

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 8 December 2000

Subject: **Action for Biodiversity in South East England**

Report of: Chief Executive

Recommendation:

That the Committee on the Assembly's behalf welcomes 'Action for Biodiversity in South East England' as a vital contribution towards achieving sustainable development at a regional level.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Executive Committee to receive and consider this action plan produced by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF). A copy of 'Action for Biodiversity in South East England' is included within your papers. Dr Robert Page, an Assembly Member and member of the SEEBF Working Group overseeing development of 'Action for Biodiversity in South East England', will be at the Executive Committee meeting for this item to answer any questions.

2. Background

2.1 The SEEBF is a liaison body of a wide range of the major statutory and voluntary bodies in the GOSE South East Region, which have a technical remit to further biodiversity. The membership of the Forum is listed in Appendix 2 of the action plan. The Forum was set up to provide a focus for furthering biodiversity at the regional level.

2.2 Until the SEEBF became active there were national Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) for a range of national priority habitats and species and a range of local BAPs but a gap at the regional level. 'Action for Biodiversity in South East England' has been produced in response to the current focus on policy making at

the regional level provided by the Assembly, SEEDA, government departments and other bodies. In particular, it 'fleshes out' the biodiversity objective and key indicators contained within the draft regional sustainable development framework 'A Better Quality of Life in the South East'. This was recently produced under the Assembly's leadership with partner bodies throughout the region and of course is currently out for consultation. The draft framework makes the linkage with the biodiversity action plan clear.

3. The Action Plan

3.1 In essence the action plan 'sets out the SEEBF stall' to help biodiversity to be taken fully into account as a key element in sustainable development. The action plan aims to do two things:

- It sets targets for the maintenance, restoration and creation of regional priority habitats. (There are a few minor adjustments to be made in the hectare figures before final publication.)
- It sets out what the SEEBF, on a consensus basis, suggests that different sectors, e.g. planning, agriculture, etc., can do to help deliver these targets. This is produced as the basis for future dialogue and the development of joint working with a wide range of regional partners and is expected to evolve over time.

3.2 As 'Action for Biodiversity in South East England' was produced by consensus and includes proposals that may go beyond current policy commitments of individual statutory organisations represented on the SEEBF, their endorsement of the document does not imply that any organisation supports all of its proposals. This caveat is set out in the Foreward.

3.3 As will be seen in the Preface, the SEEBF are asking the Assembly (as well as SEEDA and GOSE) if it will welcome the action plan as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development at a regional level. A welcome of this nature is considered to be of real value to the SEEBF in achieving the recognition that the document has an important part to play in developing regional sustainability. While there are proposals within the action plan about which the Assembly as Regional Planning Body may well have reservations - the primacy of biodiversity factors in land use and transport planning for example - the wording of the recommendation before the Committee has been negotiated so that it does not imply wholesale endorsement of the action plan.

Paul Bevan
Chief Executive
13 November 2000