

Paper for Nature Connected

Nature Connected position on Natural Capital Net Gain policy

1. Introduction

This paper sets the context for a Natural Capital Approach, proposes a position for Nature Connected for discussion and agreement and outlines some draft policy guidance to advocate to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) (and others).

Nature Connected are asked to consider and comment on:

- The proposed Nature Connected Natural Capital Position.
- Draft Natural Capital net gain policy guidance.
- Comment on products and advice that could support advocacy of a natural capital net gain policy.

2. What is a Natural Capital Approach?

Natural Capital is our stock of natural assets including soils, air, water, wildlife, landscape and resources. These provide the essential and necessary support systems and services for us to survive and thrive. We benefit through the supply of clean and safe water, air and food, natural resources and a healthy natural environment with a sense of place that supports our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

A Natural Capital approach would embed the consideration of the natural environment into policies, strategies, plans and projects. It would enable the full consideration of existing natural capital, the services it provides, the benefits gained and how this could be supported, enhanced and grown so giving a net gain

A Natural Capital Approach would:

- Establish a baseline of the Natural Capital assets, services and benefits;
- Have appropriate policies to support the integration of Natural Capital in decision making and operational delivery;
- Seek to move beyond a minimum of no net loss to a position of net gain;

- Have strategic delivery mechanisms in place to support contribution to improving Natural Capital (stock, services and benefits);
- Have financial mechanisms in place to support the evidence base, delivery mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation;
- Monitor and evaluate the state of the Natural Capital assets, success of policies and support mechanisms.

3. Context

There is a range of relevant international, national context that will be referred to within the proposed guidance for the LCR CA. Some is listed in Annex 1.

Government's forthcoming 25 Year Environment Plan is expected to include strong support for the natural capital approach and seek to protect and enhance the services it provides to society.

The City Region has set ambitious growth and social targets, much of which is summarised in the 100-day plan. The Mayor for the LCR CA has committed to the goal that the Liverpool City Region will become the greenest City Region in the UK. This vision extends to a zero carbon city region target by 2040. This vision needs to work together with our wider economic, social and well-being objectives – they are simply different influences that shape the quality of place that is the Liverpool City Region.

Embedding a natural capital approach within LCR CA policy, LCR Spatial Framework and key strategies such as a sub-regional housing strategy will be key to maintaining and improving LCR wealth of natural assets – the environment we depend on and ensuring development and growth is sustainable as possible.

The LCR has taken some initial steps to considering a Natural Capital approach ie the LNP's Natural Capital Deal proposal; appointment of Gideon Ben-Tovim as the Mayor's Natural Environment Adviser, Gideon Ben-Tovim sitting on the Housing and Spatial Planning Board and Alan's formal secondment into the CA.

The LNP and constituent partners need to move forward in providing support, guidance, advice and delivery to the CA and others. We can do this through further development of the LNP's Natural Capital Deal offer and advocacy of a Natural Capital Approach (including net gain).

4. A Nature Connected Natural Capital position proposal

To ensure Nature Connected are strategically focussed and define the principles and practice we wish to advocate to others we are proposing a NC position on natural capital. This includes biodiversity as a key aspect of natural capital and net gain.

Nature Connected Proposed position on Natural Capital

Nature Connected as the LCR Local Nature Partnership:

- *Strategically supports all in LCR to understand and utilise concepts, policies and practice for Natural Capital net gain as a contributor to sustainable growth and development.*
- *Promotes and supports the maintenance and further development of a shared evidence base for Natural Capital net gain.*
- *Advocates natural capital net gain policy and delivery mechanisms for growth and development (plans and schemes) within LCR.*
- *Can offer support to manage, monitor and report natural capital net gain delivery mechanisms.*

We will enable the above through:

- *Provision of guidance to LCR Combined Authority through Gideon Ben-Tovim, the Mayoral Adviser for the natural environment.*
- *Guide LCR CA on how an embedded natural capital net gain approach can make a key contribution LCR's Green Pillar.*
- *Guide LCR CA on how strategic policy and delivery mechanisms can support natural capital net gain, eg within Housing Strategy and Spatial Framework through the Housing and Spatial Planning Board.*
- *Publication of LCR based natural capital net gain guidance and evidence.*

- *Developing our capacity and capability to help deliver natural capital net gain.*

Natural Capital net gain approach includes a full range of natural capital, the services they provide and seeks to move the LCR from a position of net loss to net gain.

Nature Connected will give strategic guidance in advocating a strategic approach and principles for sustainable growth and development as indicated by support for net gain of natural capital within the LCR.

Nature Connected's position does not limit Nature Connected partners from carrying out their individual roles' in advice, delivery, advocacy and support etc.

5. Nature Connected policy guidance on Natural Capital

This section covers the draft policy guidance we, as Nature Connected, wish to develop and advocate to the LCR CA and others within LCR ie the LEP, Local Authorities, developers and other stakeholders. This will seek to guide others on how natural capital could be embedded within their policies and practice, to deliver net gain of natural capital and so seek greater sustainability with regards to the natural environment.

Policies and practice within LCR should enable sustainable growth and development.

Draft suggested LCR policy on Natural Capital Net Gain

The Liverpool City Region will adopt a strategic policy that increases its stock of Natural Capital and the ecosystem services that it provides to the citizens of our City Region. That means no net loss of our Natural Capital from development projects. And, in our journey to become the greenest UK City Region we set an ambitious target of a 10% increase in our Natural Capital by 2040.

(Alan Jemmett's draft)

A list of suggested products and advice (existing and proposed) that could support Nature Connected advocating a natural capital net gain policy are included in Annex 2.

6. Next steps

- Nature Connected to comment on this paper
- Finalisation of Nature Connected position on Natural Capital net gain
- Further development of Policy guidance
- Barrier assessment (interface with developers/architects) – what stopping it happening
- Development of products and evidence to support our Policy guidance
- Development of engagement plan to advocate Natural Capital Net Gain to LCR CA, LEP, key developers and other stakeholders.

Annex 1 Sources of context

[Agenda 2030 UN Global Goals on Sustainable Development](#) – Adopted at UN in 2015 consists of 17 Goals with 169 targets and 232 indicators.

‘Sustainable Development Goals: progress and possibilities: November 2017’ (ONS 2017) – The Office for National Statistics’ first report on progress made towards measuring the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators in the UK.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/sustainabledevelopmentgoalstakingstockprogressandpossibilities/november2017>

Biodiversity duty – The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) enacted a duty on public bodies to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. See guidance at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity>

[Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network](#) (The Lawton Review) (2010): The review looked at our wildlife sites and whether they are capable of responding and adapting to the growing challenges of climate change. In terms of rebuilding nature the review states that ‘*The essence of what needs to be done to enhance the resilience and coherence of England’s ecological network can be summarised in four words: more, bigger, better and joined.*’

[Natural Capital Committee](#): The Natural Capital Committee was established in 2012 to provide expert, independent advice to Government on the state of England’s natural capital. Produced a how to do it [workbook](#) (April 2017) with 5 key steps identified: 1) Setting out the vision, 2) understanding where you are starting from, 3) building the evidence base, 4) identifying and weighing up your options and 5) implementation and evaluation.

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2012): 'The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development'. Sustainable development has three aspects ie economic, social and environmental. Planning has a role in all of these; the environmental role is stated as '*contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy*'.

Government strategies/plans:

- 25 Year Environment Plan
- [Industrial Strategy](#)
- [Clean Growth Strategy](#)

The 25 Year Environment Plan will set out a plan for the achieving an improved environment. This is likely to be published in January 2018.

The Industrial Strategy sets out the government's plan to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK.

Clean Growth Strategy sets out government's proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy through the 2020s. It explains how the whole country can benefit from low carbon opportunities, while meeting national and international commitments to tackle climate change.

Annex 2 Possible products and advice to support Natural Capital net gain

1. LCR evidence base
2. Wider evidence
3. Advice on available and emerging Natural capital tools – eg Natural Capital Planning Tool (CEEP and University of Birmingham), Ecometric (Natural England. Being developed as an add-on to the Defra biodiversity Metric)
4. LCR Natural Capital Deal
5. A Natural Capital flier for LCR
6. Examples of Natural Capital Policies and delivery mechanisms from elsewhere
7. Examples of what Natural Capital assets could be delivered to contribute to different services and net gain
8. Analysis of barriers to adoption of natural capital approach and green infrastructure measures by policy makers, developers and architects