

People, Place and Economy: NIA Best Practise Network Event

Hosted by the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area
26th February 2014, Northampton

Notes to support presentations, and record of discussion

Over 35 folk with representation from 9 NIAs, LNPs, Local Authorities and other landscape scale approaches met to address the theme of people, place and economy. With eleven presenters addressing a range of issues it made an action packed day of discussion and deliberation.

Thanks to Heather Ball of Nene Valley NIA for shaping and organising a fantastic event.

Key messages and challenges arising from the day

1. Engagement with the planning system is a long term commitment – some gains won't be seen for many years.
2. How do we manage the issues posed by the contradiction of a short term economic model vs long term land use planning?
3. There is a wider communication issue; in order to get support from those in the 'jobs and growth' mind set we need to present simple messages about natural systems. We need to adopt the language of our audience, and present everything in relation to jobs and growth, and tack biodiversity on the end as a by-product.
4. Do we need to lobby central government to overcome the need for constant change in partnerships, strategies and resulting acronyms?
5. Target LEP board members directly, face to face, in order to get support of the LEP for the environment/ecosystem services.
6. Growth and jobs are expensive to deliver; biodiversity is cheap and can be an 'add-on'. There are likely to be opportunities during the implementation phase of the ESIF/SEP.
7. The environment is a box which the economy sits entirely within. We understand this but many others don't even acknowledge that the environment exists. There is some way to go to get this recognition!
8. We need to be valuing what nature *does* rather than nature itself.
9. There needs to be a shift in perception regarding food prices and food origins to allow farmers to deliver functioning ecosystems.
10. The full range of costs need to be considered in a cost-benefit analysis (e.g. not just costs of construction, but costs to ecosystem service delivery and resultant impacts on people).

Introduction – Brian McDonald

A number of recent government policies have highlighted the connection between people and nature, the Natural Environment White Paper being one, it is also a central thread to the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. The planning system needs to link to large scale conservation and the benefits this brings to people, as a key ingredient for land use management and planning.

Nature Improvement Areas are a flagship initiative announced in the Natural Environment White Paper, specifically referenced in the National Planning Policy Framework, and a key component in the Biodiversity 2020 strategy.

This is the fourth Nature Improvement Areas Best Practise Event. This one explores this relationship, between people place and economy.

Heather Webb – Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt) mapping and its role in planning policy in the Nene Valley

Accessible Natural Greenspace is standard to help deliver improved access to greenspace near to where people live. It is less common that you might think. Some villages in the Nene Valley have no provision against ANGSt at all. For example, increasing the size of [Barnwell Country Park](#) to 35ha will take it up to the next ANGSt catchment, likely to attract people from further afield and improve their access to the natural environment.

Planning provision of open space per person varies widely between local authorities, e.g. one in Northants only allows 8m² while across the border in Warwickshire allows 20m².

There is no case-law on the 'directly related to development' test, so it can be difficult to know how far away from a development site an accessible natural greenspace can be funded. ANGSt may provide the evidence required and help guide investment into green space creation and enhancement development may provide.

It takes time to see any changes secured through the planning system.

ANGSt is more palatable to planners and developers, and it has an evidenced origin. The maps are also powerful.

Some sites will reach a carrying capacity of visitor numbers, so new spaces do need to be provided.

Oliver Hölzinger – Implementing the value of ecosystem services in decision-making and planning – experiences from Birmingham and The Black Country

Nature contributes to human well-being.

There has been a historical decline of green spaces in urban areas.

The flow of ecosystem services is important.

The Natural Capital City Tool (NCCT) is a planning tool which tests plans/strategies for land use change for their impact on ecosystem services.

The NCCT is hoped to be transferable to other areas once testing and development is complete.

Andra Stopforth – Using S106, CIL and planning conditions to transform the Nene Valley

The North Northants Core Strategy from 2008 was considered to give a good direction at the time in relation to Green Infrastructure. It is now concluded that it does not give enough direction for planning officers in order to direct developers to appropriate GI projects.

The Biodiversity SPD is being updated to reference the NIA, and to create stronger links to provision of GI outside of the red-line boundary of the development.

CIL is particularly complicated, and has undergone regular legislation changes. It is particularly difficult on small development sites – meeting the 3 legal tests (Is it: *necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.*)

The number of exceptions from CIL is increasing.

Projects must be on the [Regulation 123](#) list in order to receive CIL funding. You cannot receive CIL and s.106 funding from the same development. A robust evidence base which is available to planners is important.

It can be over 10 years until benefits are seen from planning because of the prolonged application process.

Discussion relating to previous 3 speakers

Specific question

Oliver – The biodiversity map just reflects supply, which is calculated based on level of designation of habitat and its size. An equal demand is assumed across the area.

Development

There has been a lot of talk about getting people to nature, what about bringing nature into development?

Infusing natural approaches into urban/all landscapes is vital e.g. recent floods.

Neighbourhood planning gives an opportunity to place developments so as to provide [green infrastructure](#) for existing population.

Tests of soundness for plans/core strategies – we can make representations based on ecological coherence, and use the 'stick' rather than the 'carrot' if plans not addressing ecological coherence.

Links to LEPs/Economy

Short term economic model vs long term land use planning!

Birmingham is making a splash as a '[Natural Capital City](#)'. This has been driven by specific individuals, mainly within the Parks Department. There has been particular support from a City Councillor, and the approach is spreading across departments.

There are good examples from cities across the world. We should reflect what connections we have to these, and see what can be learnt.

Gloucestershire LEP is not receptive to environmental lobbying due to the focus of the board. Need to get the government to lead and promote that the environment is integral to growth. Environmentalists get labelled as trouble makers, when it is bad economic decisions that trouble the environment.

There are too many acronyms! This is causing confusion at higher levels. There is a wider communication issue; simple messages about natural systems need to be presented. We need to adopt the language of our audience.

Keep the LNP lean and targets brief? This seems to be working in Bedfordshire.

LEP officers may be on side, but board members may not be. Need to target specific board members, talk to them directly, and present to them figures relating to jobs and economy.

Are we suffering from partnership fatigue? Partnerships keep changing name and focus. They get a reputation for being transient. The changes lie with Central Government!

Tom Butterworth – The Local Environment and Economic Development Toolkit

Tom highlighted that he was the only one in the room wearing a tie! Talking to LEPs requires you to dress like them as well as speak like them, hence his 'disguise' to cover his ecological background.

There are three steps to achieving getting proper integration of the environment with the economy:

1. The environment exists
2. The environment impacts the economy
3. The economy sits within the environment

The toolkit only attempts to reach step 2, but this is a significant advance from where we are now.

See the LEP network website for a better map <http://www.lepnetwork.org.uk/leps.html> (although the map wasn't working at the time of writing this!).

LEPs are charged with delivering growth and jobs, but their remit keeps expanding. They are still not looking at the whole economy. They are looking at economic impact rather than economic value. The toolkit links to the remit of jobs and growth.

Structural Investment Fund (SIF) has €6 billion over 6 years. There are 10 objectives, including the environment. A European Structural & Investment Funds Strategy (ESIF) must be produced to access this.

Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) must be produced in order to access the Local Growth Fund, which has £2 billion for £2015-16.

Both of the above plans will be finalised for each LEP by the end of March, and implementation will start in June.

Growth and jobs are expensive to deliver; biodiversity is cheap and can be an 'add-on'.

The toolkit doesn't deal with supporting services as these are one step removed from the economy.

Natural Capital (the physical inputs e.g. apples into cider) are often forgotten, as are the requirements for producing the Natural Capital (soil, pollination etc.).

For example, carbon off-setting can result in tree planting, which also contributes to flood management, water quality, GI etc.

Horticulture – pooling all the required facilities into one location allows for the appropriate ecosystem services to be delivered alongside e.g. flood management, energy production from green waste and wood fuel.

There is opportunity going forward during the implementation of ESIFs and SEPs.

Discussion

The output from the [New Anglia LEP is](#) available (via Tom?). Other LEPs are keeping their reports to themselves at the moment, but there is hope that these will be shared at some point.

LEPs should be sharing with LNPs and NIAs.

The toolkit can help to improve relationships, which is a non-tangible output.

LEPs are not elected, but are held accountable through the growth deal. Is there a case for LEP board members being elected? Or would this reduce their 'localness'.

There is no expectation for LEPs to follow the toolkit; they are just required to meet European legislation.

LEPs need to consider indicators of sustainable development.

Jim Rouquette – Mapping ecosystem services & biodiversity with a view to developing payments for ecosystem service schemes

There is a long history of biological recording in the UK, but how do we use this data locally? When it comes to it, some of the data is difficult to get hold of (e.g. birds), and there are big gaps. Are the gaps due to lack of recording effort or genuine lack of species?

The [Ecoserv-GIS](#) tool has less focus on supporting services. It is strong on cultural and regulatory services. The base map is fundamental, and is composed of OS Mastermap layers along with local data on rights of way, habitats, open space etc.

Ecoserv-GIS is also being used in the South Downs NIA.

Mark Everard – Establishing PES schemes

There is an economic dependency on nature.

We all impact on one another via ecosystem services – can result in injustices?

The [land sparing model](#) works in America – large areas of 'wilderness' and population concentrated into cities. In the UK we don't have much wilderness, so need to coexist with nature.

Traditional cost-benefit ratios look at the cost only in terms of construction e.g. the concrete to make a dam rather than the impacts of the dam on other Ecosystem Services.

Should we be using the term 'systems' rather than 'ecosystem services'?

We are valuing what nature *does* rather than nature itself.

Example of a PES – premium on heavy water users to pay the farmers a good living so that they don't need to graze the land so hard and therefore improve water quality.

Payment needs to exceed profits foregone.

Reverse-auction – a fixed amount of money is available, farmers asked to say what they could do and how much this would cost, money is then distributed.

PES v.2.0 is about getting the environment working properly, delivering a range of environmental services.

Optimise across existing budgets; value added across public sector. E.g. highways team clearing ditches along roads of silt which originated on farmland. Better option is to pay the farmers to implement measures to prevent silt entering the ditches in the first place. This has benefits for the farmers in terms of reducing erosion and soil loss, and benefits for the local authority who don't need to clean out the ditches.

Jenny Phelps – Cotswolds PES pilot

The area is a Catchment Pilot as well as a PES Pilot. Jenny was funded through an HLF Landscape scale project from 2002-2007 to investigate the issues in this area. It is a limestone catchment and water quality was the main driver. The Aquifer is failing for nitrate. They are also working to reduce farmers' reliance on oil.

The important point here is that farmers have been involved in a problem-solving setting with the rest of the partners.

Where is the line between cross-compliance and need for incentives to improve ES? Despite 90,000ha of stewardship being established over the last 10 years there are still failures.

'Integrated local delivery' (partnership working) is taking place at the Parish level. People want to take action. Village mapping allows local people to identify the local issues. Voluntary solutions often come out of this e.g. flooding of the village can be prevented by the farmer upstream converting some arable land to grassland. The villagers then want to help the farmer, and may pay a higher price for their produce.

Knowledge has been lost among the farming community on topics such as maintaining soil-organic matter; may be a result of a long dependence on chemicals.

Discussion

How highly is food production rated as an Ecosystem Service? Can it be counterproductive to delivering other services? Water meadows are a good example of providing food and many other services.

Markets only reward 1 service e.g. food production. So farmers (especially smaller ones) who deliver multiple ES through more sustainable practices are out-competed.

Young farmers do want to farm in a different way; but will they be able to because of other market pressures?

Farmers worry about risk and rely on subsidies to reduce the risk. Stable markets are needed to support delivery of ES. NFU is fighting for stability, which often means disagreeing with the approach that many environmentalists propose.

Consumers are the ones that dictate the price of goods, not supermarkets. There needs to be a shift in perception regarding food prices and origins to allow farmers to be able to afford to deliver functioning ecosystems.

There may be an urban-rural divide. In many urban areas people are detached from food production and the demand for cheap food is high. New York is a good example of connecting the providers with the buyers in urban areas, with 30,000 farmers markets across the city.

We don't have economic systems where liability is linked to the product e.g. development on the floodplain.

Martin Wain – wood fuel, woodland management and butterflies

The main target species for woodland work in Morecambe Bay is the high brown fritillary, which requires open woodland on limestone.

The NIA has a target of getting 200ha of woodland into management. Butterflies and woodlands are good for connecting people with nature.

Secondary woodland has formed on neglected pasture on limestone as this is difficult to farm. The NIA is trying to give the woodland a value, so that there is an incentive to manage it.

An 80% rate of grant payment has been negotiated with the Forestry Commission, for Woodland Improvement Grants for butterflies in the area.

Brash has been utilised on one estate; it is bundled and then used to feed a burner that heats buildings on the estate.

A community group is collecting wood that would not otherwise be economic to extract. This is then being logged and given to volunteers and sold cheaply to local people in fuel poverty.

This is providing benefits for the landowners, communities and butterflies. It is also creating connectivity across the landscape.

Mike Jones – Woodland Carbon Code

Carbon code initiated because of the fraud in the carbon units market. There was limited traceability of where the trees were from and whether units had been sold more than once.

There will inevitably be some loss of carbon due to land use change. 1 tonne of carbon = 1 carbon credit.

PIU – promise to deliver a carbon credit. Companies can buy up these to use as and when required.

WCU – physical tonne of carbon, can be used in reporting.

There is an international registry <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-863h7a>

It is possible to reduce the costs in developing a scheme by grouping with other landowners e.g. within an NIA.

Only new woodland creation is eligible, but the type of woodland is not specified.

Other benefits include publicity for the companies who invest.

Potential to extend the scheme beyond pure carbon, e.g. an insurance company may be more interested in buying credits that benefit flood protection as well as sequestering carbon.

Huw Thomas – slowing the flow at Pickering

The project has been running for 10 years, but has gained publicity recently because of flooding issues. The community is very involved, having initially requested hard flood defences for the town. The scheme is developed to give a 1 in 25 year flood event level of protection. A traditional (hard engineered) scheme didn't meet the cost-benefit required by the EA, so alternatives have been looked at to slow the flow at Pickering.

120,000 cubic metres of water is stored in an upstream embanked area, along with Catchment Sensitive Farming delivery initiatives (CSFDI), log dams, woody debris, and woodland creation. Combined, these measures have the same effect as the engineered solution.

The 'Overflow' model developed by Durham University was used to model the scenarios. It is important to avoid slowing the flow in some areas because it may lead to synchronicity in flooding, resulting in higher peak flows.

There is not much financial benefit for the landowner, which has resulted in some farmers pulling out at the last minute. Woodland Grant has been extended as an incentive, and targeted using GIS to the catchments giving the most benefit.

This has been an excellent example of developing a project, public engagement, and delivery.

Discussion

Can the Woodland Carbon Code be extended to other habitats? It has already been rolled out as the Peatland Carbon Code. There is a body of evidence out there relating to the carbon sequestration in other habitats, but this needs to be very strong in order for people to buy into it.

What is sequestration? Permanent land use change, for at least 100 years, e.g. farmland to woodland. Is it likely to change after 100 years? WWI and II both had significant impacts on the woodland resource in the UK; this kind of impact could happen again, but we can only predict so far ahead!

Is it possible to fund fruit trees through the woodland carbon code? These would then allow food production at the same time. Fruit trees are usually widely spaced; they need to sequester enough carbon to make it worthwhile.

There are differences between managing woodlands as a carbon store and for biodiversity. The Forestry Code is used to help guide the location of planting (e.g. avoid deep peat).

Questions were posed regarding the method of calculating the economic case for the Slowing the Flow project – Huw is going to ask a colleague to provide more details.

