisation from that County can attend to represent the area, if they feel they can give a County perspective).
- East Midlands JAC representative
- Contributing partners – namely Natural England
- Non-contributing regional supporters – such as East Midlands Regional Assembly, Government Office East Midlands, Groundwork East Midlands, Lantra, a member of East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network and a representative from a University within the region.

Goals:

The forum has a vision, four aims and nine objectives. The vision is detailed below and the rest are detailed in Appendix 1.

The Forum exists to provide a united voice dedicated to promoting, advocating and lobbying for the regeneration and sustainable future of quality green spaces throughout the East Midlands.

Scope and Deliverables:

GreenSpace East Midlands (GSEM) activities concentrate within the East Midlands region. Green spaces cover a wide range of types of open spaces including, parks, allotments, woodlands, playing grounds, recreation fields, nature reserves etc. It is the cross-cutting themes such as funding, community involvement, community safety and health & well-being, that affects all green spaces no matter what type they are and who manages them.

GSEM steering group has developed three working groups so far based on these key cross-cutting themes, which were identified through research carried out by the forum in 2007. Whilst the forum's capacity is limited to the forum managers time, particular whilst it is in its developing stages, working groups can focus on topics where GSEM can promote, lobby and advocate for the green spaces. Working groups meet as and when is deemed necessary. The forum manager offers secretariat service and support to the working groups. A member organisation from the working group reports back to the steering group meeting, bringing to their attention areas that need the steering groups direction and decision on. The working groups are currently open to both GSEM member organisations and non-members. This will be reviewed once the membership has increased to over 50% of all local authorities.

Although the county forums are independent of GSEM, they are attended and sometimes supported by the forum. They form part of a communication line. A member local authority is represented through the county forum on the regional forum and regional forum chair and staff are represented on the national forum which is attended by other national organisations such as CABE Space. Attendance of these meetings by the forum manager ensures that GSEM understands and is able to represent the views of green spaces staff. It provides a two-way communication tool, where regional and national forum updates can be

provided and local views on a variety of topics can be sought.

The GSEM forum also recognises the importance of green infrastructure as a planning tool for the creation and maintenance of green spaces within the housing growth areas in East Midlands namely: 6C's, the Wash Estuary and Milton Keynes, and elsewhere as a strategic planning tool that links to the more local open space strategies.

East Midlands is one of the more rural regions in England with just fewer than 40% of the population living in towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. It also has the equal lowest number of unitary councils and the highest proportion of district council, when compared with other regions. The Forum recognises that this dynamic might have an effect on green space provision, quality and membership to the forum.

National Performance indicators, local area arrangements and comprehensive area agreements are seen as one key area of work essential to securing continued revenue funding and recognition of green spaces. There are currently national discussions about these existing targets and how are they being used by green space managers. This work will help direct how GSEM should lobby for more appropriate measures or share best practice to make the most of existing measures. Further discussions are needed to determine whether these measures should include using Green Flag Award as the national quality standard, ANGST standards for the provision and proximity to open spaces through PPG17s and open space strategies or TAES as an improving service delivery tool and as a tool to comparison against other cultural departments. Discussions should also include whether all local authorities should work together to develop common approaches or standards.

The Green Flag Award Scheme has entered a new contract and therefore is changing and growing. The forum has approved its support and future involvement in the scheme's development in October 2009 steering group meeting, as the scheme has similar aims and outcomes to its own.

There are other areas of work that will be of great interest to GSEM forum but consideration and prioritisation of work areas should be given to the above and actions identified in the GSEM action plan. In time when the capacity of the forum has increased say with an increase in staff or support then new areas can be looked at in more detail too.

The scope of the steering group includes -

- To make decisions about the direction, work activities, funding and business of the GSEM forum including resources, projects, time-scales and partnerships.
- To give regional representation, consultation at regional and national events, policies and workshops etc. through its forum manager and chairs.
- To align/ link action points from GSEM action plan into GreenSpace National Forum business plan.
- To hold an annual review where members can attend.
- To annually elect a chair and vice chair and other appointments when necessary during the January steering group meetings.
- To liaise with GreenSpace with regard to the appointment of forum staff, namely forum manager.
- To apply for grants, attract funding and participate in fundraising opportunities as and when necessary.
- To employ contractors as and when necessary.
- To carry out actions as agreed by partners, currently, Department of Communities and Local Government as detailed in the Expression of Interest and Natural England as detailed in Memorandum of Understanding.
- To hold quarterly open meeting following the steering group meeting, providing a summary of any decisions made in order to allow members to make or give comments. Forum manager will also endeavour to provide members with a copy of the briefing notes provided before the steering groups so that can pass on their comments.

- Giving the working groups' direction, guidance and decisions-making either usually through their representation at the steering group meeting or directly to the Chair.

GSEM Action Plan detail in Appendix 2.

Guidance from GreenSpace:

GreenSpace employs the forum's staff, namely the forum manager. GreenSpace fulfils the role of treasurer by holding the bank account and processing all financial procedures such as salary, expenses, invoices and membership payments. It is the forum manager who manages and oversees the forum's accounts. The forum manager also provides finance reports to the steering group in order for the group to make decisions about finance.

GreenSpace also provides other support to GSEM forum in return for annual payment such as administration for annual membership subscription and management of the forum website. This is detail in a Memorandum of Understanding.

GreenSpace National Forum Business Plan gives guidance to all regional activities and GSEM provides action points about their activities for this plan. The Chair and forum manager also attend and contribute the National Forum quarterly meetings, which are usually located in Birmingham. The GSEM forum manager also attends and contributes to GreenSpace regional staff and regional development meetings.

Resources and budget:

The forum activities are currently funded by annual membership subscriptions and Department of Communities and Local Government grant (1 year - 2009/10)

The forum funding principally covers the employment of the forum manager, her expenses and associated office costs, as well as venue hire for meetings.

Some resources are given in kind such as meeting rooms, office space such as at East Midlands Regional Assembly. The forum also often seeks commercial sponsorship to help with the cost of catering at steering group meetings in return for a short presentation.

Support is given by a variety of staff from GreenSpace, such regional manager, finance officer, network officer, membership administration assistant and communication team. Support is also from an IT firm as part of the GreenSpace agreement. The forum manager mostly works from home except when attending meetings. Therefore she currently uses her own computer, printer and scanner, but there are plans within GreenSpace policy to resource the regional staff with computers in the future. She uses her own car and public transport to get to meeting locations. Expenses are pay for consumable office costs and transport.

Governance:

The steering groups will be made up of representatives from organisations that are either members or financial contributing partners or non-contributing regional organisations as listed and described in the members section above.

The steering group meets quarterly. The steering group is responsible for the realisation of the forums vision, aims and objectives through its structure and their management e.g. working groups etc. Therefore decisions are taken at the meeting. There are often occasions when the forum manager needs to make minor decisions. She is able to contact the chair and other steering group members to seek clarification and reassurance.

Voting rights are given to the chair, vice-chair, representatives of working groups (who are from member organisations), representatives of County forums (who are from member organisations), and financial contributing partner organisations. Voting is by the showing of hands. The chair has the final casting vote if there is a tie. The forum manager is the secretariat of the forum so doesn't have a vote but brings forward

choices, discussion points and suggestions to the steering group. If this decision needs to be made outside of a quarterly meeting period the forum manager will send out reply slips for steering group members to complete and return.

The steering group quorum is 4. The Terms of Reference can be amended at a steering group meeting with an advance notice of two weeks given to members. They should be reviewed at least annually during the Annual Review during April's steering group meeting.

Members to GSEM forum:

Members will be drawn/encourage from interested groups/organisations who are supportive of forum vision, aims and objectives. There is a varied price rate in relation to the type of organisation such as voluntary, commercial and local authorities. The prices vary upon the size and area coverage of the organisation. These prices can change year by year at the discretion of the steering group or delegated to the funding working group. Membership is by annual subscription. Renewal notification is sent to existing members from a member of staff at GreenSpace. Payment is also processed by staff at GreenSpace. The forum manager organises and makes contact with new and potential member organisations.

Some non-local authority organisations who can't join because of their organisations governing documents prefer to contribute to GSEM for work carried out that is of mutual benefit. This organised through individual discussions with the forum manager.

Membership of the GSEM is not available for individual staff. Individuals are encouraged to become a member of Institute of Parks and Green Spaces (IPGS).

Relationship to other committees:

GSEM participates in:

East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network, 6C's Growth Areas stakeholders group and appraisal panel, EMRAF high quality environment working group, and breath of fresh air project group.

Communication:

The website provides information for non-member as well as a login section for members where they can download minutes, presentations etc. The forum manager provides these documents to GreenSpace staff who upload information onto the website. The forum manager also provides information such as news, events, diary dates for the website too.

The forum manager also produces a monthly News and Information Bulletin. This is sent to our contacts (over 300) and acts as a conduit of information about all green space issues with relevance to the East Midlands.

Appendices :

Appendix 1 – Vision, aims and objectives

Appendix 2 – GSEM Action Plan



VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2009

Vision

The Forum exists to provide a united voice dedicated to promoting, advocating and lobbying for the regeneration and sustainable future of quality green spaces throughout the East Midlands.

Aims

The Forum has broad objectives covering the four main areas of:-

Advice to members

The Forum should become the conduit for important information and the latest in best practice. It should be able to give guidance and advice to members on key issues and provide early warnings of new initiatives and funding regimes.

Advocacy

The Forum, through its working groups and other mechanisms, should be able to gather and channel member's views on the key issues and represent these to the policy makers. By speaking with a united voice, the views of the local authority members, associated friends of park groups and others responsible for the management and/or development of the East Midlands green spaces will be more clearly heard.

Reaching Out to Park Users

Pivotal to the Forum's role is the two-way exchange of information and ideas. The forum has the opportunity to harness, for the first time the influence of a huge number of park users across the East Midlands including the 1000s of friends of park groups. The Forum will also communicate directly through media campaigns.

Cross Boundary and Partnership Working

The Forum will aim to facilitate and encourage the exchange of information, sharing of good practice and establishment of partnerships within and across boundaries with the aim of raising the standards of green spaces and infrastructure throughout the East Midlands.

Objectives

The objectives of the Forum are to:-

- Be the representative body for parks and green spaces in the East Midlands
- Promote and support the regeneration, management and sustainable future of parks and green spaces in the East Midlands region.
- Raise the quality standard of parks and green spaces in the East Midlands to reflect the needs and aspirations of all residents and visitors.

- Promote and support the roles of the East Midland's parks and green spaces in supporting cross cutting themes such as health and well being, liveability, sustainability, crime and disorder, accessibility, environment, education, young people, culture, quality of life and regeneration.
- Develop and maintain a network of members for the exchange of expertise, experience and information
- Identify, promote and disseminate good practice in planning, design, maintenance and management of parks and green spaces in the East Midlands.
- Advocate the case for adequate capital and revenue funding for parks and green spaces in local authority budgets and national spending reviews
- Promote higher standards in skills and training for those responsible for planning, maintaining and managing the East Midland's parks and green spaces.
- Promote community involvement in the continued development of parks and open spaces and contribute to the promotion of friends groups nationally using the annual East Midlands Regional Friends of Parks event.

Appendix 2 – GSEM Action Plan – draft stage needs more work

Objective:	Respon.	Resource	Delivery/progress
<p>Continue to develop and sustain GreenSpace East Midlands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach membership target of 27% of Local Authorities. • Undertake membership drive and awareness work to inform potential new members of GSEM. • Produce draft Business Plan to steering group. • Consult draft Business Plan and produce final draft. • Finalise forum’s management structure and governing documents. • Hold Annual review in April 2010. • Deliver 3 open meetings on cross-cutting themes. • Continue the progress of the funding working group particularly in producing more case studies • Develop a new working group on training. Research regional training needs and define future objectives. • Continue the establishment of the community involvement working group. Use recent survey results to identify work areas. • Continue to support county forums to be more effective. • Increase county forums from 3 to 4. Encourage and enable establishment in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire. • Deliver large partnership project with Natural England on Access mapping. • Produce a media year plan 	Ruth Rolls	Forum manager	Q4
	Chair	Support from GreenSpace	Q3
	Support from working groups and members	Q3	
	Support from established contacts.	Q4	
	Support from established contacts.	Q3	
	Support from established contacts.	Q4	
	Support from established contacts.	Q4	
	Support from established contacts.	Q4	
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