

# Application for the Local Nature Partnership Fund from the Cheshire region



*Top left:* Young people inspired at events; *Top right:* Local people active through volunteering;  
*Bottom:* Goway Meadows, 165 ha of floodplain grazing marsh adjacent to Stanlow oil refinery.

**1. What is the name of the partnership/organisation(s) applying for funding? (50 words)**

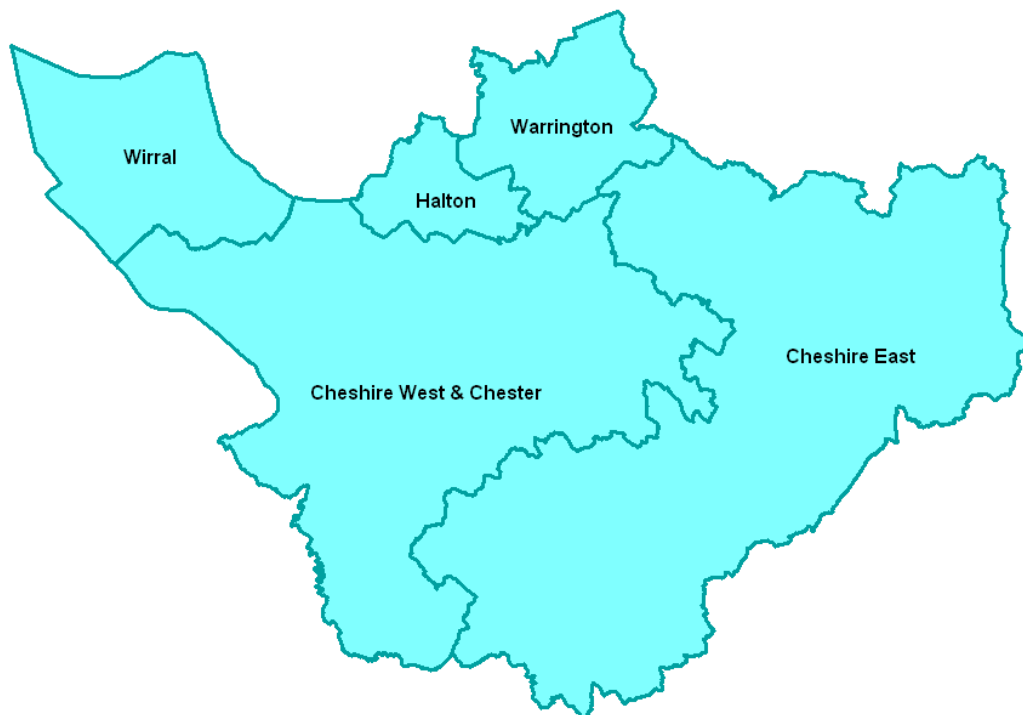
The application is being made on behalf of the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership (CrBP) and the Cheshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Forum which already share a number of key partners. This proposal engages wide ranging partnerships comprising individual supporters, community groups, local authorities, businesses and other agencies including education and health.

The accountable body for this application is Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

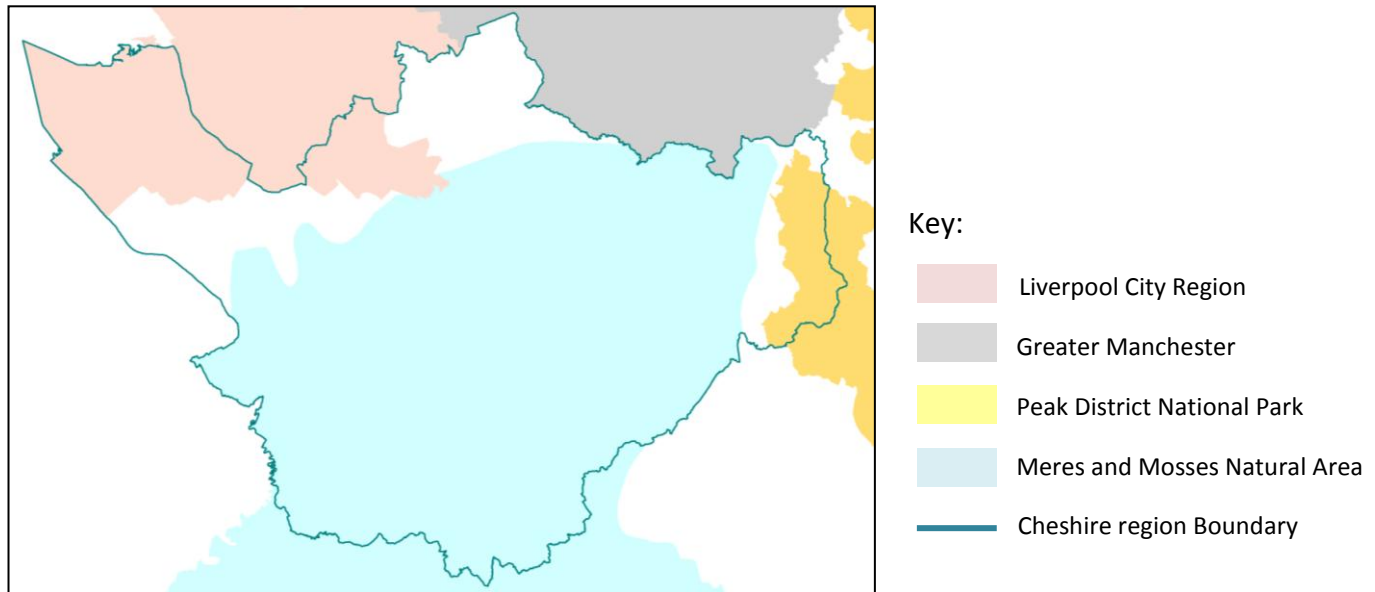
**2. What geographic area do your organisations cover? Please supply a map or relevant postcodes. (100 words)**

The CrBP area encompasses the local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton, Warrington and Wirral (Figure 1). The Cheshire GI Forum encompasses the local authorities of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East and Warrington.

The Cheshire region forms a significant part of the Meres and Mosses Natural Area (a Wetland Vision priority area) and is connected to the Peak District National Park to the East (Figure 2); Wales to the West and merges with the Liverpool City Region and River Mersey corridor to the North. The River Mersey runs through the centre of Warrington and Halton and abuts the Wirral peninsula providing strong links with the neighbouring Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.



**Figure 1.** Local Authorities in the Cheshire region.



**Figure 2.** Boundaries across the Cheshire region.

**3. What outcomes and outputs will you achieve (for 2011/12) in line with the fund's objectives? (500 words)**

This application is in line with the fund objective to enable existing environmental partnerships who aspire to become a Local Nature Partnership, to broaden their agenda, membership and vision to better reflect those of a Local Nature Partnership. The CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum wish to work together and use the transition funding to form a Local Nature Partnership. The transition fund will be used to coordinate stakeholder engagement around the following outcomes:

**Outcome:** Develop a 'fit for purpose' Local Nature Partnership proposal.

**Output:**

- Establish better partnership arrangements both within the environment sector and between the environment sector and the social, health and economic sectors.
- Broaden membership and agree a common way forward for existing partnerships.
- Establish a strategic level multi sector partnership board with representation from the LEPs, health sector, landowner associations and politicians alongside environmental partners and local authorities.
- Address the gaps within current ways of working to embrace organisations not previously active or poorly represented.
- Strengthen links with local communities (both urban and rural) through this process ensuring 'grass roots' input into the vision and delivery plan to identify cross-cutting outcomes.

**Outcome:** Develop an integrated vision for the local natural environment.

**Output:**

- A clear integrated environmental vision for the whole area, agreed by key stakeholders.
- Governance and working arrangements agreed for the proposed LNP.
- Draft a framework for delivery based upon the existing strong evidence base.

- Through a Vision and Delivery Plan to take forward landscape scale recovery of the natural environment for both people and wildlife.
- Identify and embed Nature Improvement Areas into local plans and strategies.
- Forge links between creating a healthy natural environment and contributing to the LEP priorities by taking forward recommendations made by Natural Economy North West.

**Outcome:** Develop a vision for Nature Improvement Areas.

**Output:**

- Use existing data sets such as Cheshire EConet and the North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral GI Framework to engage a wide audience in agreeing priority Nature Improvement Areas.
- Build upon the six landscape scale initiatives which are at various stages of development (Habitats and Hillforts, Meres and Mosses, Saltscap, Gowy & Mersey Washlands, South West Cheshire Dormouse Project, Dane Valley).
- Embed NIAs in to local plans and strategies.

**Outcome:** Develop a clear mandate for cross-border working.

**Output:**

- Consultation with all parties on the best way to proceed and to rationalise the way we work across the Cheshire and Warrington and Liverpool City Region LEP areas.
- Agree a defined boundary for the LNP and a shared vision and priority actions with neighbouring LNP's
- Develop effective cross boundary working to ensure that landscape scale actions are achieved
- Develop good working relationships with neighbouring regions where there are shared ecological systems such as:
  - The Liverpool City Region and Association of Greater Manchester Authorities along the River Mersey Corridor.
  - Staffordshire and Shropshire through the Meres and Mosses Partnership.
  - The Peak District through the Peak District National Park.
  - Wales through existing good links to deliver projects in the Dee Valley.

**Outcome:** Identify and secure future funding streams and ways of working.

**Output:**

- Creation of a sustainable revenue model.
- Identify Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Agreements with partners which may support some elements of partnership coordination.
- Investigate new emerging funding sources such as Biodiversity Offsetting and the use of Community Infrastructure Levy as well as exploring visitor payback.
- Integration of LNP priorities into local spatial plans and regeneration schemes.

**4. How much money are you bidding for and when will the money be spent? Please provide a budget breakdown. (Most bids will be in the region of £20,000, however added value cases will be considered for amounts up to £50,000. Funding will be paid in arrears of expenditure and must be claimed by June 2012, with at least half being claimed by 31 March 2012.) (300 words)**

Funding is needed to coordinate and lead the partner consultation process, produce the Vision and Delivery Plan and LNP application. Administrative support from the accountable body will also be required along with a budget to facilitate events and the produce advocacy materials. One method of achieving this would be to employ or second an advocate to lead the process. This way of working has already proved successful for a number of local projects and strategies for example producing the North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral GI framework, Living Seas advocacy, major development campaigns and the review of Local Record Centre functions.

Outline budget:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Requested from Transition Fund</b>
Consultation to broaden and align existing partnerships	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2011	£10,000
Meetings/ workshops with key sectors	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2011	£2,000
Develop a Vision and Delivery Plan	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012	£5,000
Production of advocacy materials	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2012	£2,000
Partnership development activities	30 <sup>th</sup> May 2012	£5,000
	<b>Total</b>	£24,000

In kind match funding to the approximate value of £5000 will be contributed from the CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum during the above activities.

**5. Please indicate your key milestones and timeline for delivery (800 words)**

Timeframe for delivery

Start: Sept 2011

End: June 2012

Outcomes	Milestones	Dates
A full consultation process to establish a broad partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First meeting of the Transition Focus Group</li> <li>• Agree ways of working/ project plan</li> <li>• Review current partnerships</li> <li>• Identify gaps and opportunities</li> <li>• Engage with new sectors (social/ health/economic) through events and one-to-ones</li> <li>• Engage with local communities/ Neighbourhood Plans (min 5 workshops)</li> <li>• Agree boundary of LNP and cross border working arrangements</li> <li>• Identify a way forward for the LNP</li> </ul>	<p>October 2011</p> <p>End December 2011</p> <p>End January 2012</p>
Establish a multi-sector partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree partnership membership</li> <li>• Agree partnership terms of reference and governance, and cross-border working arrangements</li> <li>• Establish working relationship with LEP Carbon Reduction &amp; Sustainability Commission</li> <li>• Establish Shadow LNP board</li> <li>• Submit formal application to become an LNP</li> <li>• Full Board membership and appointing methods agreed and Transition Focus Group concluded</li> </ul>	<p>End December 2011</p> <p>End January 2012</p> <p>End March 2012</p> <p>End May 2012</p>
An agreed LNP Vision and Delivery Plan with multi-sector buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Stage One NIA proposals</li> <li>• Hold bi-monthly LNP meetings</li> <li>• Draft Vision and Delivery plan (inc NIAs)</li> <li>• Agree shared priority actions with neighbouring LNPs</li> <li>• Finalise and sign off Vision and Delivery plan</li> <li>• Hold launch event/ conference</li> </ul>	<p>End September 2011</p> <p>End March 2012</p> <p>22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012</p>
Agree a sustainable funding strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with LA regarding Biodiversity Offsetting and</li> <li>• Consult with LA regarding Community Infrastructure Levy</li> <li>• Consult with Government Agencies to align targeted funding streams to LNP priorities</li> <li>• Negotiate Service Level Agreements with key partners</li> <li>• Agree LNP ways of working to maximise efficiency</li> </ul>	<p>End September 2011</p> <p>November 2011</p> <p>March 2012</p>

**6. As a partnership, how do you plan to become self-sustaining? (500 words)**

A key outcome will be the creation of a sustainable revenue model to support a Local Nature Partnership bringing together traditional approaches and new models for resourcing the actions agreed. Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Agreements with partners may support some elements of partnership coordination, however, this will be supplemented with additional fundraising from external sources to support specific project delivery.

Developing a funding strategy going forward will form a key part of the partnership's delivery plan to secure funds for the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and other priority actions. This will include investigating new emerging funding sources such as Biodiversity Offsetting and the use of Community Infrastructure Levy as well as exploring visitor payback. All 5 Cheshire region local authorities have expressed an interest in the biodiversity offsetting pilot and if successful, this may be a sustainable source of funding for the partnership. Integration of the LNP priorities into local spatial plans and regeneration schemes as well as working with Natural England and Environment Agency to align Higher Level Stewardship and Water Framework Directive targeting will also provide a strong platform for achieving LNP outcomes.

We will seek to increase efficiency and cost effectiveness by blending resources to deliver more environmental benefits that can also address socio-economic need and through becoming a hub and single voice for the natural environment at the strategic level. The LNP Vision and Delivery Plan will identify lead individuals and organisations to take forward specific actions. With appropriate consultation and full buy-in, delivery of some actions would become embedded in core work. This approach makes best use of partner resources, avoids bureaucracy, is flexible and scalable and able to engage the partnership, making use of the skills from within the whole partnership rather than a more limited pool of dedicated team members. Working in this way will mean that the partnership will not need significant annual resources. There will be an emphasis on priorities and clear accountability to limit competition for resources.

The partnership may consider creating a Social Enterprise trading arm as a post transition funding mechanism which will support the partnership by charging for specific work that can be effectively and efficiently delivered by the partnership to private, voluntary or public sector organisations.

The partnership recognises the need to be able to show the economic value, as well as the intrinsic value of the natural environment, as one additional way to communicate and influence policy and investment decisions.

### **7. How will you evaluate the work? (500 words)**

The transition into a Local Nature Partnership until June 2012 marks the first stage of a much bigger process – the establishment of a LNP. Participants (and representative organisations) will have opportunities to give input on all aspects of the LNP (including geography, structure and process). They will also be asked for feedback on whether they feel adequately consulted throughout the process and changes made to maximise their ability to give input. Their considerations will feed into the development of the LNP.

As part of the evaluation procedure, comments and feedback will be documented to present a clear and transparent route for members to see the decision-making process, and this will link with the fairness and equality as set out in Question 12.

The effectiveness of this project can be evaluated using the following quantitative and qualitative success measures:

#### Quantitative Success measures:

- The Consultation process:
  - Number of attendees at events
  - Number of consultees submitting comments / feedback
  - Number of hits on LNP consultation website
  
- The LNP:
  - Number of potential members signing a partnership declaration
  - Number of sectors represented within the LNP
  - Partner representatives being formally agreed
  - Signing of a statement of representation and equal opportunity if deemed relevant
  - Management and working groups agreed
  
- Outline LNP Vision and Delivery Plan with agreed:
  - Vision and priorities
  - Top level actions which can be embedded into local plans and strategies
  - Accountabilities
  - Reporting and monitoring processes
  - Contribution to BAP targets
  - Contribution to socio-economic targets
  - Ongoing funding plan
  - Advocacy plan

#### Qualitative Success Measures

- Outcomes of facilitated workshops
- Partnership working with neighbouring LNPs
- Levels of engagement (measured through feedback)
- Feedback on consultation processes and outcomes

### **Transition Focus Group**

During the transition period a Transition Focus Group, a ‘task and finish group’, with a membership made up of representatives from partner organisations including the Local Authorities, Wildlife Trust, Local Records Centre, Mersey Forest, Groundwork and health and business representatives, will govern the development process. The Group will have an open membership policy allowing the membership to expand or representatives to change during the life of the project as appropriate. The Group will meet bi-monthly to assess progress against the outcomes and provide advice and guidance. Meetings will follow an agenda and will be formally recorded using minutes. The Transition Focus Group will give way to the agreed governance structure at the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership.

### **8. Are you or any of your constituent members potentially interested in the Nature Improvement Area competition? (200 words)**

A number of organisations are interested in the NIA competition. The following areas are likely to be submitted to the competition:

#### *Working with the Liverpool City Region:*

Adapting the Landscape NIA: Linked by the Ship Canal and the River Mersey, the two cities of Liverpool and Manchester bookend an area with a £50bn economy and 6million people. Adapting the Landscape is at the heart of the Atlantic Gateway initiative to make more of its potential. The River Mersey Lower Catchment, is both an appropriate landscape scale programme in an important natural area with a rich mix of internationally designated sites, SSSI’s and sites of local natural value and an important area for economic growth with a range of social issues. Core to the area is the Upper Mersey Estuary where significant opportunity exists to restore BAP habitat for people and wildlife.

#### *Working with the Meres and Mosses Partnership:*

Meres and Mosses NIA: Building upon the Meres and Mosses HLF Landscape Partnership Project straddling the border between Cheshire and Shropshire. The already established multi-sector partnership board are looking to expand the reach and scope of the lottery funded project to reach the ambition of an NIA to restore areas of the internationally important Meres and Mosses natural area.

There are a number of potential future NIAs in the area including the River Gowy catchment, Delamere Forest, the River Dane Valley, the Weaver Valley and the Dee Valley.

**9. Are you or any of your constituent members potentially interested in the Biodiversity Offsets pilot? (200 words)**

Yes. All five local authorities have expressed an interest in the pilot scheme. Within the CrBP / Cheshire GI area several plans and strategies already exist which are well placed to inform biodiversity offsetting delivery on the ground. Warrington, Halton and Wirral benefit from having both an ecological framework and GI framework. Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East share a common GI framework developed through the Mersey Dee Alliance (cross border with Wirral and North East Wales) and there are local action plans being developed for Chester, South Wirral, and Crewe. In addition Cheshire EConet identifies the required ecological network across the county and could be used to direct funds to core biodiversity areas and Nature Improvement Areas.

Cheshire East Council is currently developing a small pilot of the biodiversity offsetting method to mitigate for a number of proposed housing developments around Crewe. Initial talks with the two developers have been positive and it is hoped that they will pool their resources to fund off-site mitigation.

**10. How will you engage with key sectors and communities on your plans? Please define which organisations and individuals will be involved. (500 words)**

The CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum coming together will provide an ideal platform to engage a wide audience in the Local Nature Partnership debate, however it is recognised there are currently some gaps which we would seek to address with this funding. CrBP representatives are generally speaking, biodiversity focused whilst the Cheshire GI Forum has become focused on a range of social, environmental and economic benefits (including climate change benefits) with less of a specialty in biodiversity. There is a need for wider engagement with social and economic partners.

We will build on positive initial discussions with the Cheshire and Warrington LEP, which has expressed its support for the establishment of a LNP, to explore how a LNP can help address LEP priorities. In particular, we will work closely with the Cheshire and Warrington Carbon Reduction and Sustainability Commission to identify shared priorities. We will also engage the CBI, Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations in the consultation process.

We will develop our relationships with existing partners in the health sector and seek to engage new partners. Members of the CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum already work extensively with local communities and the health sector and it will be through these existing links that we will seek strengthen partnership working towards achieving a common vision for the natural environment.

Businesses, landowners and farmers are also recognised as sectors that require further development and increasing representation on current partnerships. Individual CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum partners have, however got extensive experience of engaging with these sectors through specific projects and it will be a key outcome of this process to ensure that they share and support an integrated vision and business plan.

The following partnerships and organisations will be actively involved in the consultation process through a series of formal and informal meetings and on-line communication to give a meaningful two-way flow of information and opinion:

#### Government and Public bodies:

- Local Authorities (Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Halton, Warrington and Wirral)
- Government Agencies (Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, British Waterways, Marine Management Organisation)
- Utility Companies
- Cheshire Fire Authority
- Local Development Framework thematic groups
- Politicians
- Highways Agency
- Network Rail
- Ministry of Defence

#### Environmental:

- Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership
- Green Infrastructure Forum
- Local Sites Partnerships
- Meres and Mosses Partnership
- North West Forestry Forum
- RECORD, the local biological records centre
- Chester Zoological Gardens
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Groundwork Cheshire
- Cheshire Landscape Trust
- National Trust
- Woodland Trust
- Peak District National Park
- North West Coastal Forum
- North West Climate Change Partnership
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
- North West and Dee River Basin Liaison Panels
- BTCV
- Liverpool Museum
- Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
- Shoreline Management Liaison Panels
- Cheshire and Warrington Rural Partnership
- English Heritage
- Local Naturalists Groups

#### Economic:

- Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership
- Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership
- Neighbouring LEPs (Greater Manchester, Shropshire, Wales)
- Northern Marches Leader

- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Economic regeneration departments and schemes
- Marketing Cheshire
- Mersey Dee Alliance
- Cheshire East Tourism Partnership
- Business in the Community
- Forum of Private Business (Head office in Cheshire)
- Chambers of Commerce

#### Social/ Health

- Academic institutions (Reaseheath College, Chester University, Liverpool & Manchester Universities)
- Disability group connections
- Adult Social Services
- Primary Care Trusts
- Mental Health Groups
- Cheshire probation service
- Phoenix Futures
- Community Voluntary Services
- Warrington Health and Wellbeing Board
- Housing Associations
- Landowner representatives (ie, NFU, CLA, BASC)
- Angling Clubs
- Sustrans
- Cheshire Community Action
- Faiths for Change
- Women's Institute

In many cases the membership of these partnerships overlap and this process will rationalise existing structures and relationships to create an integrated approach to effective action for the natural environment and to agree the scope and geographical boundaries of future Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas.

**11. Please describe how you will use the funding to create/broaden your agenda, membership and vision to better reflect those of a Local Nature Partnership (1,000 words)**

The funding will be used to broaden the agenda, membership and vision to create a Local Nature Partnership by:

- **Forming at a level that can take a strategic approach and demonstrate local leadership**

The funding will be used to facilitate and coordinate engagement of current partnerships and under-represented sectors to create a LNP that engages locally and sits at a strategic level by inviting senior officer/decision maker attendance to create a strong voice. We will seek to establish a strategic level multi sector partnership board with representation from the LEPs, health sector, landowner associations and politicians alongside environmental partners and local authorities.

Transition funding will be used to agree the governance and working arrangements of the proposed LNP. Existing partnerships work at a number of different strategic levels. The transition funding is needed to create an LNP which operates at the correct strategic level to influence integrated outcomes for a wider range of benefits. By strengthening working between the CrBP, Cheshire GI forum and the LEP we can encourage council leaders and seek by-in from senior levels.

- **Using knowledge and expertise to develop a shared vision and set of priorities**

Funding will be used to facilitate discussions to create one clear integrated environmental vision and agenda through a Vision and Delivery Plan for the whole area and agreed by all stakeholders. This will seek to restore, recreate and reconnect the natural environment, incorporating broader social and economic benefits across the landscape. The Vision and Delivery Plan will identify opportunity, added value, priority action and address gaps in delivery. We will then seek to embed this vision and set of priorities into local plans and strategies. The plan will also forge links between creating a healthy natural environment and contributing to the LEP priorities by taking forward recommendations made by Natural Economy North West.

Adopting a vision at a landscape scale will increase efficiency by identifying synergies and gaps within existing strategies to inform smarter targeting of resources. This will mean bringing together BAP, River Basin Management Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, LEP priorities, Green Infrastructure Frameworks, Cheshire EConet, Climate Change Action Plans, Parish Plans and Living Landscape schemes amongst other opportunities into a clear targeted plan.

- **Adding value through contributing towards local authority plans that affect the environment as well as local plans and LDF's**

The funding will be used to develop an LNP at a strategic level that can contribute towards local authority plans and embed the benefit and value of the natural environment into local plans and Local Development Frameworks. Current opportunities include the developing green infrastructure action plans under the North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral GI Framework, developing LDFs, the biodiversity offsetting pilot in Cheshire East and the pilot neighbourhood plans in Wirral and Cheshire East. As the shared vision and set of priorities develop it will facilitate and accentuate plans such as the river basin management plans, shoreline management plans, and green infrastructure plans into local authority priorities.

- **Contribute to the green economy**

The funding will be used to facilitate discussion and engage partners to develop an LNP that can feed into the local LEP priorities.

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP are in support of this application and feel that the LNP would be valuable in feeding into the Carbon Reduction and Sustainability Commission. The LNP Vision and Delivery Plan will identify the contribution that the LNP could make to delivering the following LEP priorities:

- Carbon reduction and sustainability: green infrastructure delivery which includes benefits such as climate change adaptation and mitigation through carbon sequestration and flood attenuation.
- Promoting Cheshire & Warrington: by valuing the contribution of the green economy for jobs, house prices, business investment in greener surroundings and by taking forward innovative green infrastructure projects in urban areas.
- Rural economy working with landowners: to find suitable funding models such as ecosystem services provision and biodiversity offsetting as well as opportunities through Higher Level Stewardship. Working at a county scale to nurture our landscape character and encourage tourism.
- Deregulation: biodiversity and socio-economics discussed under one forum rather than dissipated through many. Examples include using biodiversity offsetting to help create a better balance between development and the natural environment.
- Skilled and productive workforce: the economic benefits of environmental work include generating new jobs and developing skills and experience. The environment sector can provide opportunities for trainees, apprentices and the long term unemployed
- Business investment: outstanding natural environment assets provide a firm foundation for quality of life and for retaining and attracting investment and people. It can therefore provide a strong marketing advantage.

- **Bring together a range of local stakeholders**

A wide range of organisations sit on the CrBP and Cheshire GI Forum, however we recognise there are currently large gaps which we would seek to address with this funding. Good progress has been made by some partnerships to develop membership amongst those who work on traditional “grey infrastructure” projects, such as engineers, designers, developers and investors. There is a need to establish better partnership arrangements both within the environment sector and between the environment sector and the social, health and economic sectors. Stakeholder engagement will seek to move towards an LNP with a broad membership and agree a common way forward for existing partnerships. We will address the gaps within current ways of working to embrace organisations not previously active or poorly represented.

Working closely with the Cheshire and Warrington LEP and Liverpool City Region LEP network will provide links into the private sector and enable the LNP priorities to be integrated into the local authority plans and strategies. Businesses, landowners, parishes and local groups are also recognised as sectors that are lacking in representation in current partnership. We will seek to expand our engagement with the social sector by engaging partners such as Cheshire Community Action, Community Volunteering Services and the Primary Care Trusts. We will seek to increase

volunteering opportunities and engage with the Muck In4 Life campaign through mechanisms such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Local Conservation Hubs.

Consultation for this transition funding has shown potential new partners like the Warrington Health & Wellbeing Board are already interested in becoming part of the LNP. We need to continue to engage people in discussions about the value to them of GI and the provision of biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services. In particular we will seek to work closely with directors of Public Health and with the LEP as two key areas where joined up approaches can not only improve the natural environment but also deliver socio economic benefits.

- **Co-operate with other partnerships**

Funding will be used to facilitate discussions and engagement with other partnerships. We will work closely with neighbouring partnerships particularly the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Shropshire and Staffordshire LNP's. This transition fund will facilitate consultations to discuss boundaries between the Cheshire region LNP and Liverpool City Region LNP and future close working across all boundaries.

The Cheshire region straddles two LEP areas- Cheshire & Warrington and Liverpool City Region. Whilst Wirral and Halton have joined the Liverpool City Region for economic reasons, traditionally they have been aligned with Cheshire for nature conservation delivery. For this reason there is some boundary overlap between this application and that of the Liverpool City Region. We will use this process to consult with all parties on the best way to proceed and to rationalise the way we work in these areas to agree a defined boundary for the LNP and a shared vision and priority actions with neighbouring LNPs.

- **Work at a landscape scale**

Funding will be used to facilitate discussion to identify projects at a landscape scale that can provide multiple benefits. The Cheshire region benefits from extensive and detailed natural environment mapping. Cheshire EConet (2002) defines core wildlife areas and 'nature development areas' where there is significant opportunity for biodiversity gain. Complementing this, Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Wirral and North East Wales share a GI framework and Halton, Warrington, and again Wirral benefit from the recent publication of an ecological framework. There are many suggested areas that could be taken forward as Living Landscape Schemes and indeed Nature Improvement Areas. A number of current projects work at the landscape scale but through engagement of new and under-represented sectors within the LNP wider benefits can be gained. The LNP will work to engage a wide audience in agreeing priority Nature Improvement Areas and seek to embed them in to local plans and strategies. Funding will also be used to pursue discussions and investigate the opportunity that biodiversity offsetting pilots may have to benefit the environment.

**12. Please describe how your proposal will create greater fairness and equality of opportunity (500 words)**

As the accountable body for this application, Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) will take responsibility for ensuring that all activities are in accordance with the Trusts Equal Opportunities Policy. The aim of this policy is to set out the CWT's values on equality and diversity and to ensure all managers, staff and volunteers understand that CWT takes equality of opportunity seriously. The policy includes a

set of values and ways of working to ensure that all of the Trusts activities are equally accessible and that all staff and volunteers are treated fairly and equally regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, class, political or religious beliefs, HIV antibody status (including AIDS), marital status, sexual orientation, disability, trade union activity or hours of work. A full copy of the policy is available on request.

We understand that fairness and equality of opportunity are integral to realising the Local Nature Partnership. This aspect is most important when working on the commitment to embrace organisations not previously active and to work with sectors that have been poorly represented within the groups to date. The main mechanism to help create fairness and equality of opportunity is through excellent communication through distributing information, helping people to understand issues in order for them to fully engage, listening and receiving feedback as well as ensuring representation in decision making. NGO's will be particularly important providing the link between communities and the decision makers and bringing local communities to the LNP process.

If the LNP is to be successful and achieve the outcomes, partners need to be fully committed to owning and managing the partnership, its delivery and development. All stakeholders need to have taken part in the discussions to create an LNP that can deliver the outcomes and provide support for the LNP's agreed set of priorities. A Terms of Reference will be agreed and produced to help partners understand their role within the LNP process.

We will strive to ensure a fair representation of communities benefit from the actions of the LNP by using data such as IMD and NEI and specific health or education data alongside functionality information for the natural environment to target actions to meet economic, social and environmental needs. Taking this approach will mean that resources are targeted fairly, where they are most needed and that communities with most needs are those that are provided with most opportunity.

**Please send completed applications to [LNPs@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:LNPs@defra.gsi.gov.uk).**