



<b>Environment Topic Group</b>  21 <sup>st</sup> May 2010  Minutes		
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## 1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

### Attendees

Martin See (MS)	Environment Agency (Chair)
Louise Boffey (LB)	Warwickshire Observatory
Paul Cobbing (PC)	Government Office West Midlands
Susana Flores (SF)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Nicki Schiessel (NS)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Bill Heslegrave (BH)	The Forestry Commission
Lynn Melling (LM)	Energy Saving Trust West Midlands
Phil Beardmore (PB)	Groundwork West Midlands
Robin Mager (RM)	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Shelley Howard (SH)	Environment Agency
Chris Blakely (CB)	West Midlands Regional Assembly
Kate Warburton (KW)	National Trust
Mark Hudson (MH)	Government Office West Midlands
Chris Parry (CP)	West Midlands Wildlife Trusts
Linda Ridgley (LR)	Warwickshire Rural Community Council

### Apologies

Simon Wright (SWr)	Energy Saving trust
Jeff Edwards (JE)	Natural England
Justin Milward (JM)	The Woodland Trust
Rosie Paskins (RP)	West Midlands Regional Observatory
Paul Redfern (PR)	Severn Trent
Simon West (SW)	The Forestry Commission
Amanda Pearce (AP)	Natural England
Amanda Smith (AS)	English Heritage
Dave Ward (DW)	Sustainable Development Officers Network

## 2. Minutes from the last meeting

- The minutes from the last topic group meeting were approved with the following actions:

## Actions

- AS to present on WM Farmsteads Landscape project (on agenda for September meeting)
- Environmental Infrastructure event, MS to follow up with ON. BH suggested it could link with the DAG work on Environmental Infrastructure. However, this work is not finished yet. BH will keep the group updated in the progress of this work. MS to set up a small subgroup to decide the next steps once the DAG work is finished.

### 3. National Performance Indicators

- PC mentioned that no update can be provided at this stage regarding the National Performance Indicators. We will need to wait and see what the new government outlines about the National Performance Indicators.

### 4. Topic group news

- MS mentioned that the Environment Agency issued their [5 year Corporate Strategy 'Creating a better place 2010 - 2015'](#). In addition, [regional contributions](#) were also published. The Environment Agency is also planning to re-launch the webpage of the State of the Natural Environment in the West Midlands during the summer.
- SF mentioned the following Low Carbon work that the Observatory has recently published:
  - [Low Carbon Economy in the West Midlands](#) - regional report and local authority profiles
  - [City Region: opportunities in the low carbon economy](#) - City region report and local authority reports
  - [Understanding the regional index of sustainable economic well-being in the West Midlands](#)
  - [West Midlands climate change action plan monitoring report 2009-2010](#)
  - [West Midlands greenhouse gas emissions monitoring report 2009-2010](#)
- NS mentioned that the Observatory recently published [a resource guide for Local Economic Assessments in the West Midlands](#).
- BH advised that the Forestry Commission, being a National Department, is engaging with the new government. Main priorities include the low carbon economy, the woodland carbon taskforce (woodland creation), and green infrastructure.
- LM advised that the Energy Saving Trust West Midlands will publish shortly a report about the current state of microgeneration in the West Midlands.
- PB mentioned that Groundwork West Midlands is currently going through some restructuring. However, they are still delivering the traditional landscape level projects, future jobs fund, climate change projects around Birmingham and the

Black Country. They also commissioned a piece of research to evaluate community based climate change projects in Birmingham.

- LB advised that the Warwickshire Observatory is currently working on the Quality of Life Report. It is expected to be finished in September so it can then be used in the Local Economic Assessment.
- RM mentioned that Shropshire Wildlife Trust is involved in gathering data. From Local Authority funding cuts it seems that they might also conduct some community strategy work.
- SH advised the Environment Agency has been producing regional evidence base but it is still pending publication.
- CB also mentioned a piece of work produced with [White Young Green Group \(WYG group\)](#) on key environmental opportunities in relation to the West Midlands' strategy and that there will be a seminar on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

CB highlighted the following announcements from the Coalition document:

- Abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy
- Reform of the planning system
- Local councils will have more involvement in housing and planning

CB also updated the group around the [West Midlands Leaders Board](#) and the [Strategic Policy Priorities](#):

- Improve the economic position of the West Midlands so that businesses can grow and prosper
  - Show local government's leadership role and ability to work collectively
  - Improve the image and reputation of the West Midlands
  - Maximise the effectiveness of local government
- KW mentioned that the National Trust is restructuring. Their [new Strategy](#) was published in February and as a result the East Midlands and West Midlands regions are merging into one Midlands region.
  - PC mentioned that the region has now a set of environmental priorities agreed by DAG. These were developed through workshops and they set high level challenges for the region:
    - Significantly improve the worst environments
    - Enhance and improve environmental infrastructure
    - Reconnect landscapes

It is the first time that we gather the relevant environment evidence base in one place.

PC also mentioned that the Climate Change Action Plan is been review and any updates will be shared with the group.

- LR highlighted that there are several community projects aiming to deal with climate change (such as community electricity generation, growing their own food and transition towns). More detail of these projects can be found in the [Warwickshire Climate Change Partnership](#) website

**Action**

- PC to share the document collating the evidence base around the Regional Environmental Priorities as soon as it becomes publicly available.

**5. 2010 - 2011 work plan**

MS asked the group for any thoughts around the group's work plan and whether it needs to be updated. He asked the group to identify anything missing, including whether the group is engaging with the right organisations.

PC suggested that the group focus on communicating the existing evidence base to the new national policy audience.

MS requested that each of the members reflect on the things that would like to take away from attending group meetings what each member can offer to the group.

**6. Date of future meeting**

**Action**

- SF will check with ON the date for the next meeting.