

3rd January 2018

North Devon Landscape Pioneer Natural Capital Approach

Aims

The natural capital workstream of the landscape pioneer seeks to apply a natural capital approach to decision making within the North Devon biosphere. We aim to investigate if this approach could improve decision making in the North Devon natural environment and to provide feedback to the Natural Capital Committee on the application and development of this approach.

We do not see the Natural Capital Approach as a replacement for traditional reasons for investing in the environment, but rather an addition to it. We think that the Natural Capital approach has the potential to improve decision-making because it focuses on benefits to people and because it focuses on the state of the natural environment to provide those benefits. In doing so it generates useful additional arguments for investment in the environment and useful additional information for managing it. We are aware of the risks of making decisions based only on the environmental benefits we can currently value. We are also aware that economic decision-making tools can be unhelpfully short-term when thinking about the natural environment. For that reason we are seeking to build evidence for interventions which deliver healthy ecosystems and protect biodiversity for the long term.

What we have done so far:

1 Set out the questions

We developed a spreadsheet which set out everything you would ideally like to know about Natural Capital in North Devon. This took the whole area of the biosphere and split it down into 8 broad habitat types. For each habitat type we wanted information about the quantity, quality, trend and trajectory of each ecosystem service provided by the habitat. We were also looking for any information about how much the different ecosystem services were worth.

2 Collate best available answers

Before, during and after the summer workshop we collated together the best available evidence about the ecosystem services provided by North Devon's natural environment. We used the EFTEC reports, a selection of biosphere reports and data, for example the biosphere ecosystem assessment, as well as work done by Her Majesty's Treasury, which collated and apportioned public and private sector investment in the environment. We also looked at data from the Environment Agency, the Government Open Data Base and Natural England data, for example SSSI condition data. We were only able to use publically available data as we had no funding to buy private data and wanted to be able to share all results openly. We also gave the data objectivity ratings to show levels of confidence in different pieces of information.

3 Prioritise eight problems

We started the October workshop with a list of ecosystem service and habitat pairs prioritised by value, trend and condition (see below). At the workshop we discussed these pairings, attendees had the opportunity to challenge the top 8 and we finished the workshop with a reviewed top 8 list (see final pairs below).

Pre-workshop Pairs	Final Pairs
Improved pasture – water purification	Improved pasture – water purification
Arable – water purification	Arable – water purification
<i>Arable – recreation & tourism</i>	Culm grassland – water regulation
<i>Permanent Grassland – recreation & tourism</i>	Coastal margins – tourism & recreation (and cultural)
<i>Deciduous Woodland – climate</i>	Woodland - climate
Deciduous Woodland – water regulation	Deciduous Woodland – water regulation
Improved Pasture – climate	Improved Pasture - climate
Permanent Grassland – water purification	Permanent Grassland – water purification

Because we are experimenting with a new approach we would like to progress our workstream with this set of 8 priorities.

What we are going to do next:

4 Roots cause Analysis: February Workshop

We will produce a roots cause analysis for each of the eight selected problems (and possibly some additional ones). Root cause analysis involves defining the problem, then working back to consider all factors creating or exacerbating the problem, it looks at the “root cause” for issues and will help us to understand the whole system and hopefully highlights a range of potential interventions. This will be done at a February workshop with partners with follow-up work afterwards.

5 Selection of interventions: 2 day participatory decision making workshop (May)

We will bring the analysis and a long-list of potential interventions to a 2 day participatory decision-making workshop in May. We will prefer interventions which change the system rather than just dealing with symptoms and prefer interventions which deliver for whole ecosystem health and biodiversity rather than narrowly delivering for a single ecosystem service.

6 Economic case for interventions

We will then ask consultants to work up economic cases for our preferred interventions (primarily cost-benefit analysis based).

7 Sell interventions

We will then have investment or change cases which the biosphere group of environmental partners can 'sell' to national and local stakeholders and investors.

Summary

The intention is to take the reviewed set of 8 priorities of understanding the root cause for these issue, what interventions would successfully address them and then develop the economic investment or change cases, which we can then sell to national and local stakeholders and investors.

We are in a unique position to take part in testing a natural capital approach to influence and shape government policy. We look forward to trialling this approach with you. It will need active buy in and support from all of you as North Devon partners. From this point onwards we would like to maintain continuity of engagement from organisations to maximise our impact. We will be asking for the same individuals from partner organisations to engage with the trial as we go forward.

What we would like from you:

- Any comments on our progress and plans.
- Your nominated contact(s) (1 or 2 who will attend all telecall meetings, the two workshops (February 1 day and May 2 days).

We would like to receive both of the above by the **17th of January 2018**.