

**NOTES OF THE GREEN ARC SEMINAR, HELD ON FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2005 IN  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Present:**

<b>Buckinghamshire County Council</b>	Bruce Allen (Colne Valley Park Partnership) Mike Woods, Colin Clarke
<b>Chilterns Conservation Board</b>	Steve Rodrick Colin White Alan Walters
<b>Corporation of London</b>	Andy Barnard, Wendy Mead Jennifer Adams Helen Read Jeremy Wisenfeld (North East Green Arc) Clive Totman
<b>Chiltern Society</b>	Jenny Habib Geoffrey Larminie Michael Overall
<b>Countryside Agency</b>	Colin Pritchard Andrea Byerley Terry Robinson (North East Green Arc)
<b>Dacorum Borough Council</b>	Michael Clark
<b>English Nature</b>	Kyle Lishak,
<b>Environment Agency</b>	Amy Dickenson,
<b>Forestry Commission</b>	Jane Hull
<b>Groundwork Thames Valley</b>	Mick May John Kennedy Paul Hodgson Stewart Pomoroy
<b>London Borough of Harrow</b>	David Corby
<b>Herts &amp; Middlesex Wildlife Trust</b>	Judy Adams
<b>London Borough of Hillingdon</b>	Mary Worrall,
<b>National Farmers Union</b>	John Archer
<b>South Bucks (Bucks + AONB)</b>	Simon Gray
<b>South West Green Arc</b>	Mike Dawson,
<b>Spelthorne Borough Council</b>	Joanne Burgess,
<b>SUSTRANS</b>	Simon Pratt
<b>Watling Chase Community Forest/Herts CC</b>	Andy Hardstaff,
<b>Wokingham District Council,</b>	Edward Redhill
<b>Woodland Trust,</b>	Tony Chadwick
<b>Chiltern District Council</b>	Peter Beckford
<b>Greater London Authority</b>	Dave Dawson,

Cllr Bruce Allen (BCC) welcomed everyone to the opening of Green Arc Seminar and expressed his thanks to members and officers of Chiltern District Council for hosting the seminar.

The Seminar was chaired by Terry Robinson, Director for Growth Areas, Countryside Agency.

Mr Robinson said that this seminar would be run in the form of an open discussion to explore the overall picture of Green Arc and decide what can be done in this area. i.e. what your organisation can do to play a part in the North West quadrant, in bringing it to life and driving it forward.

The North West quadrant was not devoid of ideas. Earliest experience of conservation took place in the Herts/Barnet area, with good management of private estates providing for public benefit. There is already a tradition of protecting assets, with good forward and exciting thinking already in place. Green Arc is an enormous step change into new spheres of bigger and more exciting ideas.

The Green Arc vision came about through three organisations, Corporation of London, through Epping Forest in the North East, the Lee Valley and Thames Chase Community Forest.

The vision was to merge the countryside across an area for extensive public use and from this concept being applied across a broader sphere the idea of Green Arc across North East London was created. Jonathan Spencer of the Forestry Commission and Ecologist in the New Forest applied a management technique which he used in the New Forest. The New Forest is a rural resource which is still lived in. We are all managing the countryside in multiple ways which need to be drawn together. The intensity of government reaction was also very encouraging.

The Greater London Authority was drawn into the north east resources. They wanted to use the study to see if the idea could work around other parts of London. The GLA has been helpful in making this Green Arc grow elsewhere.

Presentations were given by Colin Pritchard, Countryside Agency; Jeremy Wisenfeld, Corporation of London (North East Sector Green Arc); Mike Dawson, Surrey County Council (South Western Sector Green Arc).

Other advocates of the North West Green Arc initiative spoke on what they wished to achieve.

**Andy Barnard, Corporation of London.**

Andy Barnard is Superintendent of Burnham Beeches. The Corporation of London acquired the land in 1880 to safeguard it from housing development. It provides a place for the people of London to enjoy and now covers 540sq acres at the southern end of Buckinghamshire. It is a special area of scientific interest (SSSI) and is considered to be the best beech woodland.

Government Acts ensured the land would remain open. Acts were set up by Sir Robin Hunter, who played a major role in the creation of the Green Belt. A Management Plan is in place for the next 500 years to protect Burnham Beeches.

**Mike Woods, Colne Valley Park Partnership**

Mike is Group Manager, Countryside and Heritage at Buckinghamshire County Council and Executive Officer for Colne Valley Park Partnership.

The Park covers 43 square miles and has been a regional park for 40 years. Within the Park 63 miles of rights of way have been created. The park is an island amidst urban development and, as such it is difficult to manage the habitat. Green Arc would give it the opportunity to connect to other spaces. 2,642 acres of Green Belt land were lost to development between 2000 and 2003 and in this connection there needs to be better planning. This seminar gives an opportunity to sign up for an initiative to plan for green space on a wider scale than previously imagined. There is a need to improve and scope evidence which will lead to bold ambitious plans and strategies to provide space and explore parks for improvement of landscape.

**Mick May, Executive Director of Groundwork Trust**

The Groundwork Federation started 20 years ago to address issues around the rural/urban fringe. North West Green Arc represents continuation of earlier and earliest ambitions. Partnerships were formed between local authorities concerned and Groundwork Trust, which enabled tighter planning constraints to be introduced in order to keep loss of green areas to a minimum. It was hoped that North West Green Arc would work across a much wider area for the benefit of future generations.

Terry Robinson opened the Forum to questions. He commented that the presentations had shown how things have changed. There was a need to grab opportunities now on offer and apply ideas with confidence.

Steve Rodrick (Chilterns Conservation Board) stated that the work done in the AONB is typical of the work envisioned for Green Arc and he hoped that the two organisations could work together. The CCB advocated understanding and enjoyment of green areas and in some instances activities would flow across many areas. Mick May indicated he would be interested in sharing ideas on how the two organisations could work together. The Chilterns had a complicated boundary and there could be issues regarding inter-relationship between the AONB and other areas. It was important that the AONB be one of the key destinations for people coming from the south west.

Mike Overall (Chiltern Society) said that the Chiltern Society's area was twice the size of the AONB and was interested in MM's comments about differences between Green Arc and AONB. MO expressed concern about protecting the land around the AONB and implementation of policies regarding such items as communication masts being sited just outside the AONB areas. There has not been discussion on how this issue will get embedded into RSS. PiE would commence on 1 November. There is a special area within the East of England Plan called 'London Area'. MO wanted to know if issues such as this were being fed into the Plan. He also stated that what has not been talked about in the GLA context is initiative within the GLA to identify and protect the landscape of the Thames itself. He also expressed concern regarding the green corridors of non-tidal Thames.

MM agreed that critical landscape does feed in and out of AONB. There are protected areas around the AONB and this is where Green Arc could inter-relate. The London Arc is the area which is covered by Green Arc in Surrey, with a similar area in Kent. It was important for SERP to openly support the Green Arc initiative. With regard to the Thames, work was already being carried out with regard to supporting the Thames Landscape Strategy. Green Arc will be building on this to extend it into the surrounding countryside. The Plan for the South East of England does have a policy. SERP was approaching it in a different way. Longer iteration regarding countryside in and around town will embrace this concept. Both RP exercises have made space for this but we must make sure we carry on badgering Government.

Dave Dawson (GLA) commented that the London plan had changed as a result of badgering and included more about the urban fringe. The Team were very keen on the Green Arc concept and wished to be core partners for the North West Green Arc.

DD expressed concern regarding boundaries. Looking towards London there were initiatives but they were at the south end of the spectrum. There was also a Parks Forum. One initiative was the Green Bridge concept, which applied to Thames Gateway. The two concepts should be inter-linked. This should also apply to the AONB. The Green Bridge concept is a green belt parallel, trying to conserve, protect and improve. It includes regional and metropolitan parks and this was all going on within green belt boundaries. DD said Ealing should be included within the map. The operational boundary should be green belt boundary. TR was pleased that urban green spaces had been mentioned stated that not enough was spent to improve these.

Judy Adams (Herts & West Middx Wildlife Trust) welcomed the fact that the countryside was being looked at in a wider context. They have experienced similar issues particularly in more vulnerable areas with regard to wildlife. She expressed interest in the Epping Forest Development. In reply Jeremy Wisenfeld said the north east sector had a commitment to public development. JA was pleased at the fact that other partners could also offer land, not just the public sector. AB said the future challenge will be to link these up with other partnerships with similar aims.

Discussion took place with regard to how boundaries were constituted, such as administrative boundaries or those formed by just linking areas of land. JW commented that this arose in discussions with Hertfordshire about whether Watling Chase should be included in their Arc. The dual carriageway runs up this boundary. If the boundary went to the west of the road it would be hard to make links to the Chase. JW urged the North West sector to take this on. River boundaries, such as the Thames, were more obvious.

Jenny Habib (Chiltern Society) raised the issue of land close to AONB being sold off in small plots and asked whether the Green Arc would press for the purchase of these areas in order to maintain them. JW stated that this issue linked with planning issues. When the Green Arc concept was first discussed in the north east, this was at the core of the planning regime and how we could influence it. However, it was difficult to influence the planning regime when Green Arc was only a concept. The rural environment is important but sometimes these spaces were ignored. It was hoped the planning regime could be changed in order for there to be more rigorous controls which would satisfy Green Arc. It was excellent that there was reference to Green Arc in the East of England Regional Plan. This provided a good opportunity to continue badgering for specific planning policies to protect these areas.

TR said the study for the north east Green Arc included such things as a positive role for the green belt. It is well protected and those who have paid for plots of land were wasting their money. This would be strengthened if there were positive community stakes in that land.

Andy Hardstaff (Herts) said he was not worried about boundaries. Watling Chase has similar aims to Green Arc. He asked at what point did Green Arcs become a 'green donut'. Green Arcs needed to be everywhere.

Mike Dawson was unsure what impact Natural England would have on Green Arc. He assumed there would be funding for the South East.

Mary Worrall (Green Spaces for England/ LB Hillingdon) suggested it would be helpful to put green belt areas on the map and that the Green Arc project should champion the green belt. AB replied that more work was required on the map; this was not the final version. Work was being undertaken to bring all spaces onto the map. This was just the starting point.

TR commented on the need to recognise that there are assets already in existence from which quick wins could be made. There will be opportunities to be taken advantage of sooner rather than later and a consortium was needed to take this forward. Issues needed to be resolved such as mechanisms for building, governing and managing the partnership.

He emphasised this was not new operation taking over from what was already there. This was new badging to take inventory and draw those concerned together. There needed to be a common agreement on the Green Arc concept.

### **Mechanisms**

Simon Pratt commented that ownership was the key. MO commented on the reluctance on behalf of local authorities to acquire land and it was strategically wrong to put too much emphasis on this.

### **Governing and managing partnerships**

The question was raised as to whether there was any organisation that could be put in, in order to support landowners in looking after footpaths across their land. TR said that legislation carried powers and finance was available to manage land. However, not much of what was being talked about would fall under this legislation. Landowners could voluntarily dedicate their land, which could be beneficial. In return they did get help for managing access. Stewardship also provided funding under the Agricultural Support Scheme.

It was agreed that construction of the team was very important. Syndicated working was productive but difficult to manage.

MW commented that local authorities did not see ownership of land as core to their work and were putting less into management of land. Who would manage the green space in the first years? Mechanisms were needed to ensure there was funding, and that Green Arc would not be reliant on local authorities. Local authorities often looked to charities for funding.

MO stated the need to motivate volunteers to carry out work on behalf of local authorities.

Tony Chadwick (Woodland Trust) said his organisation had secured funds to purchase land, when fundraising there was a need to look at long term management costs. His organisation was happy to support Green Arc.

TR said £90m was going into growth area funds of which £25m was being top sliced for green areas. Government was working on solutions for running these areas. There was a need for Government to state this was core work and introduce best value performance indicators. Currently, Country Parks had one BVI, whereas Waste had about 20 and this was where the money is going. Management of green spaces and biodiversity was not seen as core work.

With regard to publicity and communication, good people skills were needed to ensure this concept was put into the hearts and minds of people.

### **Foundation of Green Arc**

£20,000 has been set aside through the South East Arc to get the project up and running in the North West. There were already templates for the North West to follow.

Different methods could be used for producing work, such as in house staff or consultants. The funding offered was not matched funding and could be flexible, depending on how the North West Green Arc went forward.

The initial processes needed to be agreed, such as who holds the funding, and who agrees how it is spent. Everyone involved needs to be comfortable this process.

## **NEXT STAGE**

It was suggested that a Steering Group be formed and that all stakeholders attend the meetings. The Steering Group could act as the governing body, which progresses any actions. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Group should be a neutral person.

The following organisations agreed they wished to be involved in forthcoming meetings:

London Borough of Harrow  
Hertfordshire CMS/Watling Chase Community Forest  
The Chiltern Society  
Sustrans  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Colne Valley Park Partnership  
Groundwork UK  
Groundwork Thames Valley  
Corporation of London  
South Bucks District Council  
The Woodland Trust  
London Borough of Hillingdon  
Spelthorne Borough Council  
Greater London Authority  
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust  
Chilterns Conservation Board  
Environment Agency  
Forestry Commission

All interested parties were asked to complete the form, indicating an interest in further involvement in the NW sector Green Arc, and return them to Mike Woods by 15 October.

The National Farmers Union representative commented that unless a farming representative was needed on a regular basis they would like to keep a watching brief.

TR thanked all those who had attended for their positive response to this initiative.