

## **Ecological Networks in southern protected landscapes:**

### **Why, where and how?**

**10:30am - 3:40pm, 20<sup>th</sup> September, Billingshurst Village Hall**

Conference Report

This conference aimed to provide a seminar and discussion workshop for those involved with developing *Nature Improvement Areas* bids (current or future) as outlined in the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP). The emphasis is on southern England; from Bodmin to the Broads. The conference was jointly run by the Campaign for National Parks and the Sussex Wildlife Trust, with support from Natural England and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Further information can be downloaded here:

<http://www.cnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/Thinkbiginprotectedlandscapes.pdf>.

### **Ecological Networks in a Changing Climate**

Prof Chris Thomas, Dept. of Biology, York University

His discussion was focussed around the movement of species as land-use and climate changes. Main points were:

- General improvement for species with fragmented habitats and also those who can increase range due to climate change.
- On average species are shifting north approximately 1-3km per year; this is average across all species but this varies considerably according to mobility of species and its range.
- There is a need to deliver specialised habitats; field margins managed for wildlife do not create corridors for all species.
- There is a need to create closer suitable habitats for those species which can only travel short distances. Mobility of species must be considered for its own applicable ecological networks.
- Look to create variety across topographic habitats, thereby creating micro-climates, and helping to deliver climate change resilience.
- Non-natives are establishing and are increasingly likely to do so.

### **Ecological Networks: How is Government responding to the challenge?**

Robin Mortimer, Director for Wildlife, Landscape and Rural, Defra

- There has been a major decline of Ecosystem Services (ES) over the last 60 years; representing both habitat and species loss.
- 30% of ES are still in decline; the Government is committed to halting this by 2020.
- Current networks are vulnerable to risks such as climate change and demographic trends.
- Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) are the Governments proposed way to deliver these improvements; each site being 10k-50k hectares which have been planned and delivered by local partnerships.
- The NIAs competition is open now and Defra has committed £7.5m to establish 12 pilot areas.
- Alongside NIAs are Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and applications for this programme are also open now with the expectation of announcements in summer 2012.
- £1m has been pledged by Defra to assist the development of LNPs. They anticipate LNPs working with Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) as an important part of local economic growth strategies.

- “Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services” has just been published. Main outcomes:
  - o 90% of priority wildlife habitats in recovering or favourable condition
  - o Bigger, better and less fragmented habitats including an increase of 200k hectares of priority habitat extant
  - o At least 50% SSSIs in favourable and 95% in recovering/favourable
- Defra see a bigger role for National Parks (NPs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) becoming exemplars of an integrated approach.
- NEWP Designated Landscapes Forum has been established to maximise benefits to look at unique opportunities for delivery.
- Broader Governments issues and their links to Defra are:
  - o Planning reform – Defra suggest highlighting why ecological resilience is important in the NPPF consultation
  - o Future of CAP (2014-2020); vital funding resource
  - o Growth agenda; rural growth review underway

### **Why are ecological networks important for local people and visitors?**

Tony Whitbread, Chief Executive, Sussex Wildlife Trust

This talk focussed on the benefits, or ES, delivered by landscapes for the benefits of people. Also he discussed what benefits there are to be gained by improving these ecological networks both in quality and quantity.

- Support ES are the bedrock for all other ES, ie. the water and carbon cycles, soil formation and nutrient cycling all provide the materials for other ES to exist.
- SWT have been using their mapping to overlay data and their current priority areas; Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) in comparison to water service protection zones and Towns Mapping in relation to delivering higher cultural ES.
- Ecological networks are about linking people to the environment as well; with the public having a greater knowledge, understanding and care for the natural environment protection and improvement will be achieved faster.

### **How could ecological networks help to support farming and land management, and vice versa?**

Sebastian Anstruther, estate manager in South Downs National Park (furthermore, member lead for biodiversity, landowner and organic farmer)

Sebastian spoke off-track as a farmer first and not under the banner of the new National Park. South Downs National Park currently has no planning policies as the newest of parks and is therefore in the process of collating data and evidence and consulting.

- As a landowner he cares deeply for the environment but needs to ensure he ‘follows the money’ to protect the farm for the future and his children.
- Farmers historically have followed poor practice but this was under advice from Government and they will again follow new advice.
- There are opportunities for Government/NGOs to work with the private sector but needs these partners to come to them, ideally with funding to create opportunities and lower risk.
- Farming is making anything from the land, including delivering habitats or species, but it needs more money than would otherwise be produced by traditional crops.
- View is based on financial decisions only; looking to future generations and the long-term.

## CASE STUDIES: Sharing examples from other protected landscapes

- 1. Exmoor Mires Project**, David Smith, South West Water  
Private sector drive to reduce ongoing costs of works by undertaking natural restoration of landscapes to protect quality of water supply. Resources relating to this can be downloaded here:  
  
Natural England:  
[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/Final%20Exmoor%20Mire%20project\\_tcm6-19381.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/Final%20Exmoor%20Mire%20project_tcm6-19381.pdf)  
Exmoor National Park:  
Webpage – <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/environment/moorland/mire-project>  
Review of project – [http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/123371/mire\\_review\\_exec\\_summary\\_and\\_recomendations.pdf](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/123371/mire_review_exec_summary_and_recomendations.pdf)
- 2. Ecosystem service pilot projects**, Stuart Clarke, Natural England  
Largely linked to water utilities and the Asset Management Plan 5 (AMP5) for the period 2010-2015. Predominantly the approach is used to improve water colour and quality by restoring and improving management in water catchment areas. Combines private (capital) money with agri-environment (public revenue) funds to deliver projects and monitor the outcomes via value planning scenarios. Once calculated the benefits of such schemes are clear; Business-As-Usual (BAU) scenarios deliver a loss to society of between £2.03-5.20 for every £1 spent, whereas environmental improvement schemes delivered benefits worth £1.31-2.96 per £1 spent.
- 3. Wild Purbeck; Landscape Scale Delivery in Action**, Ian Alexander, Natural England  
The heathlands and associated coastal, wetland and farmed habitats of Purbeck constitute one of the richest areas for wildlife in the UK. The partnership involves many organisations to make the rich core of heathlands and wetlands even better, alongside restoration of nearby areas to make a bigger, better landscape.

## Landscape Scale Delivery – A New Idea?

Richard Lemon, Natural England

- Partnerships to deliver the NEWP need to have broad membership; engaging people and businesses.
- Needs to be fresh approaches to linking designations.
- Some of the emerging LNPs are not yet engaged with Health and Well-Being Boards, LEPs, Local Authorities or communities – this must be addressed quickly!
- CASE STUDY: Proposed LNP at Marlborough Downs in landowner led.
- The scoring criteria and terms of condition have now been published on Defra website here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/lnp-fund>.
- Where LNP bids are unsuccessful NE want to ensure these potential partnerships are supported to see if they can become viable and sustainable in future.

**Workshop:  
Scaling it up and making it work**

The workshops focussed around what is working, what more is needed and how this can improve delivery of ecological networks. Main findings include:

- Engagement with people, the public and business, will be critical in delivery
- Much good work exists already but this needs to be taken further out to those of whom it will be important, ie. go to the farm gate
- Educational opportunities to engage children will be important

**Further information:**

Campaign for National Parks: <http://www.cnp.org.uk>

South Downs National Park Authority: [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk)

**Other sources of information:**

Cheshire West and Chester: local government example in practice –  
[http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/environment/srep/nhe\\_econet\\_eointro.aspx](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/environment/srep/nhe_econet_eointro.aspx)

Parliament Office of Science and Technology: Briefing note regarding ecological networks –  
<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn300.pdf>

European Centre for Nature Conservation: <http://www.ecologicalnetworks.eu/>

Convention on Biological Diversity: technical document but with useful illustrations and studies –  
<http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-23.pdf>

Biodiversity Loss and Ecological Network Structure: research paper –  
<http://complex.upf.es/~ricard/divloss.pdf>