

## North East Local Nature Partnership 2018: Natural capital steering group Meeting Minutes

**Date** 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 **Start time** 14:00 **Finish time** 16:00

**Location** Salvus House, Aykley Heads, Durham, DH1 5TS

### Attendees

Mike Pratt – Northumberland Wildlife Trust	Jim Cokill – Durham Wildlife Trust	Philip Baker – Banks Group
Graeme Warren - EA	Lydia Speakman – Natural England	Stuart Timmiss – DCC
Claire Thompson – Capability NE	Prof Alister Scott	Geoff Hughes – LAF
Paul Black - BrightWater		

### Apologies

David Feige – Northumberland Council	Brad Tooze – Natural England	Steve Bhowmick – DCC
Dan Hattle – Sunderland Council	Neil Wilkinson – Gateshead Council	Andy Smith – Intimation

### Agenda

Item	Description	Who	Time
1	<p><b>Welcome and introductions</b></p> <p>Chair welcomed attendees and thanked them for making the effort to attend this additional meeting.</p> <p>Purpose of the meeting is for the NEENP executive to collectively move the natural capital agenda forward and do so in context of the 25 Year Environment Plan. LNPs were created for this reason to bring together relevant stakeholders under a regional/ sub regional priority. Our role should be to increase understanding and knowledge of natural capital and its components to support delivery of our vision to Achieve Environmental Growth.</p>	Mike Pratt	10 mins
2	<p><b>Defra update on natural capital metrics</b></p> <p>Slides guided this overview however visibility was poor on the projector, but individual copies couldn't been given as unapproved.</p> <p>It is this government's ambition to leave our environment in a better state than they found it. Natural capital will now play a central role in achieving this ambition. Defra has been on a long journey in adopting the natural capital</p>	Claire Thompson	20 mins

approach, a one that start in 2011 with the National Ecosystem Assessment. Defra 25 year goals

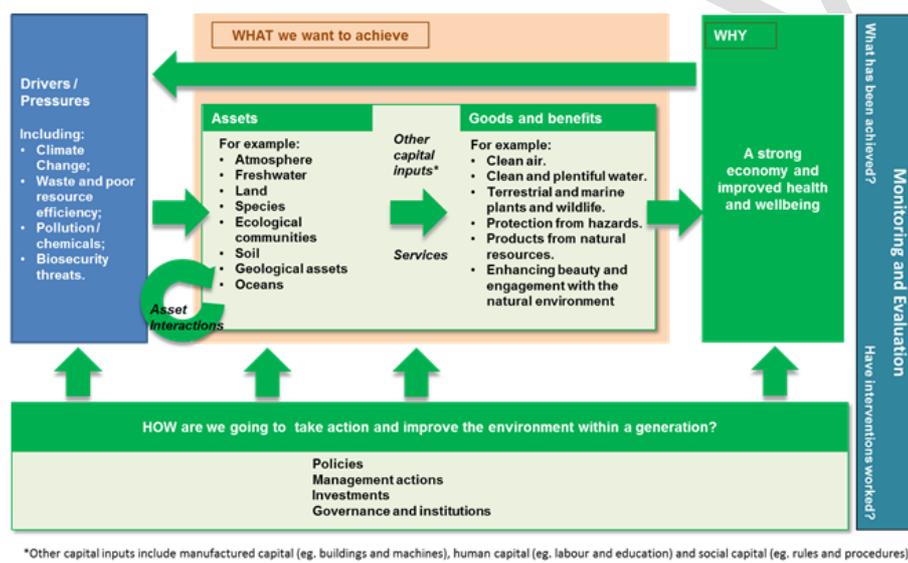
We will Achieve:

- Clean air
- Clean and plentiful water
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

We will manage pressures on the environment by:

- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Minimising waste
- Managing exposure to chemicals
- Enhancing biosecurity

Defra intend to manage the environment through the concept of 'natural capital'.



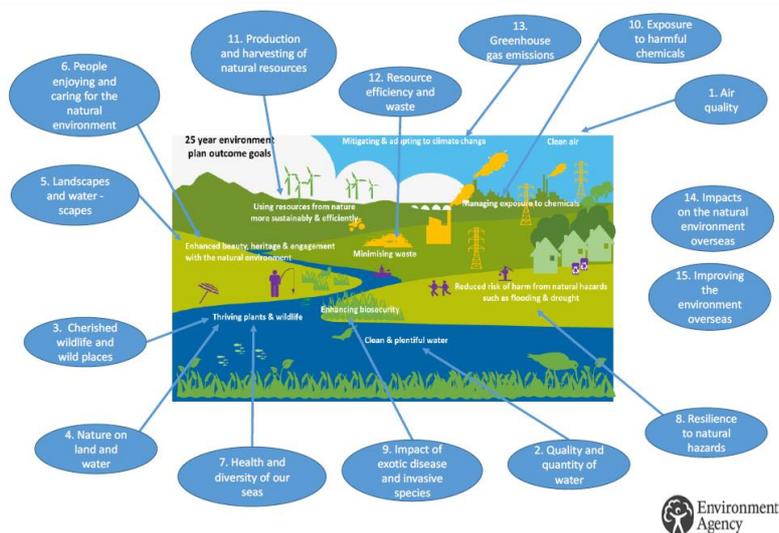
The success of the 25 year plan will be evaluated through indicators or metrics. They will enable the complexity of the environment to be understood and allow Defra to:

1. Understand how the environment as a whole is changing – the pressures, the state of assets, and the flow of benefits.
2. Assess the effectiveness of our policies and show we are delivering our domestic and international commitments
3. Inform decision and promote action within and outside of government, locally and nationally.

A draft indicator framework has been developed and consists of 65 System Indicators (65SI) that are sub sets of 6 Natural Capital Assets. The 65SIs measure change in:

- Pressures on natural capital
- The state of natural capital assets
- Services and benefits flowing from natural capital

Then a subset of 15 headline indicators will give an overview of progress and for communicating environmental change and progress towards the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan.



### Selecting criteria

Based on 7 considerations:

1. Relevance
2. Sensitivity
3. Availability & timeliness
4. Comparability & scalability
5. Accessibility & clarity
6. Coherence
7. Statistical & methodological quality

6 natural capital assets include: Water, air, mountain and moor heath, woods, farms, towns and cities and seas. Associations to pressures, the condition of the assets and benefits derived from them are then identified/ linked to show the interconnectivity of actions and decisions.

### Questions

#### Clarity and coherence of the framework

- Does the proposed framework describe the environment in a meaningful way?
- Are there gaps in the headline indicators and / or system indicators and how can you help us fill those gaps?
- Is the overall number of headline and system indicators appropriate? Are there too many or too few?
- How might you use the framework and which aspects of it you see as being particularly important?

#### Data sources

- Is it better to combine multiple data sources within summary indices or to be more selective about which data to present and assess?
- Do you possess data which is relevant to the framework and could be shared to update any of the proposed indicators?
- What is your view on the balance and scalability between local and national levels?

	<p>Metrics are still in development, with launch anticipated for April 2018, however leaving the EU may cause a delay.</p> <p>At the stage the executive felt the metrics process to be a little complicated but acknowledge it is an attempt to better understand what we have and the impact (positive or negative) our activities have on natural assets.</p> <p>Questions around data, the quality of existing data ability and resource to collect new data and have been forwarded to Defra.</p> <p>NEENP role will be to frame the metrics and their use to support environmental growth and around issues that immediately concern stakeholders.</p> <p>Worked examples will be distributed to support the launch and implementation.</p>		
3	<p><b>Natural Capital</b></p> <p><i>NB: Below is a summary of collated discussions relating to the natural capital agenda</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Checking understanding</b></li> </ul> <p>The natural capital concept is constantly evolving and is the direction of travel for UK government. Natural capital (stock of the environment) and the ecosystem services that flow from it are transforming the way people see and value the environment; from a constraint to be overcome to an asset that can deliver multiple benefits to economy, society and the environment.</p> <p>If the environment is an asset, then to deplete it is not economically sensible of acceptable, as depreciation is inappropriate use. There are two forms of natural capital; renewables and non-renewables. Natural capital forces us to think about how we use the existing capitals and to compensate those who can't i.e. future generations. 70% of land use in the UK is for farming and this makes it the most natural capital intensive activity (Heath &amp; Harmony White Paper). Land use change will become a big topic.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment-policy-statement-2018/health-and-harmony-the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment-in-a-green-brexit-policy-statement">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment-policy-statement-2018/health-and-harmony-the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment-in-a-green-brexit-policy-statement</a></p> <p>Under the government Agriculture Bill public money (for public good) will be spent on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enriching wildlife habitats</li> <li>- Preventing flooding</li> <li>- Improving the quality of air</li> <li>- Soil and peat</li> <li>- And planting trees</li> </ul> <p>Using the natural capital approach is no different to operating any other business, you know your assets and liabilities and what activities you plan to undertake to reduce and enhance. The natural capital approach can be undertaken at any scale, from landscapes to tenant farms and development site. What is key, is understanding what assets will be measured, their condition and benefits derived and to show interconnectivity of actions and therefore influence decision making. This is standard practice in other sectors and is simply about knowing what you have, measuring change and demonstrating improvement and if no improvement then doing it differently.</p> <p>Natural capital for our purposes can be distilled down into 4 areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mapping</b> – knowing where natural capital is, and where opportunities and constraints are.</li> </ol>	All	60 mins

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Data</b> – what we have the abundance and quality.</li> <li>3. <b>Case Studies</b> – Local examples of different aspects of natural capital</li> <li>4. <b>Policy</b> – national into local with consistency and coherence across the region to ensure landscape connectivity.</li> <li>5. <b>Accounting</b> – this is metrics for measuring changes in assets or can be triple bottom line accounting used by the likes PUMA (which they have been doing since 2010).</li> <li>6. <b>Creating markets</b> – payment for services from nature.</li> </ol> <p>- <b>Role NEENP</b> The NEENP needs to translate government policy and the Natural Capital Framework and make it relevant to our sub-region. Be a knowledge exchange broker and look to develop local case studies and bring additionality. The role of the NEENP is to influence and set a coherent methodology for the natural capital concept.</p> <p>- <b>Opportunities &amp; Challenges</b> Natural capital is an opportunity to make informed environment decisions, with the scope to make changes over time to deliver the best outcomes for people and nature. Is an opportunity to really understand what we have, what is at risk and what a at regional level can be done in partnerships with industry and communities. Chance to deliver on our vision for environmental growth as a mechanism can be developed to build up our natural capital and biodiversity with investment from those that impact on it or require its services. Net environmental gains is enshrined in planning policy. NEENP needs to work more closely with planning teams now to checking understanding of the requirement including implementation and metrics. Challenge is that natural capital is still evolving and more information from government is unlikely before June 2019. Resource and funding to deliver the work. Mind set change, the environment is not a nice to have side issue but is to be truly integrated into decision making. This is going against the last 8 years of how decision makers have viewed the environment. Land use change in relation to farming payments could be both an opportunity and a challenge. Protected landscapes may make change difficult and inappropriate land use could be problematic. The opportunity for the NEENP to be on the front foot to guide the visioning of what the landscapes of the future could look like.</p>		
4	<p><b>Next steps</b> Several actions are required to start the process of preparing for the natural capital approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an asset map of the region. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. EOI to HLF</li> <li>b. Liaise with councils and Defra on plan to develop natural capital asset map and host workshop for senior management.</li> <li>c. Distil this into a visual piece to engage the wider public – digital or AI experience?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	Mike Pratt	20 mins

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Data workshop to better understand what we have, where the gaps are, how to share data better and what assets do we want to measure. – NEENP staff?</li> <li>3. Develop local case studies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. BrightWater project – Natural capital for river restoration or in a farming context - Jim Cokill &amp; Paul Black.</li> <li>b. Banks Group – Natural Capital Planning Tool – Prof Scott &amp; Philip Baker.</li> <li>c. NWL – SUDS – Graeme Warren.</li> <li>d. Durham County Council – developer project – Stuart Timmiss.</li> <li>e. Highways England – assess natural capital of routes – Graeme Warren/ Lydia Speakman.</li> <li>f. Look to develop one of the above further to a project of national significance.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Planning teams: NPPF and net gains – S. Bhowmick &amp; S. Timmiss</li> <li>5. Gateshead – natural capital and deprivation – C. Thompson to check with Neil Wilkison</li> </ol>		
5	<p><b>AOB</b> Imperative that the executive lead on the next steps due to current resource constraints in NEENP.</p>	Mike Pratt	10
6	<p><b>Next meeting and close</b> Next executive meeting is 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Natural capital steering group next meeting tbc – likely link to Dec 13<sup>th</sup> meeting</p>	Mike Pratt	Close