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In-House Policy Consultancy

DEFRA LAND USE PROJECT

DEMONSTRATOR CASE STUDIES WORKSTREAM

REPORT

Prepared for Natural England

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DEFRA LAND USE PROJECT
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OVERVIEW REPORT

SUMMARY

1. This overview report brings together the main findings of the Demonstrator Case Studies Workstream, based primarily on 7 case studies. It does not make recommendations, but does highlight issues emerging from the findings that have potential relevance to future policy.

BACKGROUND

2. The workstream examined 7 land use projects over the period November 2008 to February 2009, and reviewed material from a small number of other sources. The summary findings were discussed at a workshop in Reading organised by Natural England on 24 March.

3. The 7 projects, described in the annexes to this report, were:

   A. Wild Ennerdale, Cumbria

   B. Sustainable Catchment Management Project, Lancashire and Derbyshire

   C. Mineral Valleys Project, Co. Durham

   D. Urban Heaths Life Project, Dorset

   E. Humber Management Scheme

   F. Thames Gateway Green Grids, South Essex and Kent-Medway

   G. South Peterborough Green Parks

4. The 7 projects were selected by Natural England and Defra, in consultation with Communities and Local Government and the Government Office for Science Foresight team. The aim was to improve understanding of land use decisions, particularly about multifunctionality but also the motivations behind the project, public perception, how benefits were evaluated, how existing policies helped or hindered achieving project goals, and any unintended consequences or outcomes (positive and negative). The following sift criteria were applied:

   - Projects with a range of drivers, eg from NGOs, community-led, voluntary, mandatory, regulatory.
   - Projects which aim to deliver multiple benefits and integration, ie land simultaneously being used for different purposes, and opportunities for single or complementary land uses delivering multiple benefits, including demonstrating an ecosystems services approach.
   - Projects that cover urban, peri-urban, rural and coastal areas.
   - Projects which are sufficiently developed in life cycle, ie where decisions have been made and implementation has begun, even if not completed.
   - Projects that differ in scale, ie from small to large and complex.

5. This overview report highlights the main findings of potential interest for future policy from the review of the projects. Findings are grouped as follows:

   (a) Characteristics and locations

   (b) Drivers for taking action

   (c) Participants and decision-making arrangements

   (d) Community engagement

   (e) Public perception

   (f) Tensions and barriers

   (g) Timescales

   (h) Benefits, including multifunctional uses and ecosystems services.

   (i) Transferability

   (j) Absent evidence

6. The annexes are not comprehensive descriptions of the projects. The information provided has been selected in line with the aims of the Demonstrator Case Studies workstream. Further information about the projects can be found on their respective websites, identified at the end of each annex.

FINDINGS

Characteristics and locations

7. The selected projects have a presence in all but one of the English regions. They all involve:

   (a) physical changes to the land covered by the project (eg habitat creation or restoration, new access routes, built development); or

   (b) changes in the behaviour of those who manage or otherwise use the land (eg farming practices, visitor activities, community interest), or

   (c) a mixture of the two.

8. The land characteristics vary, principally along a series of scales:

   (a) rural to peri-urban, including some areas experiencing heavy urban pressures;

   (b) high to low proportions of SSSIs;

   (c) high to low proportions of farmed land;

   (d) greenfield to brownfield;

   (e) high to low economic value;

   (f) multi-functional to single use;

   (g) landscape scale to micro-site;

   (h) single to multiple land-owners.

9. All include green space, whether created as part of an urban development or naturally occurring in a rural setting.

Drivers for taking action

10. Drivers behind the projects can broadly be categorised as follows:

    (a) Policy – regulation and guidance

    (b) Policy – incentive

    (c) Organisational or individual ambition

    (d) Opportunity

    These categories overlap and there are mutual dependencies.

11. There is no evidence of local public pressure being a direct driver behind any of the projects, other than the extent to which public policies can be represented as a – largely passive - expression of public opinion. The wider community has followed and contributed rather than led.

Policy drivers – regulation and guidance

12. The principal drivers identified were:

    (a) The regulation of protected habitats and species, and in particular the central government PSA target to have 95% of SSSI land in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. This influenced all projects, particularly in adopting changes to land management practices, though to varying degrees. In some, the need to achieve the target was a key element in the business case to secure funding. Local biodiversity action plans have also had some influence.

    (b) Forestry policy, where the ambition to increase the area of native broadleaved trees has been a key driver in both rural and urban projects.

    (c) Water policy, particularly:

        (i) the development of River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive and the associated land management policies, such as catchment sensitive farming; and

        (ii) flood management, both coastal and inland.

    (d) The government's growth areas strategy requires built development to be accompanied by green space for health, recreation and biodiversity. This has led to sub-regional and local urban green space strategies being developed and implemented, as components of a broader and centrally-driven policy.

13. Other drivers, less central to the projects than the above, include:

    (a) Economic regeneration in areas of relative deprivation.

    (b) Access policy, where the introduction of new rights under the CRoW Act 2000 has generated new requirements to manage and protect landscapes. Although access is a recurring theme across the projects, the CRoW Act has not been a principal driver for any of them.

14. The ecosystems services approach was not directly a major policy driver, partly because awareness of it was not high when some of the projects were designed. However, many of the projects are delivering multiple benefits which form part of ecosystems services (see paragraph 51 onwards).

Policy drivers - incentive

15. Three particular policy incentives are apparent:

    (a) Payments to land managers for providing services, eg environmentally sensitive farm practices through agri-environment schemes, and creation of new woodland through the English Woodland Grant scheme.

    (b) Commercial incentives for water companies to meet water quality objectives by raising the quality of the raw water on the catchment alongside the more expensive treatment measures closer to the supply end.

    (c) Until the current economic downturn, the incentive of profits to be made from built development was a major driver of land use change. Mechanisms such as s106 agreements require part of those profits to be reinvested in providing community or environmental benefits, including mitigation measures.

Organisational or individual ambition

16. Although public sector bodies are constrained by remit and resources in what they can undertake, NGOs and the private sector can have greater freedom. The projects have shown that NGO ambitions to improve conditions for people and for wildlife can have a major influence on the design and delivery of land use decisions. NGOs have been able to contribute technical expertise and delivery skills, where these were either not available or in insufficient supply from other sources.

17. Individuals within organisations are significant drivers. One project which has pursued an unusual integrated approach to land management was initiated by individuals rather than by external drivers. The consequence is that not all of the project models are necessarily transferable to other circumstances (see also paragraphs 56-57).

Opportunity

18. Projects have been particularly influenced by the opportunity of funding and the opportunity of sites.

19. Significant amounts of grant or programme-specific funding have been drivers and enablers for some projects. In some cases it is unlikely that the project would have been able to proceed in anything like its eventual form without the grant funding, although some elements which already formed part of participants' own programmes would probably have gone ahead in isolation. Large-scale funding has usually been discretionary, though some smaller amounts have been triggered by development through s106 agreements. Private sector investment has contributed where the company can see the prospect of a return.

20. The availability of sites has been central to decisions on whether to initiate a project, for example the offer of a redundant sewage treatment site to extend the adjacent nature reserve or the presence of an abandoned railway line linking two communities. Opportunities to improve the condition of sites to deliver additional benefits has also been a driver, for example the re-wetting of blanket bog to improve its capacity as a carbon store and the addition of new wetlands to support biodiversity as part of a flood alleviation scheme.

Participants and decision-making arrangements

21. Participation in the projects took varying forms, the principal roles being:

    (a) *for planning*: decision-making partner, funding body, stakeholder contributor, consultee;

    (b) *for delivery*: decision-making partner, funding body, land-owner or land manager. Stakeholders may also have roles in delivery.

22. The respective sizes of these groupings depended both on the complexity of the project and on the nature of the decision-making partnership.

Decision-making partners

23. Participants ranged across the private, public and third (NGO) sectors. Decision-making partners were categorised as follows:

    (a) Four projects were led by a public sector partnership.

    (b) One project was led by a private sector/NGO partnership.

    (c) Two projects were led by a partnership across all three sectors.

24. Some participants had more than one role. For example, in all projects Natural England had a regulatory role in relation to SSSIs, and in most Natural England was also a well-regarded key facilitator, either as a provider of funds through agri-environment schemes or as an expert adviser and supporter.

25. The role of local authorities varied considerably, ranging from the leadership role, through significant player, to a role limited primarily to exercising regulatory functions. In two projects, many of the local authority functions are carried out by the National Park Authority, and levels of engagement vary according to the issue.

26. All projects were based on some form of partnership mechanism. These varied from exclusive partnerships, where only a small number of landowners was involved and with decision-making limited to them to broader more inclusive partnerships which reflected the range of organisations that had to be directly engaged. In the latter category, there was a difference in the intensity of the partnership, ranging from a partnership which pooled significant resources and took decisions jointly to a looser arrangement where major decisions were taken elsewhere.

27. In practice, and despite tensions (see paragraph 44 onwards), the partnerships have operated with a high degree of consensus. Much of this is due to genuinely shared objectives among the partners. Where perspectives have differed, projects with the room for manoeuvre have steered away from contentious issues.

28. Land managers in the project area were not always engaged in the planning stage. Project partners have worked out plans among themselves, often in consultation with stakeholders but land managers had no privileged position. In one project, where the land managers were central to delivering the changes in land management practices needed for the project to succeed, they were brought in only at the stage after the main planning had been done. Elsewhere, fragmented ownership of land meant that smaller landowners were not directly involved in the design of the project. This appears counter-cultural and has led to varied perceptions of the projects, but has in practice proved effective in delivering project aims and objectives.

Funding bodies

29. Funding bodies exert significant influence over projects, because grants are made in response to a detailed project bid, which defines in advance aims, objectives, deliverables, expected outcomes, etc. None of the grant funders became part of the project governance arrangements, although in some cases projects were required to submit reports and undergo audit procedures before grants were paid in full.

30. Continuing revenue funding comes from two sources:

    (a) Partner organisations, who may contribute relatively small sums to fund a project officer where no grant funding is available.

    (b) Revenue schemes, such as agri-environment schemes, where funding can continue beyond the life of the project provided necessary conditions continue to be met. In this case, the funding agency – Natural England or Forestry Commission – may be part of or closely associated with the project governance.

Stakeholder contributions

31. Particularly where projects have exclusive partnership arrangements, mechanisms have been designed to involve stakeholders in the work. Such mechanisms include local advisory groups, stakeholder briefings, as well as informal communication channels.

Consultees

32. Consultation has played a part in all projects, though in different forms and for different purposes. In some cases, the principal form of community engagement (see next section) has been a consultation exercise; whereas in others consultees have included stakeholders, funding bodies, and expert groups.

33. Consultees have also included statutory consultees, including local authorities and the environmental agencies, as part of the normal processes for land use change or development.

Community engagement

34. Projects have reported a wide range of approaches to community engagement, ranging from informing people about what is going on to recruiting them to work as part of the project.

35. A necessary health warning when discussing community engagement is that the evidence is uncertain on how far “communities” as opposed to special interest groups and/or vociferous individuals have been involved. Those projects that have sought to measure public perception of their work (see next section) may be better placed to make an informed judgement, and the challenge is easier in remote, small communities. However, there are inevitably risks in drawing conclusions where the respondents are largely self-selecting.

36. Methods used to engage communities have included:

    (a) Information-focussed, seeking or offering the opportunity for feedback, eg websites, newsletters.

    (b) Promotional and informative events, encouraging face to face contact, such as guided walks, talks.

(c) Attending meetings of parish councils and other stakeholder groups.

(d) Working with schools, as part of an education programme.

(e) Arranging workshops to tap into local peoples' knowledge and memories.

(f) Formal co-option of community or user groups into the running of the project, eg through a formal advisory group with specific tasks.

(g) Recruiting people as volunteers to undertake specific tasks as part of the project, such as monitoring.

37. One project defined itself as a programme to change human behaviour and consequently placed community engagement as a central element of its work. In addition to using many of the above measures, the project recruited additional wardens to patrol the sites who would speak to people on a one-to-one basis about unacceptable behaviour (eg, dog-fouling, trampling, motor-bike riding). As the police service was a full project partner, stronger enforcement measures were also available.

38. Community engagement has been perceived by some projects to be less important when the issues to be resolved are essentially scientific or technical. For example, community input into the construction of a flood alleviation scheme or of a wetland habitat is seen is adding little value. The reactions of communities to landscape change, particularly where woodland is being created or removed, can be hostile, suggesting there is a distinction to be made between engaging the community in the principle of what is proposed and its technical delivery.

Public perception

39. One project found that lack of respect for heathland was a contributory factor to the anti-social behaviour that led to the sites being damaged by human activity. Changing the perception that the heaths were of no value, simply scrubland for people to do what they liked there including vandalism and arson, was the major challenge for the project. It is illustrative of how important public perception can be when considering land use options.

40. Perception issues have also arisen with plans for increasing the "wildness" of an area. Initial public reaction to the project was to assume that people would cease to be welcome in a natural wilderness, and the project had a significant educational challenge to make the case that people and wildness could co-exist.

41. Many projects reported conservatism among communities and visitors to proposals for change. Paradoxically, the same project that evoked fears that people would be excluded from the wild landscape experienced difficulties with public perceptions that the tranquillity of the valley would be damaged by increased tourism. Conifers were perceived as part of the natural landscape.

42. The gulf between expert and lay perceptions of what land can do was well documented in a study for the National Trust[1]. This compared, for 5 Trust sites in the East of England, the extent of multifunctionality for each site as calculated by experts with the perceptions of visitors. Although visitors commonly recognised the landscape, recreation, biodiversity and heritage value of the sites, there was minimal recognition of their value in providing health, farming, water and climate change mitigation services identified by the experts.

[1] *Green Spaces – Measuring the Benefits*, University of Essex for the National Trust, 2008.

43. Some projects carried out public or perception surveys as one means of evaluating their impact. For others, independent surveys provided information about farmers' attitudes to the changed land management practices introduced by the projects. The results are reported in the annexes, but there are few clear messages coming from them, other than that perceptions change slowly and different people react differently to change.

Tensions and barriers

Internal

44. As noted above (paragraph 27), there has been a marked absence of conflict in the projects. However, progress has been slowed on occasions by tensions, arising from policy differences within a partnership.

45. Of these the most significant has been the divergence of view about the risks of cryptosporidium contamination of the raw water supply by allowing cattle on the catchment. This has been resolved pragmatically between the partners, with further studies in hand to improve understanding of the risks.

46. Other tensions have arisen:

    (a) within a partner organisation over the impacts on the historical and cultural landscape and on current access routes of allowing natural processes to take precedence; and

    (b) between partners where sectoral interests have sought preferential treatment for their own land.

    Again, these have been resolved.

External

47. Particular issues have included:

    (a) Farmers not focussing on plans until they have detailed proposals and can walk round the site to review them.

    (b) Objections by moorland users to a moratorium on burning heather – seen as a normal way of managing moorland - in the interests of reducing peat erosion.

    (c) Objections by conservationists to new woodland said to have adverse impacts on some species.

    (d) Owners of small pieces of SSSI land refusing to manage them in anticipation of receiving conservation payments as an alternative to the landowner exercising extant permissions to carry out sand or gravel extraction work.

Long-term funding

48. The one set of issues that has so far proved difficult to resolve relates to long-term funding. The concerns are:

    (a) Future changes in farm payment and woodland grant schemes which would cause revenue streams currently funding improved land management practices to dry up.

    (b) The absence of long-term funding for the maintenance and repair of newly-created green space, which acts as a disincentive to local authorities in particular to take ownership of such areas.

Timescales

49. None of the projects is a quick win. Gestation and delivery periods vary, but change is measured in years, even decades.

50. The projects provide some evidence about the speed with which land use initiatives can be planned and delivered, though the sample is too small and the variables too many for it to be conclusive. For example, the existence of a policy framework within which projects can be easily located, such as a top-down greenspace strategy, has not speeded up planning and delivery (indeed, the presence of multiple partners and the need to tie in with funding streams may have had the opposite effect). A tightly-managed project with only two decision-making partners and a 5-year funding horizon, was quickly into the planning stages though change on the ground was slower.

Benefits, multifunctionality and ecosystems services

51. All the projects have identified benefits to be realised. Some are in the form of deliverables (eg new woodland, new access routes), some are in the form of new practices and learning points (eg better mutual understanding between fire officers and conservationists) and others are in the form of outcomes (eg, better SSSI condition, healthier communities, improved quality of life).

52. Projects envisage multiple benefits from the same areas of land. Typically, the benefits are, in varying combinations:

    (a) Improved or enlarged habitats to support biodiversity.

    (b) Improved access routes and corridors to connect communities and habitats.

    (c) New green space for biodiversity and human health.

    (d) Better water quality through less intensive farm practices.

    (e) Restoration of degraded or damaged soils, particularly peat, and reduction of erosion.

    (f) Secure incomes for farm businesses adopting less intensive management practices.

    (g) Improved or new visitor attractions, with benefits to the local economy.

    (h) Increased community capacity for self-help, through experience of volunteering.

53. Some benefits are anticipated rather than delivered, and some are difficult to measure. Funders seeking multiple benefits through partnerships are a significant influence on the way in which benefits are identified and sought.

54. What this approach to multiple benefits also suggests is that there is increasing consciousness of ecosystems services, even though it may be expressed in different terms. There is little awareness of how ecosystems services should be valued, and projects have preferred to get on with practical delivery rather than spend time on the issue. However, the costs incurred by projects – particularly over the longer term – is one way into starting to set values for ecosystems services.

55. The wider implications of ecosystems services are also starting to be factored in. One project, currently seeking clearance for a second phase, has altered its aims and

objectives so that the restoration of peat for carbon management as a contribution to climate change mitigation is an explicit objective of the proposal.

Transferability

56. Projects have been set up in line with specific circumstances, to deliver specific objectives. Although many of the objectives will be sought in other areas, the conditions that led a project to be designed in a particular way – availability of sites, funding, people – are unlikely to apply universally. Some of the projects reviewed have unique features. Caution is therefore needed in assuming that project models are transferable.

57. That said, past experience provides a potentially valuable resource to new projects, and many of the projects reviewed have tapped into other projects pursuing similar goals to draw on their knowledge. This information is not catalogued systematically and the absence of a structured approach to sharing learning emerged as an issue at the 24 March Demonstrator results workshop.

Absent evidence

58. The findings have not supported some prior assumptions:

    (a) Administrative boundaries and the need to deal with different authorities have not surfaced as having had significant impacts on the decisions taken by projects. Where multiple authorities have had to be involved, projects have developed successful partnership structures.

    (b) Unintended outcomes – positive or negative - have not emerged as a significant feature, although for some projects the outcomes are not yet clear. As in any project, there have been some changes in plans to react to changed or unforeseen circumstances, but these have been deliberate.

    (c) Policies have not generally been seen as barriers or constraints. As noted above, the projects have treated policies as drivers of action and as opportunities. SSSI designations, for example, have focussed action on particular sites, without any evidence of detriment to non-designated areas - but their presence has also acted as a means of securing funding. The one significant policy barrier is the set of policies and rules around longer-term funding (see paragraph 62).

59. This is not to argue that the prior assumptions are invalid, but simply to record that they have not been issues in this context.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH?

60. Work for the Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme[2] on future land use strategies has identified an emerging body of evidence pointing to the benefits of the ecosystems services concept as a basis for an integrated approach to developing such strategies. The RELU propositions parallel many of the findings of the Demonstrator Case Studies Workstream, in particular:

    (a) The differing spatial and temporal scales on which land use projects operate, noting the challenges in applying results to scales other than that at which information was collected from a project.

[2] www.relu.ac.uk. See in particular *Securing Integrated Land Management: Issues for policy, research and rural communities from the Relu programme,* Dr Alan Woods, January 2009.

(b) The limited conscious application in practice of the ecosystems services approach, particularly valuation.

(c) The importance of motivations of land owners and land managers in decision-making, and of understanding the decision-making processes, including the value of partnership and stakeholder engagement.

(d) A recognition that central policies need to be complemented with local drivers and innovation.

The RELU research projects are expected to illuminate further these and other issues.

61. The RELU analysis argues that policy-making has been carried out in silos and that this is unhelpful in embedding an ecosystems services approach (similar points were also made at the 24 March Demonstrator workshop). What the Demonstrator projects show is that at a local level, people will find ways of working with the grain of existing policies to exploit multifunctionality potential and deliver multiple benefits. The combination of benefits in each case may not be optimal (if the yardstick is exploiting the potential of the land to its maximum) but the reality is that significant benefits are being delivered, despite the perceived absence of a holistic approach to policy-making.

62. Some issues that might benefit from further examination by central policy-makers did emerge from the Demonstrator projects, and were endorsed by participants during the 24 March workshop.

(a) Long term funding to ensure continuation of benefits secured by project investment. This relates specifically to:

(i) funding the maintenance and repair of new green infrastructure, once the initial developer or other funder has moved on: the absence of readily available mechanisms for securing this funding is inhibiting the development of some greenspace. Solutions are available – trusts are one example – but these need resourcing.

(ii) uncertainties about the future of revenue payments to land managers, particularly agri-environment scheme payments to farmers: nervousness that the payments will cease after a farm has adopted extensive and less profitable management practices has deterred some participation.

(iii) funding the continuation of project manager posts, where the need for the role remains to realise the project's benefits.

(b) The extent to which land owners and land managers should be rewarded for managing land so it delivers benefits beyond those currently associated with agri-environment schemes, for example the value of land in carbon management and water treatment.

March 2009

Appendix

GLOSSARY OF KEY TECHNICAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT AND ANNEXES

CRoW Act	The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provided for a general right of public access to open countryside and registered common land, subject to limitations and exceptions. The provision came into force in 2004.
Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG)	A series of formal statements of national government policy which local planning authorities are required to take into account when developing local plans under planning legislation. Being superseded by Planning Policy Statements (PPS)
PSA target	Public Service Agreement targets to which government departments formally commit at the end of each spending review.
Ramsar site	A site listed as being of international nature conservation importance under the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.
Regional Planning Guidance notes (RPG)	A series of formal statements of planning policy for each region, authorised by central government, which local planning authorities are required to take into account when developing local plans under planning legislation. Being superseded by Regional Spatial Strategies.
Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)	Statutory planning guidance prepared by regional bodies and authorised by central government, which local planning authorities are required to take into account when developing local plans under planning legislation.
Section 106 agreement (s106 contributions)	Agreements between local planning authorities and developers, named after the part of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that introduced them, which enable authorities to negotiate the provision or funding of measures by the developer needed to make the development acceptable in planning terms, and subject to other conditions.
Site of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI)	A nature conservation site designated in the UK as being of national significance. Designation is the responsibility of Natural England, acting under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	A site listed as being of international nature conservation importance under EU Habitats Directive.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	A site listed as being of international nature conservation importance under EU Birds Directive.

WILD ENNERDALE

Summary: A project based on principles rather than targets, experimental in nature and without defined outputs to allow natural processes and extensive systems of land management to govern activity in a Lake District valley.

HEADLINES

- Visionary and experimental, going with the grain of sustainability but with no certainty about results.
- Delivered through a partnership limited to the landowners so as to achieve an integrated approach, across ownership and farming/forestry boundaries.
- Some quick wins in re-introducing cattle and removing conifers.
- General community support, though with some residual scepticism among farmers.
- Effective at resolving disagreement with stakeholders through dialogue.
- Creation of baseline information for monitoring change a priority.

PROJECT SCOPE

Location and area covered

A1. The Wild Ennerdale project is located in Ennerdale, a relatively remote valley on the western edges of the Lake District in Cumbria. The valley is 14.5 km long and 5.6 km wide at its widest point, narrowing towards the watershed at the eastern end, giving a total area of 4,711 ha. A central feature of the valley is the lake, Ennerdale Water, measuring 4 km by 1.6 km, with a maximum depth of 44m.

A2. Of the total area of 4,711 ha, the Wild Ennerdale project covers 4,300 ha. This is the land owned by the three partners: Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities plc. The whole area is within the Lake District National Park.

Nature of the area

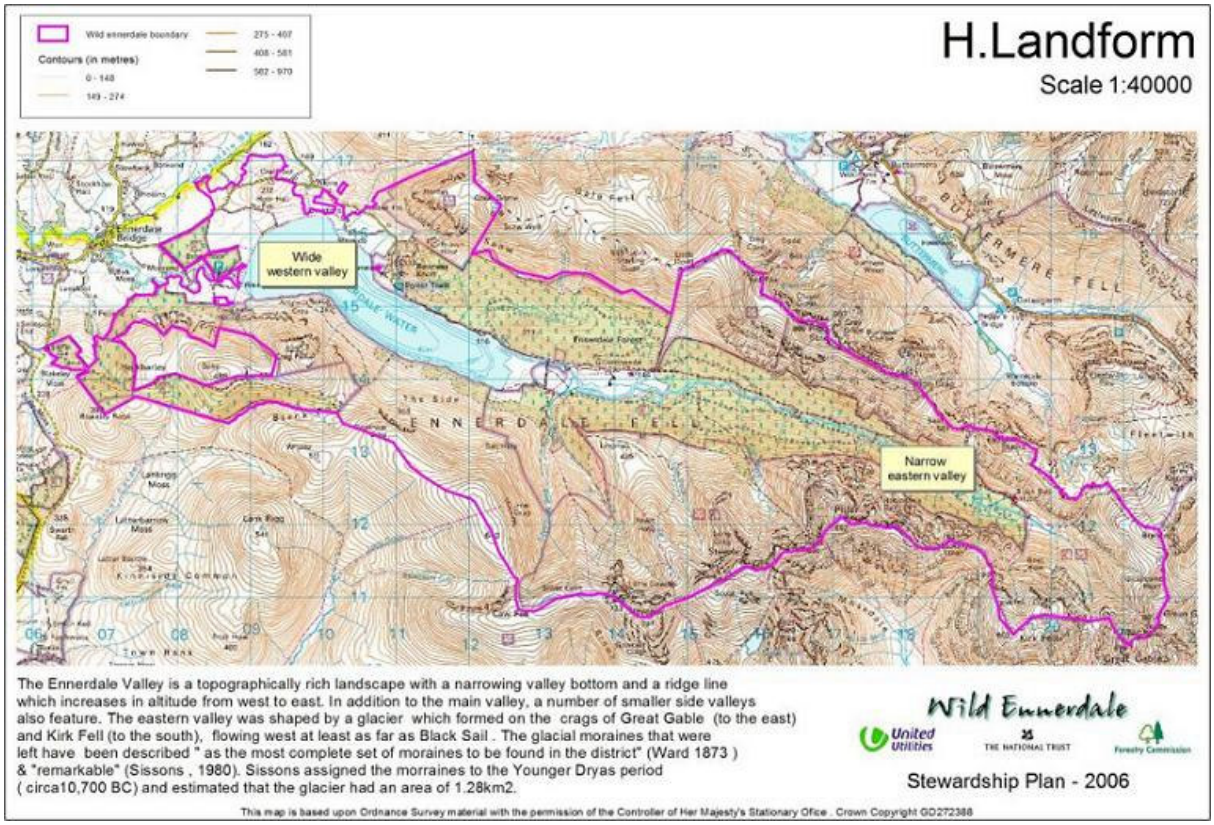
A3. The lake is used by United Utilities as a water supply, principally for the West Cumbria coastal towns and supplying about 60,000 customers. It is fed by the River Liza and mountain becks. The water quality is excellent.

A4. Surrounding the lake is farmland, a few buildings, and mixed broadleaf and conifer woodlands, rising outwards and upwards to some of the Lake District's highest summits. Sheep historically graze on the uplands.

A5. The variation in altitude from 100m beside the lake to nearly 900m on the summits is reflected in a wide variety of vegetation types and habitats. Some sites are designated as important for nature conservation, geology or archaeology.

A6. The valley is only accessible by vehicular transport from the west, with car parking limited to two sites to the north and west of the lake. A private forest track leads along the north shore to Ennerdale Youth Hostel, and continues eastwards up to Black Sail Youth Hostel at the valley head. For serious walkers, the Coast-to-Coast route passes through the valley. The nearest settlement is Ennerdale Bridge,

population 240[3], one mile to the west of the lake. Visitor numbers are limited in comparison to much of the Lake District, and the number of people living and working in the valley itself is very small.



A7. The land area therefore supports, all in modest measures: farming, forestry, recreation, tourism, water supply, and the associated economic activity. In ecosystems services terms, it supports habitats and species, cultural functions (landscape, archaeology), regulation functions (water treatment through soils and vegetation) and production functions (timber, livestock), with potential to do more.

Drivers for the project

A8. The impetus for the project came from individuals rather than communities or organisations. In 2001, the recently appointed National Trust property manager for Ennerdale was charged with developing a management plan for the Trust's land in the valley. He considered that planning would more sensibly be carried out on a landscape scale, and therefore started informal discussions with his opposite number at the Forestry Commission, the other major landowner in the valley. These discussions took place against a background of increasing concern about over-grazing on the uplands (and of inappropriate use of intensive farming methods more generally), and the continued felling of timber for poor financial reward. They recognised the distinctive character of Ennerdale, including its relative remoteness. What emerged was a proposal for a partnership approach to managing the valley, to be known as Wild Ennerdale, with a goal of enhancing its special qualities through allowing natural processes rather than human intervention to shape the landscape, ecology and experience.

[3] Source: Cumbria County Council 2006

A9. Although the reliance on natural processes was unusual, other aims within the approach were consistent with existing and emerging policies, locally and nationally. In particular:

(a) There was growing interest in "wild land", including identification in a Council of National Parks report in 1997 of Ennerdale as a suitable "wild" area candidate.

(b) The 1998 England Forestry Strategy shifted policy away from timber production to managing woodlands for health, recreation and nature conservation. The freedom this gave to individual Forestry Commission areas was important in enabling the Wild Ennerdale proposals to develop with the organisation's support.

(c) The National Trust was adopting more explicit policies to promote what was becoming known as "sustainable agriculture". It had also launched in 1999 its Wicken Fen Vision, which set out a strategy for expanding a small area of Fenland wilderness into a sustainable nature reserve, relying on light-touch management and self-regenerating natural processes.

(d) The 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease was particularly damaging to Cumbria's rural economy, and the regeneration plans made space for alternative approaches to farming and land management consistent with the development of the area as a "green tourism" destination.

(e) Almost half of the project area is designated SSSI and Special Area of Conservation, which requires those designated sites to be maintained in favourable condition.

(f) The Water Framework Directive was forcing moves towards land management measures being decided on at a catchment scale.

A10. The land ownership pattern – two major landowners for the entire valley – offered an opportunity to break away from the functional land management model (eg farming managed separately from forestry, heavy focus on conservation objectives) and develop one based on a ecosystems approach.

A11. There was some initial scepticism within the two organisations, where the project was seen to be challenging accepted norms or creating new risks. Some Forestry Commission officials were concerned at the loss of timber production and the looseness of project control; and within the National Trust the historic landscape and archaeology interests saw the potential for damage to sites arising from the precedence given to natural processes. These concerns were answered by the project, though the process was not swift, and there is now high-level sponsorship for Wild Ennerdale within both organisations.

A12. United Utilities joined the Forestry Commission and the National Trust in 2002, and a Memorandum of Agreement, which formalised the three-way partnership, was put in place in 2003. For United Utilities the involvement was unusual in that it only owned the lake (and a small amount of land for lake management purposes) but did not own the rest of the catchment. What a role in the partnership offered the company was an ability to influence decisions about land management practices and thus water quality in the valley on land it did not own.

Aims and objectives

A13. The Wild Ennerdale project is defined operationally by a vision, supported by a set of guiding principles, rather than through specific targets and outcomes.

Vision:

- To allow the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology.

Supporting principles:

- The sense of wildness experienced by people will be protected and enhanced;
- The valley's landscape and habitats will be given greater freedom to develop under natural processes, allowing robust and functioning ecosystems to develop on a landscape scale;
- Public support and engagement will remain central to the Wild Ennerdale process;
- Intervention will only occur if complementary to the vision, or where a threat to the vision is posed;
- Opportunities will be sought to develop greater public enjoyment and social benefit;
- The historical and cultural assets of the valley will be considered and respected;
- Management and decision making will be focused more at the holistic landscape scale;
- Wild Ennerdale will be offered as a demonstration to others by sharing results and information;
- Opportunities will be sought for businesses that are sustainable within the vision;
- Monitoring and assessment of change will be carried out on a large scale and over a long period of time;
- An element of set-up and higher level intervention may be required to facilitate natural processes, recognising our starting point is influenced by past activity.

A14. In addition, the partnership agreed in 2003 on a set of objectives which provide a rationale and justification for the project.

Objectives:

- To ensure the Pillar and Ennerdale Fells SSSI is in favourable or improving condition by 2010 to meet National targets.
- To provide learning and development opportunities for schools, visitors and the wider public to discover more about the Project and also more about conservation, recreation and wildlife in the Lake District and Cumbria.
- To explore and experiment with new ways of managing at a landscape level and offering our learning experiences to a wider audience. Achieve integrated land management for the whole Ennerdale Valley.
- To promote the partnership of the National Trust, Forestry Commission and United Utilities and the work of the individual partners.
- To encourage and work with other organisations, agencies and landowners

to support the Project and help achieve the objectives e.g. Lake District National Park Authority, Ennerdale & Kinniside Parish Council, YHA, Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre, Cumbria Tourist Board, English Nature, Environment Agency, Friends of the Lake District, Ramblers Association, Tourism and Conservation Project.

A15. The key document for the project is the Stewardship Plan (consciously not a "management plan") published by the partnership in 2006, with the support of English Nature[4]. In addition to the vision and principles, the plan describes the history and importance of the valley, defines what is meant by "wild" and the reasons for establishing "wild land" in the UK, explains the composition of the partnership and provides links to relevant policies of the three organisations as well as to those of stakeholders, sets out a sustainability model for the valley, and summarises the main activities and influences in Ennerdale with actions under each heading.

Activities and influences in Ennerdale

- Conservation management
- Farming
- Forestry
- Natural processes (eg vegetation succession, river dynamics, soil erosion)
- Recreation and access
- Tourism provision and infrastructure
- Transport
- Water extraction

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

A16. The project is governed by the Wild Ennerdale Partnership, made up of local officers of the three partner organisations. The structure and approval to commit resources was signed off by the three organisations at a corporate level, but "head office" involvement is minimal, with the local officers empowered to take decisions. Decision-making is the sole responsibility of the three organisations as landowners, which is the reason given for not extending the partnership board to bring in other stakeholders.

A17. Natural England occupies a distinctive and unique position within the project. Two of the organisation's roles impact particularly on the valley: as the gateway to agri-environment funding; and as the regulator for the areas designated as SSSI. There is strong support for the project within Natural England locally, and the local conservation officer regularly attends partnership meetings. The relationship between the partnership and Natural England is significantly closer than with other stakeholders.

A18. The partnership meets formally between 6 and 8 times a year, provided there is business to justify a meeting. There is regular informal contact between meetings. It employs a part-time project officer, hosted by the National Trust.

[4] English Nature was incorporated into Natural England in October 2006.

Key influences on decision-making

A19. The key decisions for the partnership centre on whether to intervene – by taking action or by encouraging or preventing others taking particular actions – or not in any given situation. The vision and principles set out in the Stewardship Plan provide the framework for making such decisions.

A20. The framework has been shaped by a set of influences, summarised at paragraph A15. All involve human activity. The Stewardship Plan shows how even the natural processes in Ennerdale are impacted by human activity.

A21. The most significant potentially conflicting influences which the partnership has to take into account in moving forward the project have been identified as:

(a) The willingness of farmers in the valley to move further from production-oriented farming towards "conservation-led livestock management". Farmers are in turn influenced by the costs of such management and by the availability of subsidies, whether the single payment or payments under agri-environment schemes.

(b) The uneconomic nature of timber operations in the valley, and the opportunity to replace conifers with native broadleaf varieties. This raises public perception issues about the extent to which conifers are seen as part of the landscape by a generation used to the sight of large conifer plantations on the English uplands.

(c) Linked to this, the perception that the "wild" tag means that people are unwelcome or even to be excluded. In its early stages, the project came up against resistance for this reason, and continues to work hard to explain that people are an important part of the wilding process in Ennerdale.

(d) Paradoxically, initial perceptions that the project was intended to boost visitor numbers and so damage the tranquillity which local people cherished. This raised particular concerns at the Lake District National Park Authority.

(e) Perceptions among some stakeholders that the project was driven by ecological considerations at the expense of measures to conserve the cultural and archaeological heritage.

(f) The designation of part of the area as SSSI, and the attendant obligations about maintaining favourable quality status.

(g) The management regimes on the other side of watershed, in particular by the movement of grazing animals into the project area which is largely unfenced.

(h) The importance of maintaining the good water quality of the lake, which has given rise to the one visible difference of emphasis between the partners: see paragraph A35.

Approaches to decision-making

A22. All members of the partnership regard it as unusually consensual, stemming from the shared vision and commitment of the participants. The effective joint working between the partners has enabled what might have become difficult situations to be resolved quickly. Two examples illustrate this.

A23. First, in the initial stages of the developing the project it became clear that there were uncertainties about the ownership of certain parcels of land – was it Forestry Commission or National Trust? The partners resolved this by concluding that since the valley was being managed as a single entity, the ownership issue was not relevant, and it was set aside.

A24. Second, the absence of specific plans and targets for the area has generated uncertainty about what might happen to areas of the valley, including the SSSI. Part of the SSSI has been notified to the European Commission as a SAC for dry heathland, but the potential exists for this to become woodland under the "natural processes" philosophy of Wild Ennerdale. Natural England's approach to the issue has been cautious rather than strict, accepting that the project would deliver significant benefits that would compensate for any changes to the SSSI.

Community engagement

A25. The partnership has sought to engage the local community in the development of the project, and maintains links through a mix of planned communications and opportunities to meet. This is a key part of the project officer's job.

A26. Engagement activities include:

(a) Community material on the project website

(b) Twice-yearly newsletter; and they offer material to parish newsletters and magazines.

(c) Events, organised by the project or in partnership with other organisations, eg guided walks, canoeing, learning activities.

(d) Talks in the local community (for example to schools, local groups, parish meetings) about how and why the landscape is as it is, generating excitement; and schools come and do practical work on site.

(e) A Wild Ennerdale volunteer group consisting of local people with an interest in the project and a desire to contribute their time and skills through practical project work in the valley.

A27. Overall reaction is said to be positive, though the both the project and the parish council reported conservatism and an underlying nervousness about change. Interest extends beyond the local area.

A28. The local parish council meets the partnership from time and time, and one of the partners is always available to attend parish council meetings. This provides a mechanism for taking community interests into account during operations in Ennerdale, for example an agreement with the Forestry Commission that vehicles used on timber felling work should not pass through the village at school start and finish times. Currently the parish council is in discussion with the partnership about the implications of plans under Wild Ennerdale to improve the experience for visitors, in particular how to deal with the consequences of increased numbers (litter, vandalism, traffic, etc). Feedback indicates that local people value the continued restrictions on vehicle access.

A29. The close-knit nature of the partnership means that there is no direct representation of the local community in the decision-making forum. A Wild Ennerdale Advisory Group first met in 2004, then again in 2007 for a 3-day event to review achievements to date, and which led to recommendations being made to the partnership. Topics discussed included extensive cattle grazing, future farming practices, spruce regeneration, water quality, baseline monitoring and community engagement.

A30. The partners state that they willingly take community and stakeholder views into account in reaching decisions, provided those views are compatible with the guiding principles of the project. Two examples are:

(a) A decision to introduce Galloways rather than Highland cattle, following advice from local farmers.

(b) A decision to proceed more slowly on a proposal to move sections of a footpath away from the lakeside, following community representations.

Evidence base

A31. Key policies and reports are identified in paragraph A9. In addition, the following were influential:

(a) An ESRC-funded seminar series on “Wilderness Britain” (1999-2001) which reviewed the social and environmental perspectives of the “wilderness ideal”

in Britain, with a view to generating policy recommendations for recreation and conservation.

(b) The Land Use Planning Group New Wildwoods Project (2000-03), which identified the potential for developing new landscape-scale native woodlands as a modern equivalent of the original wildwood. The emerging Wild Ennerdale partnership was a case study.

(c) The Lake District National Park Management Plan (2004), which identified the special qualities of the area for quiet enjoyment and personal challenge.

A32. The Stewardship Plan acknowledged that the evidence base was incomplete. Specific actions included taking steps to "develop a better understanding of" such topics as: changes to vegetation, habitats and species; and the economic significance of tourism provision and infrastructure.

A33. Specific local studies were available to inform the Stewardship Plan, for example: vegetation surveys (2003/04), and a historic landscape survey (2003) which served as the foundation for a later report leading to production of an archaeology management plan. Further studies are being undertaken as part monitoring (see paragraphs A42-43).

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

A34. Negative attitudes to the project by local farmers presented a major challenge, and continued careful management is required. A 2006 study for the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency[5] reported mixed views within the farming community about the objectives of Wild Ennerdale, with some support for the vision. Reservations tended to focus in the way it was being implemented, particularly the perceived exclusive nature of the partnership. The project team consider, with hindsight, that more could have been done to engage farmers earlier in the project, but point to work now being done with a local pub[6] to house a shop and post office and to establish a local produce group, all of which should be of benefit to farmers.

A35. Farming practices have also been the source of the one potentially serious divergence of views between the partner organisations. To support viable extensive livestock farming, with less dependence on sheep, the partnership has allowed the re-introduction of small numbers of cattle into the valley. United Utilities policy at corporate level is that because the presence of cattle increases the risk of cryptosporidium[7] entering the untreated water supply, cattle should normally be kept away from water catchments. This is in line with the water industry's advice[8] that contamination is best avoided by a risk management approach in which the sources of contamination are controlled, though the multi-barrier approach to water treatment adopted by the industry includes effective barriers to the organism. The Wild Ennerdale partnership has addressed the issue by commissioning risk assessments specific to Ennerdale, while meanwhile allowing limited numbers of cattle on the catchment. The landowner partners have noted that without the inclusion of United Utilities within the partnership it is unlikely that the issue would have been resolved in such a constructive way.

[5] *Wild Ennerdale: Tourism opportunities for farming and rural communities*, School of Natural Resources, University of Central Lancashire, December 2006

[6] Since the fieldwork was carried out, the pub has closed and been offered for sale.

[7] Cryptosporidium is a microscopic parasite that can cause severe and persistent diarrhoea.

[8] See Water UK briefing at http://www.water.org.uk/home/policy/positions/cryptosporidium

A36. Although relations between the project and the National Park Authority ranger are good, and those with the Authority's head office have improved following a difficult start (see paragraph A21(d)), there is still the potential for disagreement. In particular, the precedence given by the project to natural processes has implications for the maintenance of existing public rights of way. An example is the project's aim to allow the north shore of the lake to revert to a natural state, including removal of the revetment which supports parts of the lakeside path. The project is also unlikely to maintain the track up to Black Sail Youth Hostel in a condition suitable for 4-wheeled vehicles, which presents future challenges for supplying the hostel. Such issues are discussed regularly through meetings with YHA resulting to date in positive results (see next paragraph).

A37. Despite the potential for tension, the National Park Authority, the Parish Council and the Youth Hostel management are supportive of Wild Ennerdale's aims as a serious attempt to achieve genuine sustainability. All recognise that the project compels difficult but potentially beneficial choices to be made, for example in making Black Sail Youth Hostel as self-sufficient as possible (increasing the amount of stores kept on site, developing a small hydro-electric turbine – as already exists at the Ennerdale hostel) and so reduce the need for vehicle movements and energy consumption.

A38. Resources have not been a problem. The partners jointly fund the project officer post, which is key to maintaining progress with the project: there was a loss of momentum during the project officer's absence on maternity leave. Other costs are met as part of the partner organisations' normal responsibilities for maintaining their estates. Seeking additional funds is not treated as a priority, stemming from the philosophy that Wild Ennerdale cannot be sustainable in the long run if substantial additional funding is required. Opportunities do arise, as with a decision by the tourism partnership to pay for a new bridge over the Liza which allowed salmon to spawn upstream.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

A39. The deliberately experimental nature of the project has meant that there are no specified or measurable benefits to be delivered on particular timescales set out in the documentation. The focus is on monitoring change (see next section) rather than plotting delivery against targets. One advantage of this approach is that there is no imperative for funds to flow into the project at specific times.

A40. There are component elements of the project which do – and are required to as a condition of funding – deliver specific benefits. In particular, payments to farmers under agri-environment schemes are conditional on beneficial land management practices being adopted.

A41. The intended benefits are therefore "soft" in nature. They include:

(a) Demonstrating the potential of a "natural processes" approach to land management, which supports the re-creation and maintenance of ecosystems which are resilient in the face of future challenges such as climate change.

(b) Demonstrating the advantages of a partnership approach to the holistic management of an area on a landscape scale.

(c) Collecting data about the changes and learning from them to inform future decisions over the long term

(d) Engaging the local community in adopting sustainable business and lifestyle practices.

(e) Enhancing the wild qualities of Ennerdale for all to enjoy and benefit from.

Monitoring

A42. The partnership has developed a methodology for ecological monitoring. This lists what is to be monitored, the scale/coverage of the monitoring, the methods to be adopted, and the information now available and required in the future. Changes to be monitored are: vegetation (structure and condition), water quality, species (birds, fish, rare plants, deer), cattle behaviour and impacts. Information on weather will be collected so that the relationship between different weather conditions and (for example) cattle behaviour can be explored.

A43. In addition, the project is monitoring the impact of visitors and their relationship with the wildness of the area.

A44. Monitoring is carried out through a mix of contracted work and the use of volunteers. Some funding has been contributed by Natural England.

A45. Initial monitoring is focussed on establishing information baselines, recognising that changes will need to be monitored over decades rather than years.

Evaluation

A46. Although the consensus is that it is too early to assess the impact of Wild Ennerdale, the experience to date has had some influence. The National Trust's principles for their work in the Lake District drew on lessons from Wild Ennerdale, and other projects, particularly in the importance and value of partnership working even where the Trust is the sole or major landowner.

A47. Similarly, the Lake District National Park Authority expects to draw on the experience to date of Wild Ennerdale when developing the next management plan through the National Park Partnership[9] on which all three of the Wild Ennerdale partners are represented.

[9] This is analogous to a Local Strategic Partnership, adapted for a National Park context.

THE FUTURE

A48. There is a consensus that the project has no end point, and there is no blueprint for its future development, only the guiding principles. The present approaches are expected to be maintained, at least for the medium term.

A49. Potential new uses for the valley's assets are being identified by the partners, provided these are carried out in ways consistent with the guiding principles. They include:

(a) Carbon management, through peatland soils on the high ground.

(b) A further micro hydro-electricity generation plant.

(c) Wood burning and wood chip power.

(d) Forest and farming products.

(e) Recreational and tourism benefits from 'wild land' experience

A50. Wild Ennerdale is not immune from external uncertainties. These include:

(a) The future of agri-environment schemes, particularly on the uplands, which will determine in large measure the livestock numbers needed for a viable farm business.

(b) Future demands for water abstraction if new nuclear generation capacity were built on the West Cumbria coast.

(c) Future corporate policy changes among the partners, which led to the loss of the "head office champions".

FURTHER INFORMATION

A51. The project website is at www.wildennerdale.co.uk.

SUSTAINABLE CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SCaMP)

Summary: An uplands land management project targeted on farmers and designed to deliver environmental, biodiversity and water quality benefits by using private funding to lever in additional public funding.

HEADLINES

- Tightly managed time-limited project with clear and frequently quantified objectives.
- Generates multiple benefits from implementing new management practices on specified areas of land.
- Strong policy and economic drivers.
- All spending is regulated, either requiring water industry regulator consent or needing to meet the conditions for agri-environment scheme funding.
- Limited engagement of wider community interests.
- Transferable to other areas, subject to funding streams being available.

PROJECT SCOPE

Location and area covered

B1. United Utilities plc, the water company for North West England, owns some 57,000 ha in the region, of which 56,000 ha is catchment land. 17,500 ha is designated SSSI. These estates are the primary source of water for some 7 million people in North West England.

B2. The current SCaMP programme is based on 20,000 ha of the company's estate, split between two areas[10]:

(a) The company's Bowland area, specifically the Trough of Bowland in Lancashire, and

(b) The company's Southern area, including Longdendale, Dovestones and the Goyt Valley in the northern Peak District in Derbyshire.

Of this, 13,000 ha is designated SSSI, amounting to three-quarters of the total area of SSSI owned by the company.

B3. The Southern area SCaMP land is within the Peak District National Park. The land at Bowland is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

B4. The current SCaMP programme runs from 2005 to 2010. It is managed by United Utilities in partnership with the RSPB.

[10] Unless the context indicates otherwise, statements in this report refer to both areas.

Nature of the area

B5. The project area is rural. Much is moorland. Particular features include: upland heathland, upland oak woodland, upland hay meadow, blanket bog, wet woodland, purple moorgrass, rush pasture.

B6. Blanket bog is particularly multi-functional, providing habitats, carbon sequestration, flood alleviation and water management. Much is currently degraded and so unable to realise its multi-functional potential.

B7. The area provides recreational facilities, including walking, bird watching, sailing, fishing and other outdoor sports associated with remote districts. Extensive shooting rights are in place on the moorland. Damaging activities, such as off-road motor biking, are discouraged (eg by erecting fencing), but remain an issue.

B8. Within the project area there are 45 different land holdings, of which 21 are whole farms, mostly on secure agricultural holdings tenancies. Much has been farmed intensively, with widespread sheep-grazing. Some parts of the estates, particularly woodland, are managed directly by United Utilities.

Drivers for the project

B9. Although the current SCaMP project is focussed only on part of the United Utilities estate, the company's ambition is to extend it to other areas so that the benefits can be accrued more widely (see paragraph B59 onwards). The drivers should therefore be seen in this wider context, not solely that of the current project.

Water quality

B10. The principal justification for United Utilities having its land holdings is to protect raw water quality. As most of the water comes from upland surface sources, the company has a direct interest in land management practices and their impact on water quality. The company believes it is more cost-effective, as part of a balanced approach to water supply, to secure improved water quality at the catchment end of the supply chain rather than rely solely on additional treatment measures closer to the point of supply to the consumer.

B11. There are two particular concerns:

(a) The deterioration in water colour over the past 30 years caused by peat soil erosion and the management practices carried out on moorland areas. These include overgrazing, upland drainage, inappropriate vegetation management, air pollution and uncontrolled burning.

(b) Contamination of raw water from livestock faeces leading to unacceptable levels of cryptosporidium[11].

Habitats and species

B12. The Government's target is to have 95% of SSSI areas in favourable condition by 2010. English Nature[12] had been indicating to the Major Landowners Group, of which United Utilities is a member, that it expected progress to be made. The condition status for all of the company's SSSI land at the start of the programme was as follows:

- some 23% in unfavourable and declining condition;
- some 29% in unfavourable and no change condition;
- some 36% in unfavourable and recovering condition.

B13. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the local plans for Lancashire and for the Peak District set out specific targets for maintaining, restoring or extending habitats and securing habitats and management practices which support priority species. United Utilities is engaged in both the local BAP partnerships.

Policy changes

B14. Policy changes are affecting farm management practices, including catchment sensitive farming plans arising from the Water Framework Directive and the financial incentives to adopt environmentally-conscious farming practices under the farm Single Payment Scheme and the Rural Development Programme for England.

Aims and objectives

B15. At the start of SCaMP, the project set out a vision for what it aims to achieve.

The vision for 2010 is:

- Improvements to raw water quality
- For Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) - some of the region's most important areas for wildlife and people - to be in prime condition
- A halt to the alarming declines of birds such as twites and hen harriers
- The return of stunning and vitally important landscapes and habitats such as blanket bog and heather moorland
- Economically-viable farming helping maintain and enhance special habitats and wildlife, as well as raw water quality
- Opportunities to support farming at a time of change and uncertainty

B16. The vision is to be achieved through delivery of an overall aim:

Aim of current SCaMP programme:

To develop an integrated approach to catchment management incorporating

[11] Cryptosporidium is a microscopic parasite that can cause severe and persistent diarrhoea.
[12] English Nature was incorporated into Natural England from October 2006.

sustainable upland farming which delivers a range of water quality, environmental and public goods:

- Meeting Government targets for SSSIs
- Implementing biodiversity plans for priority habitats and species
- Improving raw water quality
- Securing a viable living for tenant farmers

B17. The significance of the aims and objectives is that:

(a) they are mutually reinforcing; and

(b) they include delivery of benefits for which the water industry regulator, Ofwat, considers costs can be passed on to customers as part of their water charges.

B18. The key instrument for achieving the aim and objectives is the design and implementation of farm plans for tenant farmers within the project area. Specific measures envisaged include:

- restoring blanket bogs by blocking drainage ditches;
- restoring areas of eroded and exposed peat;
- restoring hay meadows;
- establishing clough woodland for native tree species;
- restoring heather moorland;
- reducing stock densities;
- providing new farm buildings for indoor wintering of livestock and for lambing;
- providing new waste management facilities to reduce run-off pollution of water courses;
- fencing to keep livestock away from areas such as rivers and streams and from special habitats.

B19. A subsidiary aim of the project is to assess whether there are lessons to be learned which could be applied more widely to the development of integrated land management solutions.

B20. The project has not been deliberately grounded in an ecosystems services approach, although it is noted that the uplands themselves provide many ecosystems services. However, current thinking about the next phase of SCaMP is moving in that direction (see paragraph B60).

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

B21. The project is delivered through a partnership of United Utilities and RSPB. Project management is provided by United Utilities, while RSPB's role has principally been in the development of the farm plans. Although RSPB already had a long-standing relationship with United Utilities, based on wildlife management on several parts of the company's estate, it secured the contract to deliver the farm plans through a competitive tender.

B22. Within United Utilities, there is a dedicated SCaMP board within the company's capital programme management structure.

B23. The project works with and through others, in particular:

(a) Natural England, which has a dual involvement:

(i) as manager of agri-environment schemes, which is the major source of revenue funding for SCaMP[13]; and

(ii) as regulator for the SSSI areas[14].

(b) Land within the project which is not designated SSSI is supervised by Lancashire County Council in partnership with the Wildlife Trust (for Bowland) and by the Peak District National Park Authority (for the Southern estate).

(c) Forestry Commission, for advice on woodland and payment of English Woodland Grants.

B24. The project has established a national stakeholder group and two local advisory groups, one for each area. The national group meets twice a year and brings together the lead partners with Ofwat, Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency. This group was seen by United Utilities as particularly valuable in facilitating alignment of SCaMP with the changes to agri-environment schemes that came into effect from 2007.

B25. Other mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders are described in paragraphs B37-38.

Key influences on decision making

B26. As a regulated water company, United Utilities has obligations to take into account habitats and species in deciding how to manage the land it owns, but the company is not specifically funded for doing so. SCaMP offers a way of levering in additional

[13] At the start of the project, this function was being carried out by Defra's Rural Development Service, incorporated into Natural England from October 2006.

[14] At the start of the project, this function was being carried out by English Nature.

funds, and the funding streams have been the major influence on how the project was designed.

B27. Put simply, funding from agri-environment schemes provides a revenue stream to support farm businesses which commit to farming in line with particular environmental prescriptions. To comply with these environmental prescriptions, additional funding including capital spending may be needed. Under SCaMP:

(a) The farm plans provide the basis for the agri-environment scheme agreement, with funds coming from Natural England under the EU Rural Development Programme for England. These funds provide the continuing revenue support, plus some capital items.

(b) The majority of capital funding comes from United Utilities, in line with approvals given by Ofwat to provide the funding from water charges. Over 80% of the total SCaMP investment comes through this route.

Agri-environment scheme funding

B28. Prior to SCaMP, financial incentives had come primarily through through the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme. This focussed on reducing grazing on moorland, encouraging farmers to move their stock lower down the catchment into unsuitable buildings, with pollution implications for water quality. The introduction from 2007 of new agri-environment schemes, particularly the Higher Level Stewardship scheme presented an opportunity to shift the incentives.

B29. SCaMP was therefore able to offer to farmers farm plans which enabled them to access either the new Higher Level Stewardship scheme or to secure changes to existing ESA agreements. The new farm plans were drawn up in the light of considerations across the whole catchment, which differed from the existing ESA agreements which had tended to be designed from the perspective of a single farm or other local area. This required a degree of caution in ensuring that the new management measures remained in the farm plans and did not become part of the tenancy agreements (which could have disqualified farmers from receiving the additional payments).

B30. In addition, the Forestry Commission were able to make grants under the English Woodlands Scheme which funded planting for biodiversity purposes on the upland areas.

United Utilities funding

B31. The current Ofwat approval covers a 5-year period[15]. Although the company sought approval to run across SCaMP all of its estates, Ofwat limited funding approval to the Bowland and Southern estates, which contained most of the SSSI land. That in turn defined the scope of the current SCaMP programme.

B32. United Utilities decided to use most of the available funding on capital works, for example providing new buildings for housing stock, fencing off areas, as well as for some equipment. The reasoning for preferring capital spending involved a wish to ensure that the funding was properly targeted so that the farm operated in ways that met SCaMP aims, and to avoid any impression that these were compensation payments.

[15] Known as AMP4, or Asset Management Period 4, covering 2005-2010.

Community engagement

B33. Community interests in SCaMP fall into three categories:

(a) Farmers in the project area, who are directly affected.

(b) Stakeholders, who have a direct interest in the project, sometimes substantial.

(c) The wider community.

Farmers

B34. SCaMP would not work without the co-operation of the tenant farmers, since it is the farmers who need to adopt and implement the farm plans and apply for the agri-environment scheme funding (although in practice the project team gave the farmers very considerable support in making the applications).

B35. Initial suspicions among farmers about the motives of United Utilities (put the rents up) and of RSPB (subordinate business interests to wildlife protection) meant that managing their perceptions was important. There were also concerns among farmers that when their ESA agreements came to an end in 2014, there would be no future environmental funding available to compensate them for the stocking reductions that had taken place when they entered the agri-environment scheme.

B36. The farm plans were drawn up initially without the involvement of the farmers, though the United Utilities land agents provided input drawing on their knowledge of the farm practices in place and there was informal discussion between land agents and farmers at an early stage. To help allay concerns among farmers, the project then organised meetings of groups of farmers, recognising the importance of securing attendance of those thought more likely to want to join the scheme. The draft plans were then negotiated direct with each tenant by RSPB and United Utilities representatives. There is evidence that RSPB's knowledge of agri-environment schemes was seen as helpful by some farmers during this process.

Stakeholders

B37. The project sought to engage stakeholders, principally through local advisory groups, a twice-yearly newsletter, and one-off events to publicise progress. In addition to those identified in paragraphs B23 and B24, representatives of tenants and other users of the catchment are involved. Some stakeholders have commented that the newsletter is the main means by which they keep in touch, and that a more broadly-based partnership with stakeholders – Moors for the Future in the Peak District was cited as one example – might have secured more widespread ownership of the project as well as provide a mechanism for resolving differences of view. This can be important in advancing plans which generate strong opinions for and against, such as new woodland planting or prohibiting burning on moorland. However, the present partnership structure is delivering on its commitments (see paragraphs B51-54).

Wider community

B38. Other than through the newsletter and website, SCaMP is not perceived as having invested significantly in engaging the wider community. Planning authorities have a role in publicising proposals from the project on which they have a decision to make. United Utilities can point to its general programmes for the community – for example, the education programme - which are not focussed solely on the SCaMP areas.

Evidence base

B39. The key pieces of evidence which amounted to drivers for establishing SCaMP are highlighted in paragraphs B9-14. In addition, United Utilities commissioned its own study of the SSSI condition from expert consultants, not only as support for SCaMP but also as a contribution to assessing the value of the company's previous and continuing environmental work, including tree-planting and the appointment of wildlife officers on the estates.

B40. Information about the condition of the non-SSSI estate was also available from the local authorities.

B41. More generally, the project was able to draw on a range of studies carried out in relation to catchment sensitive farming, habitat and species management, water quality, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

B42. There was a time lag between the start of the project and any impact on the farms: the first year's activity was largely invisible outside the project team. This was due to the need to develop the farm plans (each took between 3 and 4 weeks to prepare), though it raised concerns – subsequently assuaged - among stakeholders about implementation capacity for the project.

B43. Development and finalisation of the farm plans was slowed by two factors:

(a) Uncertainty about the details of the new Higher Level Stewardship scheme, which led to some minor changes to plans as the scheme rules were clarified.

(b) Farmers tended only to focus on specific elements of the farm plans when they saw how they would work on the ground. For example, they would suggest changes to fencing proposals to reflect actual stock movement patterns. Even farmers already in ESA agreements often needed to go through this process, because the agreement contained insufficient detail about where to put a fence.

B44. Once under way, tensions on specific issues included:

(a) Proposals for new *woodland* were the main source of problems. For example, conservationists objected to new woodland proposals (i) for marginal land beneficial to some species, and (ii) which threatened ground nesting birds. The project was able to respond by pointing to the central role of RSPB and their expertise in drawing up the plans, and where necessary offering mitigation measures.

(b) In response to peat erosion, United Utilities introduced a moratorium on *burning* heather moorland. This led to a divergence of view with the Moorland Association[16] which considers that controlled burning is a necessary instrument of moorland management. United Utilities' response was to establish a Moorland Management Topic Group with a remit to develop a clear evidence-based policy.

(c) To minimise the risk of *cryptosporidium* entering the raw water supply, United Utilities have a policy of resisting cattle on catchment land. When applications for funding under the High Level Stewardship scheme were being developed, Natural England argued, backed by generally accepted evidence, that the presence of cattle was good for biodiversity and that some cattle should be provided for in the farm plans. Natural England's view was shared by, among others, RSPB. United Utilities responded that it could not fund actions which might increase the risk to water quality and was bound by the requirements of its Drinking Water Safety Plan. Recognising that it was unrealistic to secure the removal of all cattle, negotiations on the farm plans aimed at a reduction in herd sizes in exchange for the company's investment in the farm, with the aim of reviewing the position at the end of the SCaMP programme and when the ESA agreements expire in 2013/14.

(d) *Engineering interventions* have presented challenges, for example:

(i) To bring in materials for moorland restoration, such as grasses, helicopters were seen as the most effective method of transport. This required United Utilities to construct a helicopter pad, which led to objections from the Peak District National Park Authority archaeologist. The issue was resolved through negotiation.

(ii) Unlike many engineering projects, seasonality is critical: certain activities can only be carried out at particular times of the year (eg for breeding cycles) or in favourable weather conditions. This has posed challenges for project management, including profiling and consuming expenditure within the overall span of the project.

B45. A major risk to the objectives of the project is arson. A fire risk index and a fire watch scheme have been developed, but continued investment depends on arson being tightly controlled.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

B46. The current phase of SCaMP is designed to deliver multiple benefits to and from the land in the project areas. Planning at a catchment scale is seen as valuable in enabling issues such as grazing and fencing to be addressed for the landscape as a whole. The expected benefits are defined by the project as:

(a) *SSSI areas*. In relation to land currently in unfavourable condition, to meet the Government target of having 95% in favourable condition by 2010, and to have all SSSI land protected from possible future deterioration.

(b) *BAP priority habitats and species*. Specific targets include:

[16] A membership organisation representing moorland owners.

- 100% of upland oak woodland brought into sympathetic management, and an increase in area by 10%;
- 100% of upland hay meadow brought into sympathetic management, with an increase in area of 100%;
- An increase in the area of blanket bog (through restoration of degraded systems) by 10%;
- 100% of wet woodland brought into sympathetic management, with an increase in area by 10%;
- 100% of purple moorgrass and rush pasture brought into sympathetic management with an increase in area of 5%;
- 100% of upland heathland into sympathetic management and an additional 10 ha of new habitat.
- *Water quality*. The aim to achieve benefits to public health and lower water treatment costs, in particular by:
- Reduced risk of contamination of the raw water supply by cryptosporidium.
- Reversal of the increase in levels of colour in the raw water supply.
- Minimisation of soil erosion on the catchment (which also has biodiversity benefits).

(c) *Farmers*. Development of viable farm businesses taking place against a background of specific investment and of greater certainty about continuing income streams and the management practices required.

(d) *Catchment management*. SCaMP is seen as a good practice model that is transferable elsewhere, and the project is designed to generate evidence to support that contention.

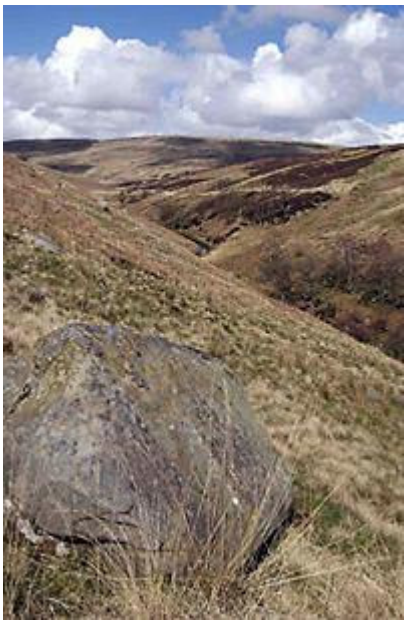
B47. In addition, stakeholders have identified a potential benefit to the *local economy*: contracting out the restoration and other site development work has supported jobs locally.

Monitoring

B48. A 5-year monitoring programme focussing on water quality is incorporated into the current phase of SCaMP, managed by consultant hydrologists and ecologists. Most of the data collection is carried out by automatic loggers, and has been used to draw up detailed profiles at four farms within SCaMP. This covers inputs (rainfall), storage capacity (peat groundwater levels and througflow colour) and outputs (stream colour and discharge). The challenge is to assess whether changes came about as a direct result of the SCaMP measures or in response to a combination of other environmental factors. Sufficient data on which to base firm conclusions is not expected until 2011, but early indications are positive.

B49. Specific studies have been commissioned: to investigate the impact of the land management changes on the flow of carbon to and from peat; and to look at the land management impacts on enzyme activity in peat and its relationship to colour generation in water.

B50. Other forms of monitoring are less complex, for example recording areas of new woodland or restored blanket bog.



Evaluation

Against aims and objectives

B51. At present it is too early for a full evaluation of outcomes to be undertaken, and the consensus is that this will still be the case at the end of the project in 2010, because of the time required for some of the restoration measures to demonstrate impact. There are however some key indicators available.

B52. In particular, by 2008 96% of the SSSI areas across the Bowland and Southern areas was found to be in favourable or recovering condition. For the Southern area, which had some of the most degraded SSSIs, 99% of the area is now meeting the condition targets.

B53. On other quantitative measures, progress against the main targets by late 2008 was as follows:

- 70% achievement of targets for woodland planting, construction of farm buildings and new fencing.
- 40% achievement of target for grip blocking.
- 30% achievement of targets for starting peat restoration and for installing water troughs.
- 15% achievement of target for restoration of walls.
- Work to improve farm tracks exceeded the target by 34%.

In summary, about 60% of the current SCaMP programme has been completed.

B54. On transferability, SCaMP has been identified in the Environment Agency's draft River Basin Management Plan for the North West as a model to be extended to other catchments.

Stakeholder and public perception

B55. Both the project and some stakeholders have acknowledged that there is an element of "business as usual" about SCaMP, in that some of the activity would have taken place with or without the project. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that a major achievement of SCaMP is to have brought together private and public funding

in a such a way that the former levers more of the latter (ie United Utilities' investment on the farms qualifies them for higher agri-environment scheme payment) to deliver clearly defined plans that deliver multiple benefits. In this way, SCaMP is seen as having accelerated processes that would take a longer time to implement under a business as usual scenario. Transferability is seen as feasible provided that a source of capital funding is provided alongside the agri-environment scheme funding.

B56. As noted in paragraph B37 there has been stakeholder comment that the partnership could have been more inclusive. One example cited is on blanket bog restoration, where other partnerships in both Lancashire and the Peak District are working to the same end.

B57. Farmers' views are mixed[17]. The economics of farming is the principal driver for their decisions, and to that extent participation in agri-environment schemes is generally though not universally supported. Those who were sceptical saw the downsides of the application process and the need to comply with environmental requirements as outweighing any financial benefits. The project sought to address this by in effect doing the farm planning for the farmers and by providing extensive support to farmers during the application process.

B58. There is no information available about how SCaMP is perceived by the general public. The processes and many of the outcomes are invisible to those not involved with the project. Where visible change does occur – for example, woodland planting – there is no information available about whether this is perceived as a consequence of SCaMP.

THE FUTURE

B59. United Utilities has applied to Ofwat for approval to extend SCaMP to the company's Northern (Haweswater and Thirlmere in Cumbria) and Central (around Bolton) estates over the period 2010-2015. This is line with a commitment in the company's Strategic Direction Statement for the period: "We want to extend SCaMP-type approaches to other catchment land we own and promote its use on other catchments which we might not own but on which we nevertheless rely for water supplies".

B60. The overall aim of the second phase of SCaMP remains unchanged, but the specific objectives have been modified:

(a) to emphasise water quality rather than SSSI, which are less of a challenge than in the current SCaMP areas; and

(b) to include a new focus on carbon management, with the aim of making company-owned land better able to act as a store of carbon as a contribution to the company's response to climate change

[17] This paragraph draws on an as yet unpublished study of SCaMP farmers carried out for Defra by Risk Solutions between May and July 2008.

Aim of proposed second SCaMP programme:

To develop an integrated approach to catchment management incorporating sustainable upland farming which delivers a range of water quality, environmental and public goods:

- Improving raw water quality and reducing risk
- Securing and improving the carbon flux management of our land
- Implementing biodiversity plans for priority habitats and species
- Securing a viable living for tenant farmers

B61. The company is cautiously optimistic that approval will be given. In that event, the second phase will be rolled out on a faster timetable than the first.

B62. The second phase of SCaMP will not be applied to the existing project areas. There are concerns about what will happen when the current phase comes to an end, though these are more centred on the consequences of the ESA agreements expiring rather than the ending of United Utilities support for capital measures. There is a perceived gap between what will be funded under agri-environment schemes and what is needed over the long term to maintain the benefits being accrued by the project.

FURTHER INFORMATION

B63. The project website is at: www.unitedutilities.com/scamp.htm

THE MINERAL VALLEYS PROJECT

Summary: An environment-led landscape scale regeneration programme of 14 individual projects over 5 years in a mixed rural and urban former mining area.

HEADLINES

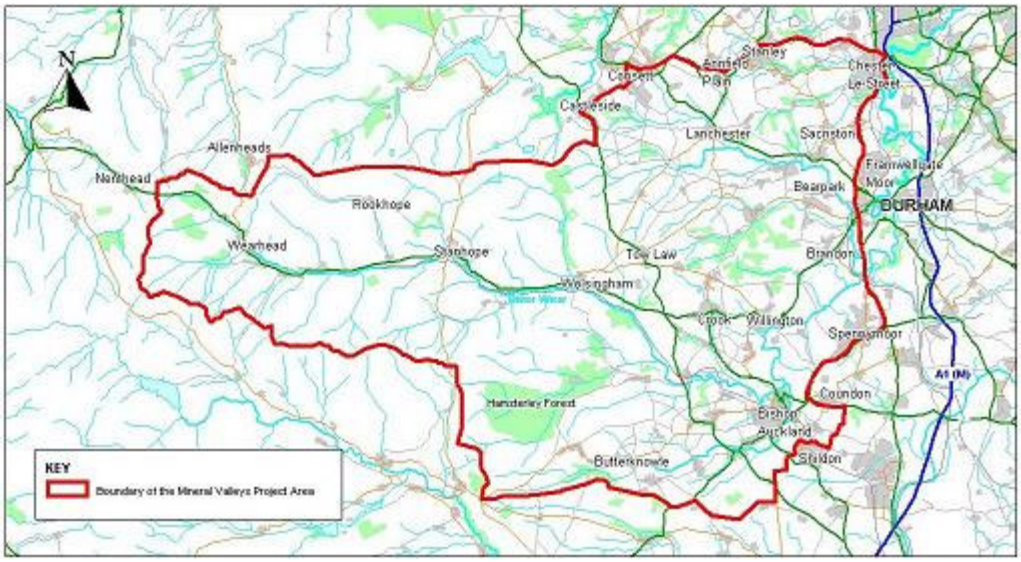
- Individual projects benefited from being part of a centrally-managed programme which added value through pooling experience, identifying synergies between projects and providing communications expertise.
- Multiple benefits achieved for access, biodiversity, landscape and communities, often from the same site.
- Working in and with local communities a key element of most projects.
- Substantial list of deliverables clear, but longer-term impacts less easy to measure.
- Recognised by Heritage Lottery Fund and others as exemplifying best practice for a programme of this type.

PROJECT SCOPE

C1. The Mineral Valleys Project (MVP) was a centrally-managed and centrally-funded programme of 14 individual projects within a defined geographical area, which ran from June 2003 to May 2008. This annex describes MVP as a whole, with reference to three of the individual projects to illuminate particular points.

Location and area covered

C2. MVP was located across 89,000 ha in west County Durham along and adjacent to the River Wear and its tributaries, upstream – ie broadly to the west - of Durham City and extending up into the North Pennines AONB almost as far as Nenthead. Some of the individual projects were spread over large areas, whereas others were focussed on specific small sites.



C3. Other than covering in broad terms the target area in which the Heritage Lottery Fund was interested (see paragraph C8), the boundary was not defined in strategic terms. The location of the individual projects that put themselves forward for inclusion in

MVP were a significant influence. The result is three different types of area within the project boundaries:

- Durham coalfields in the north and east
- Upper Weardale in the west, with early limestone quarrying and upland farming
- In the south, the northern fringes of the upper Tees valley, with a more intricate farmed landscape than in Weardale.

C4. In practice, there was some clustering of projects in particular areas: volunteering and access issues were important in Weardale, while habitat and access projects dominated in the Durham coalfields.

C5. The three individual projects selected for study were:

(a) Accessing Wetlands and Beyond (AWB), spread across land between Ramshaw and Spring Gardens, near West Auckland

(b) Harehope Quarry (HHQ), near Frosterley in upper Weardale between Wolsingham and Stanhope.

(c) Wild Wetlands (WW), at Low Barns Nature Reserve near Witton-le-Wear, north-west of Bishop Auckland, and adjacent to the River Wear.

The three were selected by the central MVP programme team because they were initially sites of no economic value and they provided evidence about multiple use/benefits and public perception.

Nature of the area

C6. The area's character has a predominantly urban feel in the east with towns and villages in close proximity, becoming progressively more rural and remote in character towards the west. It has a strong industrial heritage, with mining – coal and limestone – a major economic driver in the past, and the legacy of the decline of its former industrial base is still apparent in the communities, particularly in the east. A history of opencast coal extraction has led to impaired landscape quality. However there is substantial green space between the communities, though access has traditionally been limited.

C7. Further west, the natural environment dominates, with a mix of extensive areas of near wilderness and smaller scale traditionally managed pastoral landscapes. The open un-enclosed heather moorlands provide valuable habitats for flora and fauna and are managed for rough grazing and grouse shooting; the latter also provides a habitat for a wide variety of moorland birds, including some rare species. The winding valley landscape of the River Wear includes two historic parklands and open agricultural countryside.

Drivers for the project

C8. The initial impetus came from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which had identified work in west County Durham as supporting the directions given to it by the government for distributing its funding. Of particular relevance were the directions[18] requiring HLF to take account of:

- the scope for reducing economic and social deprivation;
- the need to promote access for people from all sections of society to heritage, in particular to develop an interest in heritage amongst children and young people;

[18] This is not a complete list of the directions, only those most relevant to MVP.

- the need to further the objectives of sustainable development;
- the requirement for an element of partnership funding;
- the desirability of working in partnership with other organisations; and
- the possibility of soliciting applications in order to pursue strategic objectives.

C9. Both English Nature[19] and Durham County Council recognised the potential in applying a more holistic approach to west County Durham, given the legacy of landscape and habitat degradation. They saw an opportunity for biodiversity gain and an improved environment for people, and were aware of interest in the local communities in participating in work to achieve these goals. A landscape scale project was seen as offering real opportunities for thinking creatively about links between different strands of activity, for example ensuring that improving access was factored into a habitat scheme. Both organisations were able to draw on the experience of a previous environment-led regeneration project, "Turning the Tide", which focussed on the Durham coast[20].

C10. In 2000 the HLF approached English Nature to explore the scope for a substantial HLF-funded project in west County Durham which met the criteria in paragraph C8. HLF subsequently funded a development officer for a year to develop a detailed funding proposal, which was approved by the project steering group in 2002.

C11. The drivers for the individual projects differed in part. All responded to the MVP central team's call for projects to form part of the programme, and to that extent the driver was opportunistic. However, the Environment Agency (for AWB), the Durham Wildlife Trust (for WW) and the co-operative managing the HHQ project already had intentions to develop the sites for their own purposes: the involvement of MVP advanced the timetable, provided some additional funding and modified the shape of the pre-existing plans. Not all the activity on the three sites was funded under MVP.

Aims and objectives

C12. MVP's high-level aims emerged from the development of the funding proposal, taking account of the HLF funding criteria.

The Project's Vision

Through a programme of environment-led regeneration the project will:

- **Restore areas of dereliction and poor environmental quality** arising from past mineral extraction.
- **Enhance the employment chances of local people**, building skills through training, volunteering and direct employment opportunities.
- **Assist local and national Biodiversity Action Plans** through a programme of habitat enhancements that include the creation of major new wetland systems and nearly 350 hectares of woodland regeneration.
- **Improve access to the countryside** by providing better links between settlements and the Weardale Way, creating new heritage walks and multi-user routes.
- **Provide information and education about the natural and cultural heritage of the area** by developing a series of books, leaflets and on-site

[19] English Nature was incorporated into Natural England from October 2006.
[20] See www.turning-the-tide.org.uk

displays, as well as improving facilities in local visitor centres.

- **Build partnerships between local communities, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies** to deliver long-term environmental, social and economic benefits to the area.

C13. The project was not explicitly designed to deliver an ecosystems services approach, though in practice the multi-functional nature of many sites has made a good fit with the approach.

C14. Each of the individual projects developed its own aims and objectives:

Accessing Wetlands and Beyond

To provide a site where communities can access their rich local heritage by providing added benefits to works being carried out for the River Gaunless Flood Alleviation Scheme, in particular:

- A new safe and sustainable off-road route accessing local wildlife and industrial heritage and linking the communities of West Auckland and Ramshaw, using interpretation boards along the route to raise awareness of both wildlife and heritage issues.
- Access for users of all ages and abilities to the wilder landscape of the upper Gaunless valley.
- Increased biodiversity through habitat creation suitable for some UK BAP priority species.
- Improved quality of life through access to “healthy walks” safe routes in the countryside.
- Boost to the local economy by attracting visitors and tourists.

Harehope Quarry

Based in a disused former limestone quarry, to provide (a) an exciting practical demonstration of a more sustainable means of living and (b) new environment-focussed educational facilities. Specific benefits include:

- Increased public access to the natural heritage.
- Development of local education and training programmes.
- Increased community involvement and interest in the local environment and the area’s industrial heritage.
- Creation, improvement and management of new habitats and associated benefits for key species, including some BAP priority categories.

Wild Wetlands

By making use of the site of a decommissioned sewage works, to enhance an existing nature reserve and the opportunities it offers to visitors, through creating additional wetland on land initially of low conservation value, in particular:

- Enhancement of BAP priority habitats and conditions for species.
- New access to wildlife sites for local visitors and tourists.
- New educational opportunities through provision of new bird hides, outdoor and indoor interpretation facilities.

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

C15. MVP was managed by a programme board, chaired by Natural England, with representation from Durham County Council, One North East (the RDA), Groundwork West Durham & Darlington, BTCV and the Durham Wildlife Trust. Membership was limited to key delivery partners and advisers.

C16. The board's approach has been described as action-oriented, focused on getting on with delivering the programme rather than reflecting unduly on policy questions.

C17. The board was supported by a small core team of Natural England staff, resourced from the HLF funding, which carried out key cross-cutting functions, in particular:

(a) Overall management of MVP, including monitoring progress on individual projects, managing the flow of funds to the projects, and accounting to HLF.

(b) Managing communications across the programme, both with communities - including the MVP brand – and between individual projects. The newsletter, website and style guide all came under a communications group.

(c) Through a dedicated community involvement group which included external expertise (eg from Volunteer Centres), developing a good practice protocol on consulting with local communities

(d) Leading a Best Practice Working Group, made up of all lead partners and some other key delivery agents, for supporting the individual projects by sharing information across the projects about successes and barriers.

Key influences on decision making

<u>MVP</u>

C18. The key influence in decision-making throughout the project was the need to deliver what had been committed to in the bid to HLF, in line with the aims and objectives (see paragraph C12). The total HLF grant was £2.8m, with match funding bringing the total investment to £5.1m. Ensuring that this funding was spent to deliver the intended benefits was central to the whole project.

C19. To support this focus on delivery, the core team applied consistent programme objectives and indicators to every item of work in each of the individual projects. Part of the intention was to encourage the individual projects to see their work as mutually reinforcing; part was to provide a consistent reporting system that made it possible to identify emerging underspends and reallocate resources as necessary.

C20. The individual projects were identified from a call for potential partners to submit proposals for projects to be included in MVP. The aims of MVP were known, and projects were expected to be able to help deliver those aims. The potential for a project to deliver multiple benefits was an important factor in selection; and the core team were also looking for linkages between projects, so as to generate benefits greater than the sum of the parts. For example: HHQ and WW are both located on the Weardale Way path (as were other MVP projects), so adding to the attractions of the route; AWB links to the wider MVP Gaunless Valley project to improve community involvement through increased access and interpretation. In this sense MVP was landscape scale, though individual projects were generally smaller scale.

C21. Individual projects were ranked by the core team on a risk register, which identified the risks to other projects of failure to deliver in one.

Accessing Wetlands and Beyond

C22. The Environment Agency had been planning to carry out flood alleviation works in the Gaunless Valley as part of its statutory responsibility for flood management, and following the flooding of 450 homes in West Auckland in 2000. The Agency also has duties to promote waterside recreation and conservation, and seeks opportunities to advance BAP objectives by creating habitats: the flood alleviation scheme was seen as offering a series of opportunities here.

C23. The Agency would normally put in place some mitigation and enhancement measures as part of a flood relief scheme, but the opportunity of MVP funding – which could not be spent on the flood alleviation scheme itself - enabled a more ambitious scheme to provide additional benefits. The presence of a disused railway track suggested the opportunity to create a new accessible route, which fitted in with Durham County Council's own ambitions for improving non-motorised access routes.

Harehope Quarry

C24. Harehope Quarry is a more personal initiative than the other two projects. The site has been purchased by two members of the co-operative managing the quarry, which provides an immediate and strong motivation to make the project a success. Although the project's aims are broad (see paragraph C14), the MVP funding focussed on two out of four elements: bringing the quarry into management as a nature reserve, including funding for permissive footpaths; and constructing an eco-education building using self-build techniques.

C25. The site has been an important influence on the project, in particular the fact that it is divided into two by a river. This has led to development on one side, with the other being managed solely as a nature reserve.

C26. The plan has been developed through the co-operative, with the key influences being: the vision created by the partners, which involves a high degree of altruism; and the need to generate an income to realise the economic leg of the vision of a sustainable enterprise. Other than the owners of the land, members of the co-operative contribute time rather than cash.

Wild Wetlands

C27. The decision to allow an existing adjacent nature reserve to take over land no longer required for sewage treatment purposes appeared to the lead partners – Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) and Northumbrian Water Ltd (NWL) – to be self-evident in the circumstances:

(a) DWT had been considering the expansion of the existing reserve for some 10 years (and were considering a grant bid of their own when the MVP call for projects was issued).

(b) The sewage treatment site was surrounded by SSSI-designated land at either side, which could be linked by an extension of the reserve.

(c) DWT and NWL already had an established partnership: NWL were funding a wetlands project officer, who also had wildlife responsibilities at one of the company's major reservoirs.

(d) NWL had a capital programme in place for disposing of redundant sewage treatment plants, which enabled them to gift the site to DWT and provide resources in kind (eg valuing land, access to GIS and other in-house resources).

C28. The alternative would have been for NWL to remove the plant and grass over the site, for which no alternative use had been identified.

Community engagement

C29. Communities have been involved in MVP both by the core team and by individual projects. Evidence suggests that people are more interested in what is happening in their own community than across MVP as a whole.

C30. The core team used a variety of methods:

(a) Examination of some parish plans, both as part of the preliminary work for the bid and again in the implementation phase.

(b) Contact with community partnerships (set up for local areas by the Durham Local Strategic Partnership) as a way in, though this varied between areas.

(c) Working through existing fora for communities of interest, eg Parish Paths Partnerships; and setting up new bodies (eg Friends of the Fort in the History in the Making project).

(d) A door-to-door newsletter, six-monthly, to every household in the MVP area (87,000) was a key tool for informing and encouraging feedback.

(e) Parish and Town Councils were often involved in proofing proposals.

C31. The individual projects also engaged communities in line with project needs. Methods included:

(a) Consultation events.

(b) Wildlife walks.

(c) Involvement of volunteers in some practical restoration work.

(d) Education programmes.

(e) Workshops in local schools to encourage children to bring stories from their grandparents about local history, to support interpretation material.

(f) In AWB, a festival to celebrate completion and achievements, and develop local ownership of the project, which attracted some 300 people.

C32. Attendance and interest varied. Projects found that the event had to be inherently interesting in its own right if significant numbers were to be attracted. Technical meetings tended to appeal only to the experts.

C33. The uses of community feedback varied. For example, in AWB considerable effort was put into unlocking anecdotal heritage information from the community as part of the project. By contrast, in WW local people were asked what they would like to see in the extended habitat, but those views did not drive project decisions.

C34. The core team saw the benefits of community engagement as providing information on local assets and problems and offering opinions on priorities for action. This was more evident in delivering those elements of projects that were predominantly providing "soft" community-oriented outputs (eg parts of AWB); by contrast, in the projects committed to "hard" outputs (eg WW and the flood management aspects of AWB) expert opinion played a stronger role. Community consultations did lead to changes in plans, for example in the routes of new waymarked walks.

Evidence base

C35. The evidence base for MVP was disparate. Broadly, it comprised:

(a) Information on the economic, social and environmental conditions in west County Durham, including deprivation indices, measures of landscape degradation and biodiversity deficiencies reflected in the local BAP targets.

(b) Specific issues already identified by partners as needing to be addressed, for example flood alleviation in AWB.

(c) Community ambitions and concerns, as set out in parish plans.

(d) The response to the call for projects.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

C36. MVP ran to time and to budget, despite some initial nervousness about the project's capacity to deliver. However, the experience of "Turning the Tide" in which many of the partners had been involved gave some confidence that projects of this type could be managed.

C37. Delivery was achieved through the core team working with the individual projects and managing effective relationships with them. The programme board was seen as working harmoniously.

C38. There were some specific issues:

(a) Some individual projects regarded the procedural demands (information and monitoring, tendering, payment of claims) placed on them by the core team as unhelpful, though were eventually persuaded that it was necessary in the interests of maintaining a degree of flexibility from HLF for the project as a whole (see paragraph C46).

(b) The length of time taken from the initial idea for MVP to funding coming on stream caused difficulty for projects that had already programmed their contributions into spending plans.

C39. The relationship with the North Pennines AONB was not straightforward, essentially because of differences of view on the branding of MVP activity in the AONB. Significant core team effort was spent on negotiations and joint working with the AONB, which resulted in agreement on the use of both identities.

C40. Where they arose, most tensions were at the individual project level, though these were usually minor. For example:

(a) In WW, adjacent landowners objected to the disruption caused by the construction of the wetlands and reedbed.

(b) In HHQ, expectations by schools that they should be able to use the project's facilities at no charge (based on a misapprehension that the project was state-funded) led to some difficulties between the project and a key part of the target market.

(c) In AWB, the County Council expressed concern about their ability to find resources to maintain the new path, though this did not alter the design of the project.

(d) Purchase of land was an issue for the Environment Agency in AWB: although the Agency has power to acquire land for flood alleviation schemes purposes, the power does not extend to acquiring land for the additional mitigation and enhancement not part of the flood scheme.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

C41. The benefits to be achieved from MVP were grouped as follows (showing which were delivered, or are expected to be delivered, by each of the 3 individual projects):

(a) Transformation and re-use of derelict and underused land, including quarries and railway lines (AWB, HHQ, WW)

(b) Enhancement and better management of habitats and restoration of heritage features (AWB, HHQ, WW)

(c) Increase in safe and welcoming access to local countryside and heritage. (AWB, HHQ, WW)

(d) Engagement of local communities, landowners and volunteers in their natural and cultural heritage, its management and future (AWB, HHQ, WW).

(e) Increased intellectual access, improved and enhanced experience of natural and cultural heritage of the area for local people and visitors (AWB, HHQ, WW).

(f) New formal education opportunities provided, with targeted support for teachers and individuals (HHQ, WW).

(g) New training opportunities created (WW)

(h) Sustainable tourism encouraged and developed (HHQ).

(i) Economic benefits delivered to the people and businesses in the MVP area (AWB, HHQ, WW).

C42. A key feature of the benefits design was to secure multiple benefits from the same project on a single site (see paragraph C12) and the listing above shows that this has been achieved to a significant extent.

C43. Benefits were obtained from all projects, though with different degrees of emphasis. Some were easier to measure than others: for example, it is easier to quantify the area of new or enhanced habitat than to measure the extent to which communities value and use an interpretation panel.

C44. Individual projects had their own success measures not directly related to the objectives of MVP, for example the Environment Agency's flood alleviation scheme in AWB which reduced the flood risk to 660 properties.

C45. In addition, there were measurable benefits to be derived from the design of the programme itself:

(a) Innovation and development, based on the experiences of the projects.

(b) Successful communication of the MVP objectives, activities and successes.

Monitoring

C46. The core team placed heavy emphasis on programme management in monitoring. One important result was that the HLF allowed MVP considerable flexibility in

managing the programme spend, having been satisfied that the programme management arrangements were robust; indeed, MVP was commended as an example of best management and delivery practice by the HLF.

C47. The aims of the core team monitoring were defined as:

(a) Accountability and value for money – enabling lead partners and funders to assess whether resources have been spent so as to deliver the intended benefits.

(b) Management – enabling risk to be managed and decisions to be taken to optimise the outcomes, eg by re-balancing funding between projects.

C48. Individual projects developed milestones and reported progress towards them to the core team.

Evaluation

C49. At the outset of MVP, there was no agreed baseline in place from which to evaluate changes. An evaluation plan was developed with external expert advice.

Delivery

C50. By the time it closed in 2008, MVP had delivered a set of definable outputs:

- Created or restored over 352 hectares of biodiversity action plan target habitats.
- Delivered over 6955 volunteer work days.
- Involved 127 local community groups and 202 school groups.
- Provided new outdoor education facilities including a self-build 'eco-classroom' and new bird hides designed to accommodate large groups.
- Delivered 188 km of new or improved access routes.
- Run 92 training courses serving over 814 participants.
- Seen 1624 visitors spend over 4469 visitor days in west County Durham delivering conservation activities as part of a sustainable tourism initiative.
- Organised 457 events, exhibitions and workshops attracting over 3564 local people and visitors.

C51. This had been delivered with:

- £2.7m from the HLF
- £2.2m in match funding
- £1.2m spent by other funders on additional work generated by MVP (for example, in WW the Durham Wildlife Trust secured funding outside of MVP from other sources for an important public access element of the reed bed creation).

Public perception

C52. MVP commissioned consultants to assess what local residents and local businesses thought of the project, on two occasions (2006 and 2008). Comparative results are summarised below.

C53. Among local residents:

- Awareness of MVP fell from 30% to 22%.
- Awareness through the newsletter increased from 14% to 41%.
- Although respondents were generally positive about benefits from MVP to tourism, employment and the environment, the responses in 2008 were less positive than in 2006.
- 45% thought their environment was good and 23% thought it was very good: no change between the surveys. In relation to two individual projects, residents reported a decrease in satisfaction with their environment.

C54. Among businesses:

- Awareness of MVP increased to 21% from 14%.
- A majority thought that MVP would have a positive impact on the environment: no change between the two surveys.
- Opinion was evenly divided about MVP's impact on local employment: a slight reduction in positive perception between 2006 and 2008.
- Only a minority considered that MVP would have a positive effect on their own business.

Partner perception

C55. There was general approval of the activities of the core team among partner organisations, with the benefits seen as outweighing the downsides. These benefits included:

(a) working with people and organisations they had not done so in the past;

(b) becoming part of a network;

(c) some best practice sharing, and learning (for example about the advantages of operating at a landscape scale);

(d) advice and learning on securing better engagement with local communities;

(e) improved reputation among other partners, for delivery on time and in budget.

C56. Some partners would have proceeded without MVP, though with a reduced or different scope.

THE FUTURE

C57. Although MVP has now closed as a project, many of the individual projects will continue under their own momentum or as part of a wider strategy. For example:

(a) Durham County Council continues to acquire disused railway land for conversion to public paths, though maintenance costs are expected to continue to be an issue.

(b) The development of Harehope Quarry will continue, subject to sufficient funding from other sources including trading, led by the co-operative.

(c) The management plan for Low Barns Nature Reserve (site of Wild Wetlands) will build on what has been achieved under MVP; and there has been some consideration about the creation of a series of wetlands projects in Weardale using a series of former gravel extraction sites.

FURTHER INFORMATION

C58. The project website is at www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/north_east/ourwork/mineral_valleys_project/default.aspx

DORSET URBAN HEATHS PARTNERSHIP

Summary: A clearly-defined and tightly-managed project aimed at changing public attitudes and behaviour so as to reduce damage to protected urban and peri-urban heathland in an area of development pressure.

HEADLINES

- European and UK central government encouragement from the outset.
- EU-funded for 4 years, with minimal scope to depart from the agreed plan.
- Strong partnership of local authorities, conservation bodies and – unusually – the fire and police services; and resilient enough to expand and continue following the ending of EU funding.
- Education – in schools, through community groups and direct with heath users – the central aim of the project.
- Inclusion of measures to combat anti-social behaviour a motivator for police and fire service involvement in a conservation project.
- Deliverables produced - including purchase of fire service equipment, infrastructure changes, new monitoring and mapping systems, and teaching resources - though the impacts less easy to measure.
- Much less funding certainty for the continuing work needed to embed attitude changes.

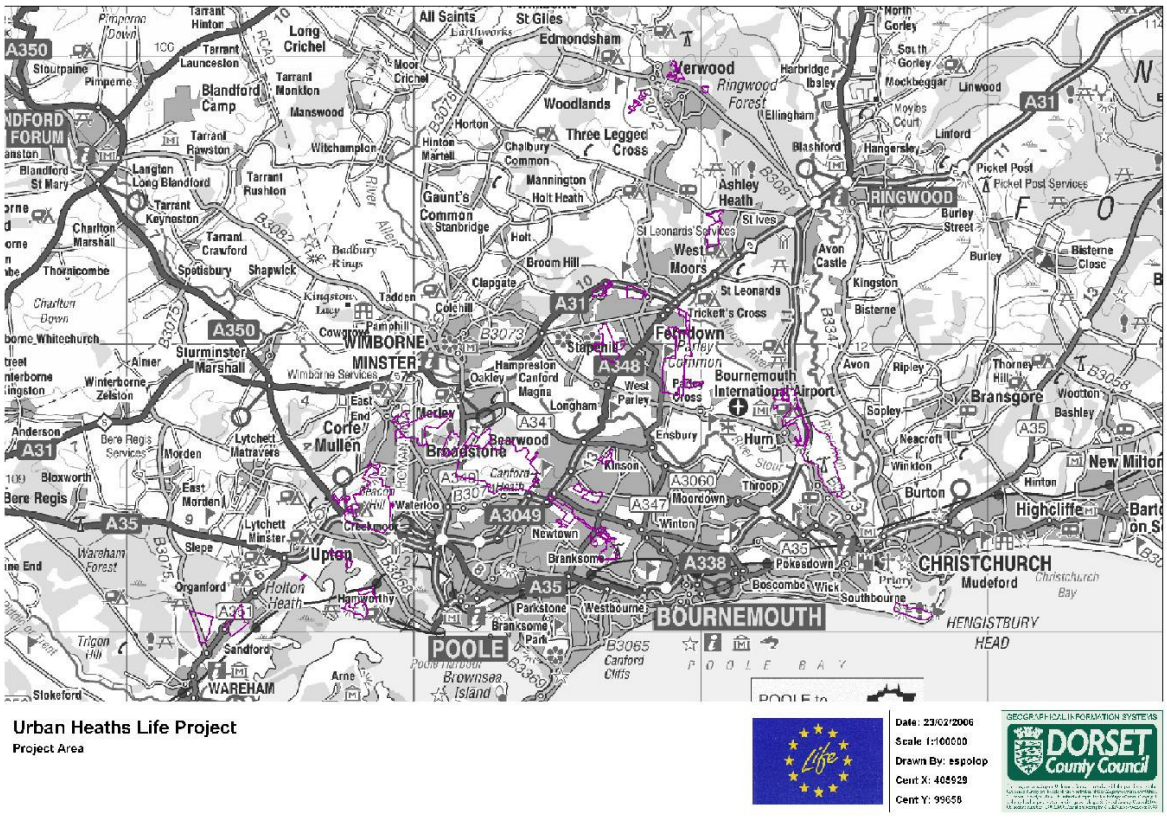
PROJECT SCOPE

D1. The project described in this annex is the Urban Heath LIFE Project, which ran from mid-2001 to mid-2005, funded jointly by the European Union's LIFE-Nature fund and by members of the Urban Heaths Partnership in Dorset. Since 2005 work steered by the partnership has continued and reference is made to this where it helps to illuminate the significance of the 2001-05 project, hereafter referred to as "UHLP" or "the project".

Location and area covered

D2. UHLP targeted the 25% of Dorset's heathlands in or immediately adjacent to the urban areas in south-east Dorset, principally Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch, and extending to the small towns of Wareham in the west and Verwood in the north. Nearly half a million people live in the area. A total of 49 heaths were covered by the project, ranging in size from Canford Heath at over 380 ha on the edge of Poole to small patches of heath surrounded by housing and other built development such as Kinson Common in Bournemouth at 16½ ha.

D3. Ownership varies, even within heaths: for example, there are 13 different landowners on Upton Heath (216 ha) including private owners, the Dorset Wildlife Trust and two local authorities; and the heath falls within three local authority areas.



Nature of the area

D4. The heaths are all SSSI, many being designated as Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites. Some heaths contain protected and unprotected ancient monuments, including bronze age tumuli; others have old military structures and quarry pits.

D5. The heaths are not identical. The vegetation structure and animal population varies. The larger sites all have wet, humid and dry ecosystems within their boundaries, while some of the smaller ones only contain one or two habitats.

D6. Much of the heathland is managed for conservation and recreation purposes, with management often contracted out to the Dorset Wildlife Trust, the Herpetological Conservation Trust[21] or a local authority. Some isolated patches in private hands are being left unmanaged in anticipation of receiving conservation payments as an alternative to the landowner exercising extant permissions to carry out sand or gravel extraction work. Scrub encroachment is a common problem, but grazing animals help manage it.

D7. Given their urban and peri-urban locations and ease of access, the heaths are subject to urban pressures including dog fouling, litter and fly-tipping, trampling by feet and horses, damage from motor vehicles and bikes, erosion of vegetation by wind and rain, disturbance to wildlife, and arson.

[21] The HCT is a national charity established to further the conservation of amphibians and reptiles, with its headquarters in Bournemouth.

Drivers for the project

D8. UHLP has its origins in collaborative activity through the Dorset Heathland Forum, a loose affiliation of conservation organisations and local authorities, starting to work out a policy for the rural and urban heaths. During the 1990s most of the work to stop the loss of heathland focussed on influencing planning *policy*. Attention moved to the *management* of heaths under the leadership of English Nature[22], supported by a £4.7m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve habitat management. This project was part of the national Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage programme and was known in Dorset as Hardy's Egdon Heath, running from 2001 to 2006.

D9. Previous experience had shown that although the improvements in management were applied to the urban heaths as well the rural heaths, the human activity pressures on the urban heaths meant that the effects of management measures were easily undone. Pressure on central government, in particular from the Herpetological Conservation Trust, led to the former DETR[23] inviting an inspection of the Dorset heaths under the Council of Europe Bern Convention[24]. This led to Recommendation 67, adopted in December 1998, which advised the UK Government to develop a policy for the urban heaths. Specific recommended measures included:

(a) stricter controls on development near the heaths;

(b) the creation of alternative play spaces in new housing development;

(c) prevent mineral extractions, including a review of existing permissions;

(d) strengthen wardening and police presences;

(e) improve fire-fighting facilities;

(f) engage local residents, schools and volunteers in prevention and conservation activities;

(g) expand the police-led GIS approach to fire prevention and management, extending it to heathland management generally.

D10. Central government accepted the recommendations, and encouraged the Dorset Heathland Forum to explore the scope for a bid to the EU's LIFE programme for funding to implement the approach outlined in Recommendation 67. The work was led by the County Ecologist at Dorset County Council, as chairman of the Forum.

D11. Those concerned to protect the urban heaths were aware that public perception of the heaths was a major and adverse driver of the behaviour that caused the damage. Many people regarded the heaths as uninteresting areas of wasteland, fit for any sort of uncontrolled activity, with no understanding of their importance for wildlife and the need for careful management. For example, dog walkers are major heath users, yet at the start of the project there was widespread ignorance of the effects of nutrients in dog faeces which smother native heathland vegetation. Those who started heath

[22] English Nature was incorporated into Natural England from October 2006.

[23] Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. The relevant functions transferred to Defra in 2001.

[24] Properly known as the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, it is a binding international legal instrument which aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats and to promote European co-operation in that field.

fires or destroyed vegetation with motor bikes caused more immediate and devastating damage.

D12. Against this background, it became possible to involve the Dorset Police and the Dorset Fire and Rescue Service in the LIFE bid. The initial reaction of both services had been lukewarm, given other priorities, but once the Forum was able to point to the link between damage to urban heaths and anti-social behaviour, and the importance of engaging communities in addressing the issues, attitudes shifted to positive cooperation. This intensified as it became clear that LIFE funding could be used to provide additional resources directly for the two services, and that additional wardening resources and a dedicated education programme using experienced teachers could have more impact in schools than visits by the uniformed services.

D13. A further driver for action was a progressive hardening of English Nature's stance on the SSSIs. In the 1970s and 1980s, considerable development had been allowed on the urban heaths – about half of Canford Heath was lost to housing. The protection regime introduced by 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act strengthened conservation action; and a review of the heaths provided evidence that some heathland species were rarer than had been believed. This new evidence contributed to a Secretary of State decision to refuse to confirm a planning permission granted for development on Canford Heath.

Aims and objectives

D14. The subsequent LIFE bid was based on the premise that changing public attitudes was the key to reducing unacceptable behaviour on the heaths. It envisaged a strong partnership education-led approach to deliver a range of actions aimed at managing people rather than managing sites.

D15. The UHLP bid became the project with only minor variations. It was designed to address the four key threats - trampling, fire, disturbance, and public perception - arising from the level of public access to the heaths and the lack of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the heathlands' importance for wildlife. The main areas for action were identified as:

(a) Improve ability to prevent and tackle heathland fires.

(b) Deliver an education programme aimed at preventing abuse of heathlands.

(c) Provide a community action programme to gain local support for heathlands.

(d) Provide integrated communication between all partners.

(e) Demonstrate the effectiveness of actions.

D16. The action components of the bid strongly resembled Bern Convention Recommendation 67. The main activity strands were:

(a) Providing infrastructure: improving access for fire vehicles, installing a new fire hydrant, restricting access for motor bikes by fencing.

(b) Expanding the wardening service: recruiting seasonal wardens for peak misuse time (the summer), using wardens to inform and encourage people to get more from their visits, to run walks and events, to educate dog walkers about the consequences of dog walking, to improve the reporting of incidents of misuse.

(c) Improving monitoring of incidents: support for Heathwatch or "friends" groups, demonstrating that the police do respond, collating information and mapping them using GIS applications.

(d) Delivering an education programme, targeted on schools linked to the greatest numbers of incidents.

(e) Facilitating better communication: a common system linking wardens and emergency services.

(f) Driving and coordinating activity through a dedicated project team.

D17. The bid was approved by the European Commission in July 2001, with funding of £1.2m over 4 years to be matched by members of the partnership. The match funding was provided in staff time. Partners did not benefit in direct proportion to their contribution, and there was an element of subordinating self-interest to delivering the overall project goals (but see paragraph D22c).

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

D18. A partnership was put in place, made up of the 5 local authorities (1 county council, 2 unitary authorities, 2 district councils), Dorset Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, English Nature, the Herpetological Conservation Trust and Dorset Wildlife Trust. Of these, the County Council, Poole Borough Council, the HCT and Dorset Police constituted the project management board. Other organisations, including RSPB, National Trust, Greenlink[25] and Forestry Commission were involved in advisory roles. The project believe that the involvement of the police and fire services in this way was unprecedented in a conservation project.

D19. The partnership structure was also designed as a safeguard to ensure that the additional resources bought with the LIFE funding were pooled rather than allocated to individual authorities (unless the money was being used for a service-specific function, such as fire-fighting equipment). A key pooled resource was the wardening service, with wardens deployed according to the needs of UHLP rather than in line with an individual partner's priorities.

D20. The County Council saw its role as that of enabler, with a degree of impartiality, being the only one of the local authorities that was not a planning authority and employing specialist advisers who could be deployed in support of the project. It also provided the chair for the partnership, employed the project officer and acted as lead authority for financial control.

D21. Partners believe that the history of joint working established under the Dorset Heathland Forum enabled the new partnership to be pulled together more easily: people knew one another and a basis of trust already existed.

Key influences on decision making

D22. The key influence on decisions during the life of the project was the project bid, to which the European Commission required adherence as a condition of funding. The main drivers for the project taking the overall form it did are outlined above; this section highlights examples of why individual actions were incorporated into the bid.

[25] A partnership of south east Dorset's local authorities and Natural England, working together on countryside issues across the area.

(a) *Focus on fire-fighting*. Partners recognised that the most intractable and damaging issue to resolve was that of heath fires. Although education and police action might deter some arsonists, there was no certainty that the number of fires could be reduced to zero. Accordingly ability to control fires and minimise damage to the heaths was a priority for all partners, and approximately 20% of the total budget was allocated to measures specifically targeted at improving the control of fires including the purchase of new equipment.

(b) *Improving understanding between partners.* Historically, the relationship between Fire Service personnel and site managers and wardens had not been good, stemming from different priorities when controlling fires: the fire officers saw controlling or putting out the fire as first priority, whereas the conservationists considered insufficient priority was being given to wildlife and the habitats. The project decided to pay for training so that all parties improved their understanding of their respective roles, and for improved electronic communications between site staff and the emergency services.

(c) *Differences on priorities*. From the early stages of working up the bid there were differences between the sectoral conservation organisations, notably the HCT, and the public service authorities. The former wanted action concentrated onto their land, and did not always trust others to take action on their behalf, whereas the latter were bound to spread resources equitably.

Community engagement

D23. Given that a key aim of UHLP was to change public perceptions of the heaths through education, community involvement was unusually intense for a conservation project, and detailed monitoring of changes in public perception was undertaken (see paragraphs D36-37).

D24. Education activities included:

(a) Development and delivery of an education programme:

(i) using professional teachers, rather than relying on over-stretched ranger staff;

(ii) developing education resources packs linked to national curriculum key stages, supplied free to schools;

(iii) targeted on schools nearest to where problems had been in the past, ie those within 2km of a heath (though other schools would receive visits on request);

(iv) co-ordinated between agencies so that the same school did not receive closely consecutive visits from (say) a heath warden and a fire officer, and that messages were consistent.

(b) Holding activity-based educational events on the heaths.

(c) Working with young people using existing groups, such as scouts, through youth workers, and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

(d) Approaches to individuals by wardens to explain the consequences of dog fouling, trampling vegetation, etc.

D25. Community engagement activities included:

(a) Talks by the project manager to groups unconnected with conservation.

(b) Inviting parish councils to updating meetings.

(c) Working with 11 volunteer Heathwatch Groups, some of which predated the UHLP and which were formed specifically to look after the heaths, and a further 8 which keep an eye on the heaths as part of their wider activities. Training and information material are provided to the volunteers.

(d) Publicity, through signage, a UHLP exhibition trailer, a website, media releases, speaking at conferences

D26. The harder edge to community engagement came through police enforcement activity where advice was having no effect.

Evidence base

D27. There is considerable literature about the impact of urban pressures on heathlands, including several English Nature/Natural England research reports.

D28. Although UHLP was largely policy-driven, principally by Recommendation 67, the local problems it sought to address have been documented. Sources include fire statistics, SSSI monitoring surveys, public perceptions surveys. However operational information, for example about the extent and severity of fires, was poor.

D29. During the project the quality of some information was improved, particularly relating to incident reporting, including fires. For example, mapping of fire incidents using GIS showed a pattern of proximity to schools, which enabled the education and enforcement efforts to be targeted accordingly.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

D30. Approximately two-thirds of the budget was spent on employing staff: the project manager and support; the education officer; wardening staff including a senior warden; and the Heathland and Wildlife Protection Officer at Dorset Police. There was some delay in putting the project manager and other core staff in place, and in the first summer seasonal wardens were employed separately by three of the partners.

D31. The project was delivered in line with the bid. The main variations were:

(a) Overspends on some items and underspends on others.

(b) Because of the delay in appointing the project manager three partners went ahead and appointed their own wardens, contrary to the agreement in principle about pooling. Coordination was achieved from 2002 onwards.

(c) A decision not to set up Junior Heathwatch groups, intended look at problems on their local heath and accept some responsibility for solving them. The change arose from concerns that setting up groups with a relatively narrow focus would not sustain interest by young people and about the need for CRB checks on all the adults involved. The objectives were delivered instead by using existing groups.

(d) A decision to expand the (adult) Heathwatch groups from being a fire warden service to take on a more broadly-based heathland protection role.

D32. The key on-the-ground implementation issue was public reaction to changes in the heaths and in attempts to change public behaviour. Partners state that the majority of dog walkers accepted the advice about dog fouling given by wardens, though a hard core minority continues to ignore requests. A common perception reported among dog-walkers was they were the only users of the heaths.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

D33. The expected benefits were defined as:

(a) Areas defined as damaged at the start of the project would achieve "favourable" or "recovering" condition status at the end.

(b) Better monitoring systems to document the extent and severity (including ecological impacts) of fires would be in place and used to target warden and police activity against arsonists; and that the number of fires, and their extent and severity, would reduce.

(c) Reductions in fly-tipping would prevent, and even reverse, the spread of the urban heathland ecotone.

(d) Reductions in disturbance would contribute to an increase in the breeding by specific Annex 1 species on the urban heaths.

(e) The public perception of heaths would improve.

D34. Specific milestones and outputs were included in the bid, though these were in the nature of deliverables rather than outcomes.

Monitoring

D35. Deliverables were monitored as part of project management.

D36. Monitoring surveys to assess progress in changing outcomes were carried out as follows:

(a) Site user surveys were carried out by the wardens in 2002 and 2003 to provide information on visitor access patterns. The shift patterns operated by the wardens limited the times at which information was collected, and thus the usefulness of the surveys.

(b) Fire and other incident monitoring was put in place from 2002: this includes coverage of fly-tipping, motorbike and vehicle misuse.

(c) Arrests by police are recorded.

(d) A condition survey was carried out by English Nature in 2005.

(e) Public perception surveys were carried out in 2003 and 2005, using earlier 1995 and 1997 surveys as a baseline.

Evaluation

D37. The project has not been independently evaluated, but some self-evaluation based on available data has taken place. At the end of the project, the main findings were:

(a) The trend in numbers of fire incidents appears to be downwards, although the figures are not statistically significant when weather variables are taken into account.

(b) There have been no major fires since 2003, and the smaller size of fires is attributed to UHLP actions to provide better equipment for the Fire Service, better wardening (including public eyes and ears) and a readiness to report a small fire as a potentially major problem, and the provision of better maps and information to assist access and judgements about likely severity.

(c) The consistent decline in conservation status of the heaths has been halted. 8 SSSI management units out of 138 on the urban heaths continued to deteriorate over the lifetime of the project, though all were privately owned by non-participants in the project. Assessment suggests either a reduction or no increase in the effects of urban pressures on the breeding populations of the Annex 1 species.

(d) The partnership has proved to be a robust way of delivering multi-agency goals.

(e) The number of police arrests for arson rose from 0 in 2001 to 39 in 2003 and 12 by the time of the project closure in mid-2005.

(f) The 2003 public perception survey showed an increase in awareness of the consequences of fires compared to the mid-1990s baselines.

(g) The 2005 public perception survey showed no significant change over 2003, though there were some minor shifts in a positive direction. For example, 25% of those surveyed reported they understood that heaths were man-made.

D38. The partnership recognise the limitations of these surveys and measurements. The conclusion is that there is still some way – at least 5 to 10 years - to go before firm evidence is available about the effectiveness of the UHLP measures. There are divergent views as to whether the benefits would have been achieved without UHLP, although the sceptics agree that the project has delivered benefits more quickly than would otherwise have been the case. The achievement of long-term change is viewed as not readily compatible with short-term funding.

THE FUTURE

D39. The end of UHLP is defined by the end of the LIFE funding. The issues the project began to address remain live, and the partnership continues to operate, as was the intention. The emphasis of its work is expected to change from discouraging misuse (eg do not start fires) to encouraging responsible use (eg stay on paths to avoid committing an offence of disturbing wildlife).

D40. Since the ending of UHLP, four more organisations have formally joined the partnership: Purbeck District Council, RSPB, National Trust, Forestry Commission.

Policy changes

D41. Development pressures, driven by population growth, will continue. An ageing population may lead to greater visitor numbers. The specific context within which the partnership will have to operate has changed in two important respects:

(a) The introduction of open access from autumn 2004 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 means that the urban heaths are advertised as places where open access is available. The expectation is that visitor numbers will

increase on some heaths. Mapping showed that there were particular risks to nature conservation and key interest features on urban heaths, as well as some well-used rural heaths.

(b) The evolution of Natural England's approach to development on or adjacent to protected heaths, together with changes in ways in which the Habitats Regulations are applied to regional and local development plans, has led south-east Dorset's planning authorities to re-assess their policies on granting permission for development. Put briefly, Natural England considers that further residential development within 5km of a protected heath in Dorset would have adverse impacts on the heath, but is prepared to agree to development in a range between 400m and 5km from the heath on condition that suitable mitigation measures are put in place. Mitigation is to include measures to divert recreational pressure away from heathland (in particular, by creating new green space for recreation) and access management measures. The cost of the mitigation measures is to be paid by developers under a standard formula. An Interim Planning Framework was adopted by the local planning authorities in January 2007, for a 3-year period, which gives effect to this strategy while Natural England and the planning authorities further research the effects of urban pressures on the heath so as to secure a longer term solution.

D42. The creation of new green space envisaged in the Interim Planning Framework – known as "alternative natural green space" (ANGS) – is key to the mitigation measures. The aim is to take pressure off the heaths, though some participants consider it may prove problematic to move people from the heaths to an ANGS, for example where existing housing means there is no available land to create an ANGS but there is a convenient heath. The provision of ANGS will be delivered through the planning system, not by the partnership.

Funding

D43. The policy changes have implications for the resourcing of the partnership. Some £300k annually is needed to replace the LIFE funding. Resources for the partnership have come from:

(a) The partner bodies continuing to make staff time available.

(b) A successful time-limited bid to the Access Management Grant Scheme[26] for funding to continue and expand education and wardening work to respond to the access issues raised by the CRoW Act (see paragraph D41a).

(c) Payments by developers for mitigation measures under the Interim Planning Framework, for use in supporting the partnership's community education and awareness work with the aim of ensuring improved behaviour avoids any net increase in urban pressures on the heath following new development.

D44. The current housing market downturn makes the supply of developer contributions uncertain, which puts continuation of the services delivered by the partnership at risk.

D45. Expenditure decisions by some local authorities have meant a reduction in local authority wardens, leaving the partnership wardens – intended as an additional resource - to fill the gap.

[26] Operated at the time by the Countryside Agency, now by Natural England

D46. The initial decision that members of the partnership, particularly local authorities, would make contributions of staff time rather than cash is seen as having allowed much of the work to go unnoticed by senior officers and councillors, thus weakening the partnership's ability to lever financial contributions from them. Given the timescales involved in securing lasting change (see paragraph D38), closure of the project risks undoing the value of the work to date. Alternative funding sources have not yet been secured.

FURTHER INFORMATION

D47. The project website is at www.dorsetforyou.com/index.jsp?articleid=335886 .

HUMBER MANAGEMENT SCHEME

Summary: A formal process – defined in national legislation and administrative guidance - for engaging multiple public bodies, industry and user groups in managing a major estuary so as to facilitate the co-existence of human activity and European protected habitats and species.

HEADLINES

- Driven by legislative requirements and policy guidance.
- Partnership within a formally defined structure, but much informal joint working alongside.
- Co-opts volunteer special interest groups to a common purpose.
- Limited wider community involvement, especially at the start.
- High potential for conflict, but this is managed away.
- Minimal and voluntary funding requirement

PROJECT SCOPE

Location and area covered

E1. The Humber Management Scheme (HMS) is focussed on a single defined area, the Humber Estuary European Marine site, which is made up of the marine components of three separate statutory designations: Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, and a Ramsar site. The area extends west several miles into each of the tidal rivers Trent and Ouse, east out to Spurn Point on the Yorkshire coast, and south to just north of Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast.

E2. The HMS does not extend beyond the level of Highest Astronomical Tide because it covers only the marine components – ie areas covered continuously or intermittently by water - of the designated sites. However the scheme recognises that activities in adjacent areas can impact on the marine protected area, and appropriate management actions are included: an example is the importance of high tide roosts outside the HMS area for the waterfowl species in the Special Protection Area.

E3. At approximately 30,550 ha, the Humber is one of the UK's largest estuaries, draining around 20% of the total land surface of England and providing the largest single output of water from Britain into the North Sea. Over 400,000 people live on the Humber tidal floodplain, with a total population of about 11 million on the catchment as a whole[27].

Nature of the area

E4. The estuary is multi-functional, being used for industrial, trade and recreational activities, to provide land drainage and space for flood management, and to support wildlife and natural habitats. Spurn Head, for example, provides a base for a lifeboat station, a wildlife reserve and a contribution to flood management.

[27] Environment Agency estimates.

E5. The physical characteristics of the estuary have enabled a significant range of habitats and species to be supported. Habitats include: salt meadows, extensive intertidal mudflats and sandflats, sandbanks, lagoons, tidal reedbeds, and unvegetated sand and shingle. Species include river and sea lampreys, protected birds (eg marsh harrier, avocet, and golden plover), waterfowl, migratory birds (eg knots, lapwings and redshanks) coastal and wetland invertebrates and grey seals. Some of these are of international significance.

E6. The main impacts on the protected site are from urban developments, sea defences, industrial use and dock-related activities. The sea defences enclose much of the estuary. Industrial complexes such as chemical works, oil refinery complexes and power stations dominate areas of its shores. The Humber is a busy waterway, used by some 16% of the UK's total port traffic[28]. Grimsby and Immingham alone account for 11.4% of the total, the largest volume of any UK port.

E7. The range of recreational activities in and around the estuary includes: angling, horse riding, walking (alone, in groups, and with dogs), wildfowling, bird watching, sailing and other personal watercraft including jet skis. Cleethorpes is a seaside resort within the estuary, which generates associated leisure and business activities. There is potential for conflict between some of these activities, for example between birdwatchers and wildfowlers.

E8. Administratively, the management of the estuary is influenced by the policies and actions of multiple organisations and authorities, including port operators, local authorities, statutory national and sub-national agencies, water companies and Internal Drainage Boards.

Drivers for the project

E9. The presence of significant human activity in proximity to the protected habitats creates actual and potential conflicts which need to be managed. This is the principal driver for the Humber Management Scheme.

[28] DfT figures for 2007

E10. The initial impetus came from the 1999 proposal by English Nature to designate the estuary as a European Marine Site. Industry and economic development interests – including the newly-established Regional Development Agency – reacted with concern, identifying designation as a potential constraint on growth. Subsequent discussions, in which Associated British Ports played a leading role on the industry side, led to agreement to develop a joint approach to the management of the estuary.

E11. The Scheme has developed in line with statutory provisions and administrative guidance. The Habitats Regulations require public bodies with functions that could impact on the marine area within or adjacent to a European Marine Site ("relevant authorities") to exercise those functions so as to comply with the Habitats Directive. The Regulations make provision for those authorities to establish a single management scheme for the site as a means of facilitating compliance with the Directive. Detailed guidance on the constitution of management schemes was issued by the former DETR[29] in 1998, and the Humber scheme has been developed taking account of this guidance.

E12. The development of the Scheme was driven by the relevant authorities coming together, from 2000 onwards, to form a Humber Estuary Relevant Authorities Group (HERAG). Membership was initially 37 authorities, reducing by amalgamations and reclassifications to 34, comprising 5 navigation and harbour authorities, 6 local authorities, 16 internal drainage boards, 2 water companies, 2 fisheries committees, Ministry of Defence (because of its responsibility for regulation of a bombing range), Environment Agency and Natural England. The Environment Agency provided the first Chair. Community engagement was factored into the management arrangements (see paragraphs E23-28), but has not been identified as an initial driver.

E13. The HMS was preceded by a plan with similar objectives – the Humber Estuary Management Strategy (HEMS), published in June 1997 as a response to PPG 20 on Coastal Planning (1992), the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (1994) and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994). HEMS brought together a range of public bodies, private companies and representative organisations to explore many of the issues that would be central to HMS. The absence of resources to fund a project to implement HEMS meant that it remained a paper strategy. Nonetheless it provided a basis – in identifying issues, raising awareness of them, and developing partnership working – for the subsequent work to develop and implement the HMS.

Aims and objectives

E14. The aims and objectives of the Humber Management Scheme have been refined, though not changed in substance, in the light of experience. The overall aim has remained consistent.

Overall aim

- Subject to natural change, maintain the favourable condition of the site through the sustainable management of activities

E15. Specific objectives have been developed by the relevant authorities to support achievement of this overall aim. The objectives derive directly from the principal driver for the scheme (see paragraph E9).

[29] Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions; the relevant functions transferred to Defra in 2001.

Final Scheme document, May 2006:

- Help maintain favourable conservation status and avoid deterioration of the area's natural habitats and species;
- Promote the sensitive and sustainable use of this area;
- Consider action that will improve conservation interest and reduce conflicts with other activities.

Business Plan for 2008-2010, issued July 2008

- To provide a forum for the Humber relevant authorities, to share best practice and ensure consistent management of the Humber European Marine Site.
- Encourage participation at the widest level, engaging the community and voluntary groups, businesses, local and central government, and public and regulatory bodies, all leading to more informed decision making.
- To work in partnership towards the sustainable management of the Humber Estuary European Marine Site.
- To allow sustainable development of the area whilst taking measures to maintain the favourable conservation status of the site.
- Encourage joint initiatives and educational opportunities.
- Link with national and international estuarine groups to promote best practice and integrated action generally.
- Provide project costs and funding for research to promote the achievement of the aims and objectives.

The emphasis on activities and processes in the Business Plan elaboration was designed as a partial refresh of the objectives, to maintain interest and momentum within the participating authorities and the advisory group (see paragraph E23 onwards).

E16. The objectives are designed to be achieved through a series of management actions relating to specific topics:

Management actions:

- Fisheries
- Flood Defence and Land Drainage
- Water Resources
- Water Quality (including waste management)
- Land use: high tide roosts
- Land use: Saltmarsh management
- Recreation and tourism
- Science and education
- Shipping and navigation
- Ministry of Defence aircraft activities

DECISION MAKING

Formal machinery

E17. In line with the legislation, the HERAG takes the major decisions about the development, content and implementation of the HMS. It meets twice a year. The seniority of representation varies between authorities Not all Internal Drainage Boards attend, with some being represented by a single officer.

E18. Because of the size of the group, much of the work has been carried out through a smaller working group currently comprising Environment Agency, Natural England, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the Harbour Master (employed by Associated British Ports), one representative of the Internal Drainage Boards, and the Chair of the Humber Advisory Group (see paragraph E23 onwards). A key role of the working group is to give direction and guidance to the HMS project officer, who is funded by the relevant authorities for a half-week.

E19. Working group members tend to have very direct interests in the HMS. For example:

(a) Natural England is responsible for monitoring the condition of the protected sites.

(b) Environment Agency is responsible for flood defence, flood management, pollution control and migratory fisheries.

(c) East Riding of Yorkshire Council has the longest coastline of any of the other HERAG local authorities.

(d) The harbour and navigation authorities – represented by the Harbourmaster (though he is also an independent regulator) – need facilities adequate to receive larger ships.

E20. The HMS decision-making machinery is not some form of joint authority and remains separate from authorities' statutory functions: there is no requirement for them to submit (for example) proposed consents for major projects to HERAG, although there may be other requirements, such as those under the Habitats Regulations. The aim is that authorities should act in accordance with the HMS, but HERAG's own competence is limited to taking decisions about the HMS itself. HMS is primarily about activities, not projects. A key strength is that it requires the authorities to engage with the issues and each other. However, each relevant authority is responsible for funding and implementing actions assigned to them under the HMS.

E21. The types of decision taken by HERAG include approving business plans, budgets, and deciding on actions in response to project officer reports and advice from HAG. The working group prepares the ground for many of the above decisions, eg in reviewing drafts of the business plan and budget, detailed oversight of projects.

E22. Outside the formal machinery, there is frequent informal contact between the main players. A side-product of the work to develop the HMS has been to improve relationships between them, and issues are regularly discussed – and wherever possible resolved – outside of formal meetings.

Community engagement

User groups, interested parties and experts

E23. The administrative guidance on European Marine Sites emphasises the importance of involving landowners, user groups, conservation bodies and other local interests in the development of management schemes and recommends that the relevant

authorities should consult with one or more advisory groups representing these interests. At an early stage, HERAG took steps to establish the Humber Advisory Group (HAG). This was achieved through an advertised public meeting at the Hull Guildhall in November 2001, following which HAG was established. To that extent, HAG membership has been self-selecting. Its formal terms of reference are defined in an annex to the HMS, and so the group is an integral part of the Scheme. Its central formal role is to provide advice to HERAG, but it is engaged in practical delivery activities as well (see paragraphs E26-27). In practice HAG has decided itself how much of the formal remit can be delivered.

E24. HAG has met up to 4 times a year. Meetings alternate between the north and south banks of the estuary to facilitate attendance by groups who find it difficult to travel. It is serviced by the HMS project officer, though during 2002-04 the secretariat was provided by the staff of the Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies at the University of Hull while the project officer was fully engaged on developing the HMS itself. Its small running costs are funded by HERAG. The Chair or Vice-Chair of HERAG normally attends meetings, and the Chair of HAG is a member of HERAG, so there is a formal 2-way communication mechanism in place.

E25. 26 organisations are represented on HAG, a mix of conservation and wildlife organisations, sports bodies, local business, academic institutes, a parish council and a tourist information office. These include local and national organisations. HAG sees itself as a constructive partner within the HMS, not as a lobbying group. In this role it provides a vehicle for resolving tensions between potentially conflicting interests: as an example, wildfowlers and birdwatchers have been able to sit down together and recognise the interests they have in common, with acceptable conduct

set out in the codes of conduct (see paragraph E26b). Ease of access to the relevant authorities in a way that individual members of the public might not achieve is an incentive for organisations to take up HAG membership.

E26. The organisations represented on HAG provide a pool of volunteers available to undertake general and specific tasks within HMS. In particular:

(a) Acting as "eyes and ears", eg in identifying unacceptable behaviour, spotting changes in the size or shape of marshes, trends in use of particular areas by the public. Organisation members and the public have been invited to complete questionnaires as part of these activities. The data limitations of this type of monitoring are obvious, but it is seen as better than having no data at all. Feeding this sort of information back into HAG and, as necessary HERAG, means that these bodies are given access to more information than the project officer would be able to obtain single-handed or than would be accessible through the relevant authorities' own field staff.

(b) Developing the codes of conduct, which in a single leaflet explain the importance of the marine site, describe the HMS, and give guidance on what to do to avoid damage to the habitats and species. Individual topics covered are: birdwatching; general advice on safety at sea and waterborne recreation; and the activities asterisked in the box below. Pragmatically, these drew on existing codes of practice developed by the national organisations involved. The format of the codes has recently been reviewed by HAG and new codes and leaflets are to be published soon.

E27. Some of the management actions forming part of the HMS are being implemented in partnership with HAG:

Angling	Jet/water skiing and power boating
Cockle gathering	Motorised access to foreshores
Plant gathering	Motorised recreation on foreshores*
Access	Samphire collection
Angling	Walking
Airborne recreation	Wildfowling
Bait digging	Field trips - universities/schools
Dog walking	Guided walks and activities
Horse riding*	

These activities are ones over which the relevant authorities have no direct control, limited competence and/or expertise, and to which the expert groups represented on HAG can make a significant contribution.

E28. The combined HERAG/HAG structure has assisted in bringing together industry and conservation interests, though it is not the only driver. To some extent this cooperation goes back at least to the 1997 strategy work, but the 1999 designation proposal for the Humber crystallised not only the gap between environmental and economic development interests but also the common ground about the value of the estuary in economic, social and environmental terms. This led to the formation of Humber INCA[30], a neutral and independent organisation supporting the co-existence of economic development activities in partnership with the environmental organisations. Humber INCA has a broader remit than the HMS. It is a member of

[30] INCA is an acronym for Industry Nature Conservation Association

HAG, and employs the HMS project officer because HERAG has no legal structure for employing staff – the postholder is funded for half a week by HERAG for HMS work and the other half by Humber INCA. Humber INCA organises the annual Humber Conference, to which the HMS contributes £1,000 of the costs. In 2008 over 100 people attended and 41 different organisations were represented.

The wider community

E29. Other than the sole parish council, there is no representation of the "wider community" on HAG, though it is argued that many of the people representing specialist interests are also members of their community. Membership of HAG is open, and there is no bar to other interested individuals and groups participating. Others do attend meetings, for example the police. But HAG is not immune from the common challenges involved in reaching out into the wider community.

E30. The extent to which the wider community understands the aims and objectives of the HMS is uncertain: there is no reliable evidence. Efforts have been made to raise public awareness of the importance of the site, and of the Scheme and the issues it seeks to address. In particular:

(a) A newsletter – "Ebb and Flow" – published since 2002, initially annually but now with a target of two issues per year. The distribution is 2,000 printed copies per issue, and it is available on the HMS website.

(e) The signage project, which involved the erection of 14 information boards at popular and busy points around the estuary, explaining in lay language the conservation objectives, the reasons for them, and the role of the HMS in supporting their achievement.

(f) Occasional talks to local groups.

(g) The HMS website, originally produced in 2005 when the scheme was launched and updated in March 2009. The new site has been re-designed to include a more interactive 'look and feel', with the aim of encouraging wider participation in the scheme.

E31. Anecdotally, there are indications that these activities have raised awareness of the HMS and its aims. One local authority with coastline both within and outside the estuary commented that contacts from members of the public relating to the Humber

were frequently passed on from the HMS project officer rather than made to the council direct.

E32. Engagement has been easier to facilitate in the context of specific development projects rather than the (to many) abstract nature of the HMS. For example:

(a) the Alkborough Flats project – which allowed some 440ha of agricultural land to flood in exchange for new wetland habitat creation and new jobs in conservation, visitor management and green tourism – did engage the local community;

(h) at Kilnsea, the Environment Agency worked with the local community to resolve problems over providing economically and environmental acceptable flood defences for the village and its environs.

These and similar projects were informed by the HMS, with the Habitats Regulations a particular influence.

E33. There have been suggestions that the HMS process could have made greater efforts to engage the wider community at an earlier stage, and that doing so would have strengthened awareness of and support for the protected site across a broader base.

Evidence base

E34. The key element of the evidence base for the HMS was the so-called "Regulation 33" package of advice[31] from English Nature. The advice – which is classed as interim because not all the designations in the Humber area had been approved at that stage – was formally provided in April 2003, though in advance of publication those developing the HMS were in touch with those in English Nature developing the advice package. The purpose of the package is to give advice, in relation to the Humber Estuary European marine site, to the relevant authorities on:

(a) the conservation objectives which are the starting point for developing management schemes and monitoring programmes, as they provide the basis for determining what is (or may in the future cause) a significant effect), and for informing on the scope of appropriate assessments of plans or projects. The conservation objectives set out what needs to be achieved and so deliver the aims of the Habitats Directive.

(i) operations which may cause deterioration of natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species, as the basis for discussion about the nature and extent of the operations taking place within or close to the site.

The advice also supports identification of the extent to which existing measures of control, management and use are, or can be made, consistent with the conservation objectives, and so focus the attention of relevant authorities and surveillance to areas that may need management measures.

E35. Natural England has no plans at present to update the Regulation 33 advice, for this or any other European marine site. Although confirmation in 2004 of the merger of several SSSIs to create an enlarged designated area in the Humber meant that a small number of features and areas were not covered by the advice, Natural England's view is that in practice the relevant authorities consider all features and so there is no practical significance in the gaps.

[31] So called because it is given under Regulation 33(2) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994

E36. Baseline data on species in the Humber was assembled in a 2003 study for English Nature carried out by the Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies at the University of Hull. This had a wider potential application than HMS but contributed to the HMS evidence base.

E37. A significant number of studies, policy statements, guidance and legislative requirements are cited in the individual management actions plans.

E38. The earlier Humber Estuary Management Strategy (see paragraph E13) identified a set of 13 key issues, with objectives to address each issue, for the management of the Humber. These were carried through or subsumed into the HMS management actions plans.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

E39. The HMS was formally launched in July 2005, after 4 years of preparation, though the current definitive scheme document was issued in May 2006. Crucial throughout the development process and the subsequent operational period was the availability of an effective project officer (the current postholder is the third incumbent). The project officer post was full-time during the development period, up to July 2006, after which it became half-time. The role is primarily about:

(a) acting as the first point of contact for all matters relating to the HMS, and either resolving issues or passing them on to the relevant authority;

(j) managing specific projects approved by HERAG, eg signage;

(k) managing communications, including the newsletter and website content;

(l) providing secretariat services to HERAG and HAG, including preparing meetings, drafting the business plan and annual report, and managing the funding;

(m) following-up and progress chasing on agreed actions.

E40. The importance of the project officer role is illustrated by the temporary loss of momentum observed by several participants when the current project officer was absent on sabbatical leave in the latter part of 2008. One view held is that more could be achieved in terms of improving synergies with marine spatial planning initiatives if the post reverted to being full-time.

E41. The presence of 34 authorities in HERAG, all with an equal voice, offers a potential for obstructions to progress. Within the high-level HMS objectives, many of the authorities will have differing priorities and agenda. In practice, careful management has obviated difficulties, with the following factors perceived as particularly relevant.

(a) Having simplified representation for internal drainage boards, for example 3 boards are represented by one officer and 2 boards by another.

(b) Focussing on actions that are largely uncontroversial, such as the signage project and the codes of conduct.

(c) Recognising that certain issues – such as the need to meet the conservation objectives - are not up for negotiation.

(d) Good personal relationships between the many of the representatives, enabling difficulties to be identified early and resolved informally if possible.

E42. Resources have not been a significant issue. Although there is no requirement for relevant authorities to provide funding, they are asked to contribute a sum based on

their functions and remit in relation to the estuary. Most do, but not all. Organisations with similar or equal land holdings or stakeholder involvement pay the same. In practice this means that the major contributions are made by Associated British Ports, Environment Agency and Natural England. Annual expenditure over the period of the current 3-year business plan is projected not to exceed £50,000, as against annual income from authorities' contributions of just under £40,000: the difference is funded either by project-specific grants or from modest reserves.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

E43. The HMS has not been conceived in terms of delivering benefits: the word "benefits" occurs only once in the scheme document, and then in a quotation from government guidance. It has been developed for a specific purpose, namely to maintain the favourable condition of the marine protected area. The detailed management actions in the scheme are presented in terms of the impact of an activity on the condition of the site and the action to be taken to limit such impacts (see the box on Shipping and Navigation). Targets relate to the delivery of specific actions, rather than the outcomes to be achieved: the working assumption is that all will contribute to the overall favourable condition goal. The exception is the set of targets contained in the Regulation 33 advice package, to be used by Natural England in monitoring the condition of the site (see paragraph E33).

> The "Shipping and Navigation" management action plan identifies spillages from vessels and harbour installations, and the associated clear-up operations, as having significant effects on site, depending on the size of the spillage. These effects include smothering of species, removal of sediment, and toxic contamination. All other activities, such as dredging, discharges of effluent and vessel movements are judged to have no significant effects.
>
> The management actions focus on monitoring and surveillance to ensure compliance with rules and regulations: dredging, discharges and vessel movements are all regulated in various ways. This is a preventative approach and, for this reason, no adverse impact of the activities on the site is assumed. In the case of accidental spillages, management actions focus on an effective response to the incident, including reviews of contingency plans and training exercises.

E44. The above also illustrates the difficulty in assigning benefits to the HMS. The actions to minimise adverse effects to the site are in many cases required to enforce legal requirements not peculiar to protected sites, eg on discharges.

E45. Against this background, the added value of the HMS is presented less in terms of measurable outcomes and more in terms of processes seen to be beneficial: see the current Business Plan objectives (box at paragraph E15). These processes generate deliverables, such as the promulgation of the codes of conduct (currently being revised) and the erection of information boards ("signage") at key locations around the estuary.

Monitoring

E46. Monitoring operates at three levels within the HMS: the condition of the site, compliance with regulations and other requirements, and the effectiveness of the HMS as a delivery vehicle.

Condition monitoring

E47. Natural England is responsible for monitoring the condition of the site, though is able to draw on information held by relevant authorities. An example of the type of monitoring undertaken is in the box below. Staffing constraints have meant that Natural England has not made as much progress as intended, though particular attention has been paid to assessing saltmarsh units in the upper estuary.

Example of Condition Monitoring, from the Regulation 33 advice.			
Interest Feature	*Attribute*	*Measure*	*Target*
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	Extent	Area (ha) of intertidal flats, measured periodically during the reporting cycle (frequency to be determined)	No decrease in extent from an established baseline, subject to natural change.
	Topography	Tidal elevation and shore slope, measured periodically during the reporting cycle (frequency to be determined).	Shore profile should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change

E48. Not all of the condition change, whether positive or negative, can be definitively attributed to actions taken under the HMS, and some – such as coastal squeeze – are beyond HMS influence. Where human activity can be identified as a contributory factor to change, the issue can be remitted to the HMS to address.

E49. In addition, there is informal and largely uncoordinated information about the condition and use of the area (see paragraph E26a)[32].

Compliance monitoring

E50. Relevant authorities monitor compliance with management actions set out in the HMS. In many cases, this monitoring will be of the actions of the relevant authorities themselves, eg in issuing consents in line with legislation and practice, enforcement of regulations. Authorities report on an annual basis to HERAG on each of the management actions, and the information is published in the HMS Annual Report.

HMS delivery monitoring

E51. Actions which are the collective responsibility of the HMS bodies rather than individual relevant authorities – in practice, specific projects and the operation of HERAG/HAG including communications – are reported on in the Annual Report. To date, there has been no systematic attempt to assess the impact of these activities.

E52. The project officer participates in a network of European marine site project officers, for exchange of experience and mutual support. She also represents HMS in, and is elected secretary for, the Coastal Partnerships Working Group, which has a national

[32] A more structured volunteer monitoring programme is the Wetland Bird Survey. However, this data will be used to assess whether the Humber European Marine Site is continuing to make an appropriate contribution to the Favourable Conservation Status of the species across Europe , and is not part of the Humber Estuary's condition assessment.

membership base and which assists with information flow on policy and other relevant developments, particularly on Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

Evaluation

E53. HERAG and HAG members took part in a self-assessment workshop in 2007 using a scorecard model developed by Natural England's marine protected areas team. The aim of the self-assessment was to provide a baseline of information about the workings of the site management arrangements, and it is expected to be repeated during 2009.

E54. Formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the HMS has not been carried out, and the consensus is that it is probably too early for anything more substantial than the monitoring, annual reporting and self-assessment currently in place. A worthwhile evaluation would need to attempt to include "negative" measures, such the extent to which the HMS mechanism had prevented disputes between authorities occurring in the first place. However, there is recognition that an evaluation of its impact is needed as part of discussions about the future (see next section).

THE FUTURE

E55. The main physical changes to the estuary are expected to arise from coastal erosion and managed flood defence. These will happen irrespective of the HMS.

E56. Prospective policy and operational changes are expected to have implications for the HMS.

(a) The Marine and Coastal Access Bill and the forthcoming draft Floods and Water Bill, where the existence of HMS is perceived by some participants to be an advantage in implementing the new requirements.

(n) Defra's review of internal drainage boards, which may change the number of relevant authorities responsible for internal drainage, with a consequent impact on the number of HERAG members.

(o) The development of the river basin management plan under the Water Framework Directive.

E57. To date, HERAG has not explicitly considered what changes may be needed to the HMS to respond to these developments. There have been informal discussions but detailed assessment of the implications is expected to await enactment of the legislation and completion of the review.

E58. The HMS is expected to continue for as long as legislation requires such arrangements to exist. Some participants have speculated that even if the requirement were removed, something very similar to the HMS would continue because of the perceived benefits. Others have suggested that in the light of the forthcoming changes identified above, some rationalisation of the partnership machinery would be preferable or even essential.

E59. There has also been speculation that the remit of HAG might be broadened, to make use of the expert membership base HERAG will be considering this and related issues.

FURTHER INFORMATION

E60. The HMS website is at www.humberems.co.uk

THAMES GATEWAY GREEN GRIDS

Summary: A major initiative to deliver multi-functional urban green space across a growth area, influenced by a hierarchy of strategies and policies, and illustrating both the challenges of multi-tiered partnership working and how targeted resources can achieve results.

HEADLINES

- Integral part of a major policy-driven regeneration programme, driven by both central government plans and sub-regional initiatives.
- Public sector the major player, though with private sector and NGO resources integral to delivery.
- Operating at different spatial scales, with multiple levels of partnership and decision-making mechanisms.
- Decisions on competitive funding bids a key influence on what actually happens.
- Pre-existing projects influenced and informed by, and benefiting from, the overall programme.
- Good evidence of delivering multiple benefits, less evidence of use of an ecosystems services approach.
- Use of mainstream local authority processes for community consultation, though with some one-off tailored initiatives for consultation and engagement.

PROJECT SCOPE

Location and area covered

F1. Thames Gateway is a huge, long-term regeneration programme initiated by central government, designed to provide at least 225,000 jobs and 160,000 new homes. The Gateway covers East London and the Essex and Kent sides of the Thames estuary, a total of 120,000 ha, of which one-fifth is water.

F2. This report reviews activity to develop green infrastructure within the programme area. In the interests of manageability within the scope of this study, it focusses on:

(p) The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, and within it the Thurrock Council administrative district.

(q) The Thames Chase Community Forest, in the London Borough of Havering and adjacent to the South Essex Partnership area.

(r) In north Kent, the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway initiative, and relevant councils and partnerships within the area.

The aim of this approach, which is selective, is to illuminate different facets of green infrastructure activity within Thames Gateway[33].

[33] There is an East London green Grid, not covered in this report.

Nature of the area

F3. Alongside areas of multiple deprivation and an industrial environment of ports, factories, quarries, power lines, waste sites, storage tanks and derelict land, there are internationally designated areas for nature conservation, including extensive wetlands. Substantial tranches of agricultural land, ancient woodlands, and over 40 marshes are present. One-fifth of the land area can be classed as "wilderness". Historical and cultural resources are found throughout the Gateway.

F4. There are wide variations in character. East London is predominantly urban, south Essex is characterised by low-lying land, while the landscape of north Kent is more undulating, with the North Downs to the south. All contain a mix of built-up and open spaces. Despite this diversity, the Gateway area has been described as "one coherent place"[34].

F5. Green space is present in different forms throughout the Gateway area, even in the most urban areas. These spaces include parks, school grounds, canal and railway corridors, woodlands and areas within and surrounding housing developments, as well as the wetlands, inter-tidal areas and open countryside. Much is in public ownership, but farms, business parks, development sites and domestic gardens are all key elements of the total green space.

Drivers for the project

F6. Although at first sight Thames Gateway appears a top-down programme, the drivers for the projects described here operate at different administrative tiers and there are drivers independent of any public authority. Drivers are not always sequential or clear-cut, with a proliferation of strategies, policies and other guidance a marked feature.

National policy

F7. The origins of a national driver for green infrastructure planning in the Thames Gateway go back to RPG9A, the planning framework document for the Gateway issued in 1995, which emphasised the need for "an overall improvement in

[34] In Sir Terry Farrell's Parklands Vision report, Communities and Local Government, 2008.

environmental quality"[35]. The guidance noted the presence of existing initiatives in the area, including the Thames Chase Community Forest, and highlighted for local planning authorities the importance to quality of life of accessible open space. Apart from the need to respect protected habitats and other sites, the amenity and educational value of other ecological resources and landscapes – particularly in areas that already were or would become developed – was seen as important. The guidance noted the potential for joining up open spaces.

Extract from RPG9A:

- A 'green grid' could be created to join the main open areas with river frontages and to link existing and new communities. The grid should be identified in development plans and safeguarded by planning policies. (para 5.4.16)

F8. Although central government has subsequently issued more detailed guidance on green space including *Greening the Gateway* in 2004/05[36] followed by the Parklands programme in 2007 (see paragraph F11), the publication of RPG9A was seen as a significant stimulus to the development of green grid thinking and planning in the Gateway area, and some of the current initiatives can be dated back to it. There is a perception that over the period in which central government policy was evolving, the green grid concept being developed early on at sub-regional level provided a framework of consistency and continuity.

F9. The *Greening the Gateway* strategy provides a specific framework for the government's plans "to promote liveability and a good quality of life" in the Gateway area. In particular the strategy promotes the concept of landscape as "functional green infrastructure" with multiple practical roles contributing to an enhanced quality of urban life.

Functional green infrastructure as envisaged in *Greening the Gateway*:

- Landscape character and heritage: landscape developments – built and natural - should reflect and reinforce local variations in the character of the Gateway area.
- Setting for development: new planting should complement existing greenspace, and be put in place well ahead of built construction to enable people to move into new communities with established green surroundings.
- Water resource management: new planting should be designed and managed with water conservation as a priority; tributary rivers and streams should form key elements in the greenspace network; as part of flood defence, sustainable urban drainage schemes and the adaptation of land alongside water courses to permanent or occasional wetlands should be integrated into planned development; where possible, planted areas should be raised as ridges above predicted flood levels to serve as containment bunds and as dry access routes.
- Recreation: footpaths, cycleways and public transport connections should

[35] *The Thames Gateway Planning Framework: RPG9A,* Department of the Environment, 1995, para 5.4.2.

[36] *Greening the Gateway: A greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway*, ODPM/Defra, 2004; and *Greening the Gateway: Implementation plan*, ODPM/Defra/Thames Gateway, 2005.

form an access network extending from urban centres to the wider countryside for recreation.

- Health and well-being: green space has been shown to reduce stress, vegetation filters pollution with benefits to conditions such as asthma, and exercise contributes to healthy living. Allotments, community gardens, urban farms, commercial smallholdings contribute to the greenspace network and offer opportunities to connect people with fresh food supplies.
- Accessible wildlife: designated sites and species must be protected from the consequences of new development, but wild places should be made accessible to people on a scale consistent with maximising ecological integrity.
- Increased biodiversity: land management practices should minimise pollution run-off into the rivers; brownfield land and established greenspace in urban areas should be valued as forming an important and complex ecosystem.
- Social inclusion and employment: caring for local greenspace builds community spirit and ownership, which in turn protects the investment in the landscape; new greenspace offers jobs in construction, maintenance and green waste management.
- Education: greenspace and its contents have an important educational role.

F10. The *Greening the Gateway* implementation plan identified sources of funding for green space projects, including the government's own Thames Gateway Programme fund, local authority funding, s106 contributions and other sources including Lottery money. The availability of funding was a key driver in turning policy into practice.

F11. The government's Thames Gateway Parklands programme aims to provide a network of accessible, high quality and sustainable landscapes and waterways which capitalise on existing natural, built, historic and cultural assets. As the programme provides £35 million in funding for projects in the Gateway area, it has become a recent significant driver of green space activity.

Regional policies

F12. Three spatial strategies impact on Thames Gateway: in East London, the Mayor's London Plan; in south Essex and north Kent, the respective regional spatial strategies for East of England (published May 2008) and South-east England (in draft form).

F13. The East of England Plan sets out a policy of protecting and developing green infrastructure for a range of purposes, including health, recreation, non-motorised transport, biodiversity, flood attenuation and carbon management[37]. It specifically relates green infrastructure to urban fringe development, and encourages the further development of community forests, including Thames Chase. It notes[38] "there are significant advantages to be gained through a strategic vision for urban fringe management of an extended area, such as the Green Grid in Essex Thames Gateway".

[37] Policy ENV1 on green infrastructure.
[38] In relation to policy SS8 on the urban fringe.

F14. The South-east England draft RSS[39] includes several policies with relevance to green infrastructure. The main policy – CC8 – stresses the need "to plan, provide and manage connected and substantial networks of accessible multi-functional green space" and the supporting text identifies combatting climate change as an explicit objective of planned green infrastructure.

F15. The impact of regional plans on the initiatives described here is uncertain. As noted above, national drivers have been instrumental in setting the policy context for green infrastructure in Thames Gateway. The regional plans serve to confirm consistency of approach and reinforce the policy that the need for green infrastructure is not limited to the major growth areas. In future they will drive relevant policies in local development frameworks, so providing a lever to incorporate green infrastructure in local planning policies.

Sub-regional and local drivers

F16. Below the regional level, the drivers start to become more closely linked to local plans and aspirations, articulated through NGOs and private sector developers as well as public bodies.

F17. The practical importance of having sub-regional and local greenspace strategies was set out in the *Greening the Gateway* implementation plan, which stated that in allocating funding the government would "continue to give priority to quality greenspace projects that can demonstrate their fit with sub-regional and local greenspace strategies".

Sub-regional

F18. The driver to develop greenspace strategies at a sub-regional level reflected the sub-regional partnership structure set up for Thames Gateway as a whole. Hence the early preparation of a green grid strategy by the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership. The partnership viewed the development of green grid strategies as a key component of its work, driven in part by the assumption that an attractive environment encouraged inward investment. The work done to develop Thames Chase Community Forest – one of the earliest Countryside Agency[40]-sponsored community forests – was influential in the content of the green grid strategy by demonstrating what could be achieved through multiple use of a single site.

F19. The absence of a strategic approach across north Kent was recognised by the local authorities, Groundwork and RSPB who, together with regional partners, commissioned a proposal for a North Kent Regional Park. Although the regional park proposal did not proceed in its presented form, it did demonstrate the strength of the case for a strategic approach to green infrastructure, leading to the formation of Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM) as a focussed partnership aimed at driving a step change in the level of environmental investment in north Kent. This developed the cluster study work to provide the sub-regional strategy (see paragraph F45).

Local

F20. Local authorities that have developed specific green grid strategies – such as Thurrock Council – are now incorporating them into local development frameworks to

[39] Version incorporating the Secretary of State's proposed amendments.

[40] The landscape, access and recreation functions of the Countryside Agency were incorporated into Natural England in 2006

act as an in-built driver. Thurrock's decision to have a green grid strategy was influenced by:

(a) The proposed increase in urban development and in population as part of the Thames Gateway Growth Area.

(b) The need for adaptation and mitigation for climate change and increased flood risk.

(c) Poor use of, or access to, existing green space.

(d) Existence of major barriers (such as major roads) to movement of people and wildlife through the borough.

(e) Deficiency of accessible open space in some parts of the borough.

(f) The role of good quality greenspace in attracting business and investment in previously degraded areas, and in providing a sense of pride and place.

F21. On the Kent side, the Kent Thameside regeneration partnership[41], one of the three local development vehicles in the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, prepared a green grid strategy starting in 1998. There were two specific drivers: the inclusion of a green grid in the partnership's vision for the area developed in the early 1990s; and the availability for the work of £100,000 funding over 5 years from the Countryside Agency[42], with additional contributions from Kent County Council and the two borough councils. Local green grid plans are also in place for the Medway Council and Swale Borough Council areas.

F22. A further driver for embedding green grids into local planning policies was the driver for local authorities to develop open space strategies under central government planning policy[43], including undertaking open space audits. However this was not a driver for green grid strategies themselves, which in many cases pre-dated the open space audit requirement.

[41] Covering the boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham, in north-west Kent.

[42] Now incorporated into Natural England.

[43] Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002

Non-governmental organisations

F23. The development of green infrastructure is seen by many NGOs as a means of advancing their own objectives. For example, RSPB became involved in land management and acquisition in south Essex in 2001 where they saw great potential for delivering nature conservation in line with their objective of opening up conservation to the population in general. In particular, they wanted to develop reserves at a landscape scale and locate them nearer to centres of population. RSPB therefore worked with, and influenced, authorities and organisations developing the South Essex Partnership green grid strategy.

Aims and objectives

F24. National and regional aims and objectives are summarised above, as the principal drivers for planned and funded green infrastructure in the Thames Gateway. This section describes the aims of the sub-regional and local partnerships.

South Essex

F25. The South Essex Partnership Greengrid Strategy, completed in 2005, is defined as a strategy "for the development and management of the overall Greengrid in South Essex" and sets out the key objectives to be achieved.

South Essex Greengrid Strategy:

The key objectives of the Greengrid are to:

- embrace different habitats and land uses across rural and urban boundaries
- connect new communities with existing neighbourhoods and the regenerated riverside across spatial and conceptual boundaries, providing improved 'access for all'
- conserve and enhance existing sites and links
- conserve and enhance biodiversity
- create well-designed and high quality new elements in identified areas of opportunity and need
- contribute to improved environmental sustainability and enhancement through flood-risk management, improved air and water quality and noise abatement
- create a distinctive 'sense of place' through enhancement and celebration of landscape character and heritage
- enhance the image and confidence in South Essex as a high quality place to live, work and invest
- engage all communities with an interest in the planning, management and celebration of the network
- plan and promote the network as part of a broader sustainable environmental agenda including the transport system
- promote use of the network for recreation and tourism, education and healthy living; and
- promote employment creation, and learning and skills development through environmental activity.

F26. The strategy is seen as very broad, without realistic delivery goals. The newly-appointed programme manager is working to develop a business plan setting out priorities against expected available resources.

F27. At the local level, Thurrock Council's Greengrid Strategy covers the period 2006-2011, with the aim of "creating a sustainable network of multi-functional greenspace and links within Thurrock's towns and countryside".

Thurrock Council Greengrid Strategy Objectives:

- Create high quality, multifunctional green space to meet the needs of the current and future communities.
- Green urban areas on the doorstep and link them with the wider countryside through a network of green spaces, and to improve access to open space in line with Thurrock's open space standards.
- Promote a network of footpaths, cycle paths, and green transport options that encourage healthier living.
- Conserve and enhance international, national and locally important biodiversity assets, and to create new assets.
- Create an inclusive network of open spaces and green links that can be enjoyed by all members of the community.
- Create an accessible and vibrant riverfront.
- Provide a network of accessible, child friendly, inspiring and multi-functional open spaces.
- Enhance Thurrock's important heritage, with the creation and enhancement of green infrastructure.
- Secure delivery of a greenspace network for managing flood risk, adaptation to climate change, creation of renewable energy infrastructure and local food production.
- Enhance the perception of Thurrock as a place to live and work, and improve the key features of the landscape to provide a 'sense of place'.

F28. The Council recognises that the strategy is ambitious, and work is proceeding on development of an action plan that is deliverable.

F29. The Thurrock green grid strategy has also been taken into the Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation's urban regeneration framework, so providing a yardstick against which proposals for funding could be assessed.

Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation: Urban Regeneration Strategy

Strategic Goal 6: To Enhance the Quality and Use of Valuable Green Space

Policy 2: Implementing the Green Grid

• The Spatial Plan will integrate Green Grid requirements. This will involve a consideration of riverside ecology with flood defence schemes, which will be an important matter for the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Flood risk must be assessed at a regional and national level.

• Green Grid requirements will be integrated as required in all land projects,

buildings and infrastructure that the Corporation is involved with, either through development control or direct engagement.

North Kent

F30. GGKM defines its vision to "achieve a radical transformation in the quality of the urban environment across north Kent, together with the conservation of adjacent high-quality countryside assets and improves access to them". The underlying thesis is that although much has already been achieved, a fundamental shift is required in the planning, design, funding and maintenance of green infrastructure. It plans to achieve this by focussing on three core objectives underpinned by a set of priorities for the period 2007-2010. These are planned to be achieved by working with stakeholders and communities.

Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway: Core objectives:

- Transform the environmental quality and green connectivity of our *built environments*
- Conserve, restore and enhance the quality and accessibility of our *natural environments*
- Engage people from all backgrounds in understanding, enjoying and caring for our *historic environment, culture and heritage*.

F31. At the local level, green grid objectives are defined in local strategies. For example Kent Thameside Green Grid has a business plan covering 2007-2010 with 6 strategic objectives supported by 17 operational objectives: the latter are largely process objectives to support partners developing and delivery specific projects. Medway Council and Swale Borough Council have developed green grid action plans: Medway's plan is disaggregated into 5 areas (eg waterfront projects, marshes projects) to help non-experts relate to the plans. The three local regeneration partnerships also have green infrastructure policies.

Thames Chase Community Forest

F32. The 12 community forests in England have been developed as a model for community involvement, inclusion, environmental regeneration and green infrastructure creation.

Community Forests: objectives:

- *Supporting regeneration & growth*: by making towns and cities more attractive places in which to live, work and do business; and by attracting new investment and creating new jobs and enterprises in environmental management, wood products, recreation, leisure and tourism.
- *Building sustainable communities*: by working closely with local communities, and harnessing the enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of local people, mobilising and helping them improve their local area and enhance their health, well-being and quality of life.
- *Creating better places*: by enriching the environment and creating new facilities for recreation and leisure, and by enhancing quality of place and making our towns and cities more sustainable and attractive places to live and bring up families.

F33. Like other community forests, Thames Chase has been planned as a mosaic of wooded landscapes and other land uses – including meadows, ponds and an apple orchard - located on the urban fringe close to where people live and work.

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

F34. The decision-making and influencing machinery across Thames Gateway is complex: only those parts most relevant to green infrastructure in the selected areas are identified here.

F35. For co-ordination across the Gateway area, a Greening the Gateway Partnership board is in place, chaired and serviced by Natural England. Membership includes all local authorities in the Gateway area, NGOs (including RSPB, Groundwork and the wildlife trusts) and central government departments with an interest. The board was established by the former Countryside Agency following the Sustainable Communities Plan of 2003, and it now forms part of the overall Thames Gateway programme machinery managed by Communities and Local Government on behalf of the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership.

F36. CLG is also an integral part of the decision-making chain in that it allocates funding to specific local projects from its Thames Gateway programme budgets. The current example is the Parklands programme, confirmed in the 2007 Delivery Plan[44] and which provides a budget of £35 million. The three Thames Gateway sub-regional partnerships submitted bids, each receiving funding for 5.

F37. At the sub-regional level, arrangements reflect the partnership approach applied to the Thames Gateway programme centrally:

(a) In south Essex, there is a green grid partnership within the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership structure, formerly chaired by the Partnership but – after a hiatus during which Natural England temporarily chaired - now to be chaired by the new Parklands programme manager funded by Essex County Council. . Membership includes both project delivery bodies and advisory and funding bodies: government departments and national environmental agencies, the RDA, all the local authorities and the associated local regeneration partnerships, and NGOs including BTCV, Essex Wildlife Trust, Groundwork, RSPB and Sustrans. In addition, Natural England is funding a delivery officer to project manage both the Parklands delivery and the wider Greengrid business planning and implementation.

(b) GGKM has a strategy group within the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership structure, chaired by the chief executive of the main partnership and with a membership very similar to its Essex counterpart. It is supported by a full-time director, funded by Kent County Council and Natural England, and based in RDA offices. A smaller task-focussed group made up of the local authorities, the local regeneration partnerships and Natural England work with the director on specific issues.

F38. The partnerships are there to encourage proactivity and positive planning, adding value by bringing different perspectives together to help identify opportunities, synergies and solutions.

[44] The Thames Gateway Delivery Plan, November 2007

F39. The key decisions taken are normally about:

(a) the level and nature of support to be provided at the sub-regional level, for example on developing opportunities for larger scale projects, identifying synergies, gaps and duplication across partners' green grid plans, on marketing the green infrastructure concept, and business planning;and

(b) setting priorities and selecting projects to put forward for funding on behalf of the sub-region. This does not preclude individual partners from putting forward their own projects, but where the bid is into a central government programme endorsement by the partnership is usually necessary.

F40. At the local authority level, decisions are taken as part of each authority's normal machinery, typically:

(a) Adoption of green infrastructure aims within planning policy.

(b) Integration of green infrastructure issues into other service policies, eg education, transport, rights of way.

(c) Support for individual project proposals, whether financial or on consistency with other policy grounds.

(d) Negotiation with developers on the provision of green space in individual projects.

(e) Community engagement arrangements in relation to green infrastructure proposals.

F41. Local regeneration partnerships will take similar sets of decisions within their areas of responsibility.

F42. The three lead officers for each of the sub-regional green infrastructure partnerships meet informally at regular intervals to discuss issues of common interest, including relationships with CLG and the Homes and Communities Agency.

Key influences on decision making

F43. The key influence on strategic decision-making has been the policy drivers outlined above, which are carried through into sub-regional and local plans. The key question – which cannot be definitively resolved in a study of this scope – is how far these policy drivers are carried through to local authority operational level, in particular the stated importance of developing integrated programmes of projects.

F44. The consultants preparing the proposal for the North Kent Regional Plan noted that there was a lot of activity from individual authorities and organisations to deliver green space incrementally but that, with some exceptions, this was not joined up across site and administrative boundaries, leading among other things to adjacent authorities competing for the same pot of money for similar projects[45]. The establishment of GGKM was intended to address this issue and the beneficial effects are becoming evident; but there is anecdotal evidence that individual district-level local authorities and their clients remain the principal determinants of what projects are put forward for funding.

[45] *Linking estuaries, downs and towns: scoping study for a North Kent regional park*, LDA Design, 2004, para 7.1.1.

F45. The consequence of this is that higher-level strategies need to recognise this reality. GGKM has responded by undertaking 8 “green cluster” studies, each focussing on a different regeneration area across the partnership area. For each cluster area, the studies set out what is already happening, record stakeholder aspirations, identify inter-dependencies, gaps and opportunities, define a coherent sense of place and a common vision for the area, and develop an action plan and business case for investment. Cluster steering groups will work with GGKM to identify lead partners for each area and develop and take forward the action plan.

F46. This approach ensures the direct involvement of local authorities, including parish councils, and local interest groups. For example, the Isle of Sheppey cluster study involved 5 parish and town councils and 6 specifically local heritage, nature conservation and community organisations, as well as Swale Borough Council and other partners within wider north Kent. There was a less active response for the Ebbsfleet cluster study, but GGKM were able to access information from local authority work on open space strategies and from consultations carried out by Land Securities.

F47. Other influences on decision-making include:

(a) The availability of funding: proposals are shaped by the terms of funding programmes, and those with the best ‘fit’ are more likely to be successful. The current Parklands funding programme, for example, has focussed attention in all three Thames Gateway partnerships on projects which satisfy the funding criteria. Other sources include landfill tax trusts and Lottery schemes. Local authorities can access funding direct through s106 developer contributions. Funding is not limited to one-off projects: for example, Natural England is targeting higher-level scheme stewardship funding on identified priorities, of which the growth areas are one (and the Parklands programme in particular). Long-term funding for maintenance is also an issue: see paragraph F63.

(b) The availability of sites: local bodies with their local knowledge are usually well placed to identify sites for specific projects, which accounts for their influence in the decision-making process. However, current funding policies suggest that it is easier to obtain approval for a large block of land on a town edge (eg for a country park) than for projects to create or improve small sites inside urban areas. This may change as the drivers align behind the concept of Thames Gateway as an eco-region[46] (see paragraph F70).

F48. To assist decision-making, Natural England has produced green infrastructure planning guidance and a spatial planning tool, which informs judgements about what sort of site and what sort of green development will achieve the optimum return.

Community engagement

F49. Community engagement – both consultation and use - normally takes place at the individual project level. The higher-level strategies and plans have tended to be developed through partnerships of stakeholder organisations, with local authorities acting as proxies for their communities, although the GGKM cluster studies (see paragraph F45) secured some direct community involvement.

Consultation on projects

[46] See the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan, November 2007.

F50. Consultation on specific projects is normally handled through local authority consultative mechanisms, or by NGOs where they are in the lead. This is seen as particularly important on green space issues, where local community knowledge about current and potential uses is important and views about change can be strongly held.

F51. Consultation can also be carried out through specially designed exercises. For example a consultancy was engaged to assess public opinion on options for the development of a 74 ha former landfill site at Ingrebourne Hill, owned by the Forestry Commission within the Thames Chase site. The response was small, the identified reasons being (a) the area's demographic character and (b) the fact that the site was already regarded as a recreation asset in an area well endowed with greenspace.

Use of public green space

F52. A challenge for the promoters of public green space is to ensure the space is actually used. At Thames Chase Community Forest, for example, local people have regularly come to visit the site saying they had no idea it existed, despite signage and publicity material. Thinking through how to make a site interesting and attractive to users is now seen as a key element of the planning.

F53. As a recent example, at Ingrebourne Hill (see paragraph F51) the Forestry Commission developed a 6-month community engagement plan to run during the major construction period . This set out a programme of promotional and activity events, such as tree planting and volunteer recruitment, to raise awareness and to encourage people to use the new site.

F54. Since its establishment in the early 1990s Thames Chase Community Forest has continued to seek to engage local people through:

(a) Promoting the country parks, nature reserves and woodlands within the site, through publications and the website.

(b) Arranging programmes of events, often based at the Forest Centre.

(c) Providing an environmental educational resource for local schools and the public.

(d) Running a volunteer programme to help with staffing the café and shop, conservation work, and the education service.

(e) Operating a Forest Forum, which enables local user and other groups to express their views to the trust which has overall responsibility for the forest.

Nature reserves

F55. NGOs are keen to promote public engagement with, and support for, their work. In south Essex RSPB has involved 120,000 people over the past 3 years in a community engagement programme, using Big Lottery funding and, for a new visitor centre, Parklands funding. RSPB encourages people to attend events and their visitor centres, to volunteer and to participate in environmental education programmes.

Evidence base

F56. The evidence base across the Gateway area is disparate, although the development of green grid strategies did much to bring together locally relevant information. Extensive land use information is available through studies carried out for spatial planning, conservation and other purposes, as well as that held by Natural England

on designated sites and agricultural land, by the Forestry Commission on woodland, and by the Environment Agency on land quality, water resources and flood management. The Natural England spatial planning tool (see paragraph F48) is a further integrated source.

F57. Activity in the sub-regions has focussed on refining the evidence base to facilitate delivery of aims and objectives. For example both South Essex and GGKM are starting to map unfunded but developed, or developing, projects across their areas as a basis for business planning and funding bids.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

F58. The two significant sets of issues that have emerged are: funding, and complexity.

Funding

F59. Almost all sources of funding for green grid projects are competitive. There is anecdotal evidence of NGOs and local authorities bidding against each other for the same or similar projects.

F60. When a bid is successful funds – especially from central government programmes – are often required to be spent within a specific, and tight, timeframe. This risks sub-optimal solutions, for example by leaving insufficient time for community engagement or for preparing a site for planting by establishing a grass sward. There is some support for an approach under which central government provides the sub-regional partnerships with a overall sum for a programme rather than the present practice of funding being attached to individual projects.

F61. Public sector running cost budgets are severely constrained. The South Essex Greengrid Partnership was without a full-time officer for a significant period until agreement was reached for Essex County Council to fund the Parklands programme manager post and for Natural England to fund a delivery officer post, both from 2008/09.

F62. These constraints also limit the ability of authorities to allocate time and resources to developing funding bids, which can be required on short timescales.

F63. Projects with long-term maintenance and repair commitments have been held back because no organisation has felt able to take on the expenditure consequences of these commitments. One way forward is to secure a capital endowment to be administered by a managing trust: a trust arrangement is proposed for the long-term management of the Parklands projects, and the Land Restoration Trust has recently brokered such an arrangement at Canvey Wick

Complexity

F64. There is a strand of opinion that the Thames Gateway administrative arrangements have not always supported prompt delivery of green grid projects. Although the strength of the case for promoting integration of green infrastructure with the wider regeneration programme speaks for itself, , there is a sense that local planning and delivery arrangements have become complex. The volume of guidance and the multiplicity of partners, both replicated at different tiers, are factors; and the length of time between the initial development of the green grid concept locally and the finalisation of central government policies on green infrastructure is seen to have caused delays in developing sub-regional governance arrangements. However, these are not universally-held views.

F65. The Parklands programme has added a further complexity to the extent that its aims are not identical to the earlier green grid strategies and it is seen as focussing resources on selected projects rather than the wider growth areas.

F66. Nonetheless, partners are working within the structure to deliver results (see next section), and the strengths and advantages of partnership working are generally seen to outweigh the challenges. There is widespread support for the view that Thames Gateway has facilitated the incorporation of green space into development plans at an early stage rather than as an afterthought. There have been instances of organisations initially pressing their own project bids deciding to drop out of the competition in the wider interests of the sub-region. It is worth noting that during the period when the South Essex Greengrid Partnership board was unable to meet, the development of individual projects continued.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

F67. The intended benefits are the realisation of green infrastructure in line with the aims and objectives of the programme, as an integrated component of regeneration.

F68. Much has already been achieved. Examples completed or in progress are:

(a) In north Kent:

- a new inter-tidal habitat and riverside walkway as part of the Rochester Riverside development;
- a new linear park along the southern edge of Gravesend after the re-alignment of the A2;
- a new country park on former industrial land in Sittingbourne;
- an integrated programme for managing the marshes at Dartford, Erith and Crayford;
- a major new visitor and interpretation centre at the RSPB's Cliffe Pools Nature Reserve;
- a co-ordinated series of restoration and linkage projects along the 19-mile Darenth Valley Path;
- restoration of the canal basin and part of the Thames and Medway canal east of Gravesend.

(b) In south Essex:

- continued development of Thames Chase Community Forest, including the addition of the Ingrebourne Hill facility;
- the Greengrid Explorer, in which users can explore areas of greenspace with the aid of a pocket-sized mobile device receiving GPS data;
- enhancements to the heritage and conservation value of the Mardyke Valley, near Thurrock, and access improvements;
- creation of a new RSPB nature reserve at Rainham Marshes, with an environment and education centre;
- a network of Greenways connecting communities and open spaces by footpaths, cycleways and bridleways.

F69. There is clear evidence that the concept of multi-functionality and multiple benefits from land is understood and has been applied in many cases. Projects typically link together benefits to health, recreation, access, heritage, habitats and species, in varying combinations. There is less explicit recognition of climate change mitigation benefits.

F70. There is less certainty about the extent to which ecosystems services approaches have informed plans to date. There is increased consciousness of the value of the approach – for example Medway Council is incorporating it into its new local development framework – and Thames Chase Community Forest is seen as an exemplar, albeit not necessarily using the current language. The drive to develop Thames Gateway as an eco-region would logically favour funding bids which demonstrate that an ecosystems services approach has been incorporated: for example, energy use considerations might mean that small green spaces within urban areas are favoured at least as strongly as large edge of town parks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

F71. Because green grid activity is a sub-set of wider regeneration programmes, the focus has been on planning and delivery, rather than evaluation. Delivery of projects is monitored, both at project level and at sub-regional and funding body level, in line with the need for assurance. At the end of the day, it may well be the cumulative effect of the plans and projects that delivers benefits at the top of the scale: as Sir Terry Farrell put it, “One vision, a thousand projects”.

F72. Some public perception information is available, for example in visitor surveys at particular sites. The time available for this study meant that this information could not be identified and examined.

THE FUTURE

F73. The government's 2004 greenspace strategy for the Thames Gateway[47] envisages a roll-out of 25-30 years, though with interim milestones including "measurable improvement by 2008"[48].

F74. The immediate focus in the sub-regional partnerships is:

(a) to deliver the funded Parklands projects;

(b) to continue to co-ordinate planning and delivery of sub-regionally significant green infrastructure;

(c) to keep themselves fit for purpose to maintain momentum, to champion quality projects, and to challenge others to contribute; and,

(d) as previously noted, to continue seeking funds for prioritised projects.

F75. Further policy changes are not anticipated: the focus on the eco-region concept may be the most significant recent change in emphasis.

FURTHER INFORMATION

F76. The key green grid websites are:

Kent & Medway: www.gtgkm.org.uk

South Essex: www.greengrid.co.uk

[47] *Greening the Gateway: A greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway*, ODPM/Defra, 2004, page 3
[48] *Greening the Gateway: Implementation Plan*, ODPM/Defra/Thames Gateway, 2005, para 6.4

SOUTH PETERBOROUGH GREEN PARKS

Summary: A focussed initiative to deliver multi-functional urban green space in a growth area, influenced by a hierarchy of strategies and policies, and illustrating the problems which arise without a commitment of resources.

HEADLINES

- Strategy-led project bringing together and setting priorities for different strands of private and public sector activity to embed green infrastructure into a major urban extension on brownfield land within a growth area.
- Strong focus on benefits to communities and biodiversity.
- Significant reliance on the willingness and ability of a developer to design and fund green space as part of a long-term commitment to a site.
- Extensive stakeholder input into planning the project, with partners operating as a confederation rather than as a partnership with pooled resources.

PROJECT SCOPE

Location and area covered

G1. The South Peterborough Green Parks project (SPGP) is located to the south and south-east of Peterborough city centre. The project area stretches from the A1 in the west to the Nene Washes and Whittlesey in the east, covering approximately 2,600 ha. Most of the area is administered by Peterborough City Council, a unitary authority, but it extends at the margins into Fenland District to the east and Huntingdonshire District in the south, both within the Cambridgeshire County Council boundaries.

G2. Peterborough is within the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth area, and significant development is planned. Much of this will be to the south of the city centre, and the SPGP strategy is an integral part of planning for that development. This report illustrates the strategy by reference to one particular development - Hampton, a brownfield site of over just over 1,000 ha in the western part of the SPGP area.

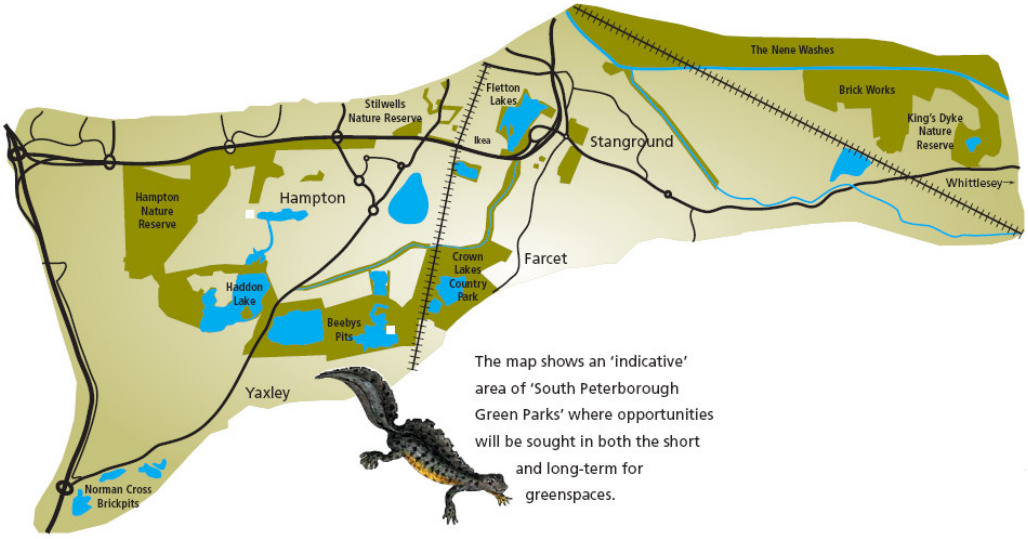
Nature of the area

G3. The project area forms part of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands[49] and has historically been dominated by the brick industry, with major clay extraction and brick manufacture. Brick industry operations continue in the eastern part, while the west is zoned for development. Although many quarries were filled in and covered, several open lakes remain.

G4. The area includes internationally important and protected wildlife sites, including the Nene Washes (a SAC/SPA and Ramsar site) and Orton Pit (Special Area of Conservation). At Orton Pit, the former brick clay workings comprise a series of linear spoil heaps and pools referred to locally as “ridge and furrow”, which has encouraged the development of a mosaic of habitats, in particular both open and dense scrub, rough grassland, ruderal vegetation, emergent and aquatic vegetation

[49] Joint Character Areas Map classification.

and open water pools. This is home to Europe's largest colony of great crested newts, and is one of the UK's two most important sites for charophytes (stoneworts) with 10 species present.



G5. There is some farming within the SPGP area, mostly so-called county farms inherited from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Drivers for the project

G6. In common with many green infrastructure projects, policy drivers have been particular motivators. These have operated at different levels, becoming progressively targeted into drivers for the SPGP project.

National, regional and local

G7. The main drivers for a green grid strategy for Peterborough as a whole have been:

(a) Central government policy statements on green infrastructure, including the 2003 action plan to deliver sustainable communities:

> We will promote more and better publicly accessible green space in and around our communities, for example through the creation of new country parks and networks of green spaces within towns and cities. 'Green wedges' and 'green corridors' will be given further protection through the planning system.[50]

(b) The planning system, particularly:

(i) PPG17 *Open Space, Sport and Recreation* which asked local authorities to undertake needs assessments of their open space requirements (and which led to production of an Open Space Strategy for Peterborough).

(ii) PPS9 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* which asks local authorities to use the planning system to protect and enhance biodiversity

[50] *Sustainable communities: building for the future*, ODPM 2003, para 4.12.

in sites additional to those that are statutorily protected where this would be beneficial, for example in joining up habitats and in supporting healthy functioning ecosystems.

(iii) The Regional Spatial Strategy, where the provision of strategic and connected green space will support several policy objectives.

(iv) Peterborough local plans, most recently the emerging Local Development Framework:

> The Council, working with local communities, developers and partners, will develop a Green Grid for Peterborough. This will take the form of an integrated network of high quality and multi-functional green infrastructure within and linking urban and rural environments. Key features of this Green Grid will include (but not be restricted to) the following:
>
> - The continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, paths and cycleways within the former brickpits to the south of Peterborough as the 'South Peterborough Green Parks'.
> - [*other points not shown*][51]

(c) Growth Area Funding, of which £1m was made available for the period 2006-08 for green grid work in Peterborough. This recognises the importance of having green space available as part of the overall infrastructure to meet the needs of the expanding population.

(d) A natural environment audit carried out in 1996 by the Peterborough Environment City Trust, with support from English Nature, which informed the local Biodiversity Action Plan. The audit looked at what had been lost as well as what remained, and so provided a baseline going back some decades. Natural England carried out a biodiversity audit in 2007, focussed on the SPGP area.

Green Grid Strategy

G8. These drivers lay behind the finalisation in 2007 of a Green Grid Strategy for Peterborough. This drew on existing related policies, including those mentioned above, as well as stakeholder aspirations to put forward the following vision for the next 20 years:

> **Vision for the Peterborough Green Grid**
>
> To create and positively manage an integrated network of high quality and multi-functional green infrastructure within and linking urban and rural environments that delivers:
>
> - Enriched biodiversity habitats and greater connectivity
> - Enhanced and sustainable access for all

[51] Peterborough City Council, Core Strategy Preferred Options, May 2008, para 6.15.10. Similar policies are being developed by Fenland and Huntingdonshire district councils.

- Diverse patterns of landscape and townscape character

for the benefit of all who live, work in and visit Peterborough, demonstrating its status as Environmental City.

G9. The Green Grid Strategy set out a series of proposed actions, grouped according to the strategy's spatial structure as follows:

(a) *Corridors – Green Grid Network: focus on the existing and future connections that form the biodiversity and landscape structure of the Grid*. Actions include:

(i) Use the main rivers, other cuts and drains and the existing landscaped parkways as corridors for biodiversity and landscape enhancement;

(ii) Create linkages improved linkages between woodland clusters;

(iii) Restore/create calcareous grasslands and traditional wetland/open water habitats;

(iv) Install green bridges/underpasses over major physical barriers to develop biodiversity connectivity;

(v) Protect, enhance and extend the mosaic of lakes, water features and woodland within the former brick pits to the south of Peterborough.

(b) *Sites – Major Green Infrastructure Sites: focus on providing enhanced and new major greenspaces to serve existing and populations arising from growth in the City.* Actions include:

(i) Create new strategic accessible greenspaces to the north-east and south of the City in association with planned major development;

(ii) Promote enhancement and better use of Country Parks and urban neighbourhood parks;

(iii) Identify and support new neighbourhood facilities associated with new development and new greenspace linkages between existing and proposed open spaces;

(iv) Support sites which promote arts and cultural heritage;

(v) Improve access to greenspace by public transport.

(c) *Wider Area Initiatives – focus on providing wider enhancement of the rural landscape and delivery of the Green Grid*. Actions include:

(i) Promote landscape and biodiversity improvements in the rural area which enhance local landscape character;

(ii) Appoint a Green Grid Officer to promote schemes, wider initiatives and coordinate funding bids.

G10. The Strategy included SPGP as a specific project, already identified and under way, which would contribute to delivering the overall vision. In relation to SPGP, the purpose of the strategy was seen as situating the project in its wider context, including potential access to Growth Area Funding, and applying common principles across all of Peterborough's green infrastructure activity.

G11. SPGP is the only area within the Green Grid Strategy that has a comprehensive delivery plan (see paragraph G15).

South Peterborough Green Parks

G12. The concept for SPGP was first developed in 2004 by English Nature[52], seeking to ensure protection and enhancements of the habitats and wildlife value of the land to the south of the city within the growth strategy. To that extent, there has been some retro-fitting of other policies to include SPGP as a delivery instrument.

G13. Within SPGP, the major driver on the ground is private sector urban development. At Hampton, in the western part of the area, O&H Hampton Ltd are funding : the construction of over 7,500 homes; community facilities including schools, playing fields and community centres; and commercial and retail areas providing 12,000 jobs. The developer's plans provide that 50% of the total area will be green space, an unusually high proportion. Completion is not expected before 2019. To the east, the land is owned by Hanson plc, who have also been fully involved in drawing up the SPGP delivery plan, though development is less advanced there. The relationship between development and the ability to create greenspace is considered in paragraphs G24-25.

Aims and objectives

G14. The vision for SPGP was developed from English Nature's original 2004 concept. It lays emphasis on the area as a place which people will enjoy, visit regularly and make their own.

Extracts from the SPGP Vision:

- South Peterborough Green Parks should not be a separate entity that is ring-fenced and distant. It should enhance local identity, be a part of the local identity and give physical structure to the area.
- The park should have 'fingers' of greenspace that enter development areas to draw people into the main body of the park, giving a sense of continuity, safety and belonging to local residents.
- It will be an area where nature conservation, history, culture and recreation is integrated in a sustainable way with planned development.

[52] English Nature was incorporated into Natural England in October 2006.

- There will be an network of greenspaces of high biodiversity value that provide opportunities for wildlife as well as for people to appreciate, be involved with and enjoy nature close to where they live and work.

G15. The objectives to be met in delivering the vision are set out in the SPGP Delivery Plan which was agreed in March 2008, and followed on from initial work carried out for the City Council as part of developing the Green Grid Strategy. This is intended to drive future work by setting out in priority order specific projects to deliver green infrastructure in SPGP, grouped under 6 themes.

Priorities for SPGP:

- *Access:* projects which will improve access to green spaces for all to promote a healthier lifestyle.
- *Biodiversity:* projects which will protect designated sites, enhance others, make large areas of natural green space available as habitats, and improve connectivity between wildlife sites.
- *Community engagement:* projects to promote the existence and value of green spaces and to build ownership of it among the community.
- *Destination:* "landmark" projects that will improve the visitor and local resident experience.
- *Economic viability and management:* work to develop a management structure and a secure source of income for both maintenance and further development in SPGP in the future.
- *Landscape enhancement:* projects which emphasise the diversity of local landscapes, eg claylands vs fenlands

The plan notes that projects will frequently support more than one theme, thus securing a degree of multi-functionality at each site.

DECISION-MAKING

Formal machinery

G16. Development of the Green Grid Strategy was led by a partnership, formed in 2003, and made up of the following organisations:

Buglife	Forestry Commission
Cambridgeshire County Council	Government Office-East
Countryside Agency[53]	Peterborough City Council
English Nature[54]	Peterborough Environment City Trust
Environment Agency	The Wildlife Trust

G17. In 2007, following the launch of the Green Grid Strategy, and after consultation, the Green Grid steering group merged with the Peterborough biodiversity group to form

[53] The landscape, access and recreation functions of the Countryside Agency were incorporated into Natural England in October 2006

[54] Incorporated into Natural England in October 2006.

the Natural Networks Steering Group. This is now responsible for monitoring progress against biodiversity targets as well as championing and monitoring the implementation of the Green Grid Strategy. Natural Networks has a broader remit than the former partnership, with greater representation of delivery bodies. In addition to those listed above, membership includes:

Peterborough Local Access Forum	Froglife
Milton Estates	Hanson PLC
O & H Hampton Ltd	Greater Peterborough Partnership
Opportunity Peterborough	River Nene Regional Park

Natural England provide the chair and Peterborough Environment City Trust the secretariat. Sub-groups focus on three priority themes, one of which is SPGP also chaired by Natural England. Consultants were engaged and funded by Natural England in 2007/08 to undertake the preparation of a delivery plan. This included a SPGP stakeholder consultation event.

G18. Natural Networks has no formal authority over other bodies. It has endorsed the strategy and the SPGP Delivery Plan, and provides the focal point for monitoring progress with implementing projects. Partners with responsibility for implementing specific projects through various statutory and non-statutory actions are represented on the steering group, where SPGP is a standing agenda item. The main barrier to progress is the lack of a staff resource to co-ordinate delivery and seek funding. Leverage for the Green Grid Strategy is provided, for example, by it being referenced as a material document in local authority planning policies.

Key influences on decision making

G19. The key influence on strategic decision-making has been the policy drivers outlined above, which are given expression in local planning policies.

G20. At the operational plan level, there are four main sets of influences to take into account alongside the strategic direction:

(a) The nature of the sites available for green space, specifically opportunities to provide green links from SPGP to the surrounding areas and to enhance existing green spaces.

(b) Progress in constructing the built development, particularly housing.

(c) Availability of resources to design and implement projects.

(d) Community views, in line with the aim of increasing use and ownership of SPGP by local people.

Sites

G21. At Hampton, the nature of the site dictated much of the design of the development including the distribution of green space. The previous brick industry use necessitated three years of site remediation before completion of the first house. The development's designers have made use of flooded former quarries for drainage and flood control arrangements, and with the addition of man-made lakes within the development, to form the key element in a development wide 1000 ha SUDS[55].

[55] Sustainable Urban Drainage System

G22. A further site constraint arose from the discovery of what turned out to be Europe's largest colony of great crested newts across the Hampton development area, who had migrated there from the adjacent drained fenland. An imperfect understanding among scientists of the wildlife value of claypits meant that the extent of the colony was only identified after outline planning permission for development had been given in 1993. The solution agreed between the original developer – Hanson Land Ltd – and English Nature was an agreement which allowed 79 ha of the habitat to be developed in exchange for funding, creation and management of a new 162 ha reserve to the west of the main development area, now designated as a Special Area of Conservation. Natural England consider that close partnership working will continue to be essential to support sustainable development and ensure the persistence of a large population of newts in the future

G23. The allocation within the 1993 planning permission of 50% of the site to green space has been driven in part by the developer concept as well as by the site constraints. However, the value of exploiting the site's legacy of existing waterways and quarry edges as a means of delivering an attractive and at the same time sustainable community has also been a factor. To meet revised government requirements, the housing density has been increased from an average of 25 dwellings per hectare (dph) in the 1993 outline planning permission to an average of 35 dph, the range varying from 25 dph to 120 dph across the development.

Progress with development

G24. Development needs to take place, and properties need to be sold, to generate funds for green infrastructure. At Hampton, substantial progress has been made, and the result is extensive visible green or open space, including lakes. O&H Hampton Ltd's role as a "master-developer" is to sell land with planning permission to house builders

(or gift it to registered social landlords), and provide the infrastructure, including roads, cycle routes, drains, community buildings and green space (including open space, the main lake and woodland).

G25. Section 106 agreements[56] are in place, although some parties consider they have been insufficiently stringent. However, at Hampton the developer has put in place green space provision over and above what was required by the s106 agreement, which the company views as part of its long-term commitment to the area.

Resources for projects

G26. The SPGP delivery plan priority projects were not costed, as most have not yet been specified in detail. In the 2006/08 Growth Area Fund award to Peterborough City Council, all £1 million was allocated to deliver projects in SPGP. In the 2008/11 Housing Growth Fund award, funding was allocated to Green Grid projects elsewhere in Greater Peterborough, so other sources of funding need to be identified to take forward delivery of some of the SPGP priority projects. Others will be delivered through the planning system and partner organisations' budgets.

Community engagement

Consultation with the community

G27. Two separate community consultations were carried out on behalf of Peterborough City Council, Natural England and Natural Networks to feed into the development of plans for SPGP

G28. The major consultation was with young people aged 10-19 and people with disabilities, over the period July-November 2007. The consultation was carried out by Froglife and 262 people took part. The aims of the consultation were defined as being to:

- Gain ideas that would make the new parks an exciting prospect and a regional attraction.
- Understand the target groups needs and barriers in relation to parks and open spaces.
- Promote the South Peterborough Green Parks and gain community support for the project.
- Identify the causes and possible solutions for vandalism in parks and open spaces.

As well as reporting the views of those consulted, which highlighted physical and emotional barriers to using green space, the report made recommendations for how target groups should be engaged in the development of specific projects.

G29. Froglife carried out a second consultation with parents of children under 12, over the period January-February 2008. 152 people representing 609 family members took

[56] "Section 106 agreements", named after the part of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that introduced them, enables local planning authorities to negotiate the provision or funding of measures by the developer needed to make the development acceptable in planning terms, and subject to other conditions.

part. The aims was to was to ascertain how and why people visit parks and what families would want from a new network of parks in the SPGP area.

G30. Communities were also consulted as part of the stakeholder consultation process. Over 30 people attended a stakeholder workshop funded by Natural England in November 2007, and attendees included community representatives. The workshop generated initial lists of priority projects, which informed the list in the subsequent delivery plan. For example, in the access theme, participants used local knowledge to identify link access routes, both new ones and existing routes needing upgrading.

Engagement with projects on the ground

G31. The Delivery Plan has community engagement as one of its 6 themes (see paragraph G15). It lists as a top priority 10 projects for which the principal theme is community engagement, though most have a strong access dimension. The stated aim is to draw local people into the green space for recreation, education and healthy activities, and to involve local schools and community groups in the development and operation of projects.

G32. In practice, the experience at Hampton has shown that such engagement is difficult. Although O&H Hampton Ltd have made sustained efforts to engage with their local communities, the results have been patchy. People are ready to approach their site manager with specific problems, but engaging schools and the community association in wider planning and development issues has not lived up to expectations. O&H Hampton Ltd are supporting proposals to establish a parish council.

G33. Funded by part of their Housing Growth Fund award for 2008/09 the City Council is creating a new website to promote all the city's greenspaces, including those in south Peterborough. They are also piloting a mobile explorer project to encourage people who do not usually get out and about to visit greenspaces.

Evidence base

G34. In addition to the sources identified above, the following evidence has influenced development of SPGP:

(e) Peterborough Landscape Character Assessment (2006), produced to inform the emerging Local Development Framework. The green infrastructure proposals in SPGP seek to follow the study's recommendations for landscape enhancement.

(f) Natural England Biodiversity Audit, covering the whole SPGP and using data from 2006 back to 1995. SPGP projects have been checked for consistency with the audit findings and recommendations.

(g) Peterborough Brownfield Sites Assessment of Invertebrate Potential (2007), contracted through Buglife, which also informed the Biodiversity Audit.

(h) O&H Hampton Ltd Biodiversity Audit, forming a plan for managing the land they own.

(i) Hanson Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans, setting out actions and targets for the Hanson-owned land in the eastern part of SPGP.

(j) Peterborough Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which identifies schemes to improve the access network in Peterborough, including SPGP.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

G35. The main obstacle to realising the vision for SPGP is a lack of resources. This is operating at three inter-related levels: funding for some individual projects; funding for a central staff resource to manage and progress the delivery plan; and funding for the long-term maintenance and repair of the green space assets. A survey of the overall effect on projects is being carried out for the Natural Networks group overseeing SPGP.

Funding for projects

G36. As noted above, funding for some projects is dependent on development taking place, with the consequent access to s106 contributions. Individual planning applications can be used as levers to secure green space improvements on a case-by-case basis, but again this is dependent on development actually taking place. The slow-down in the economy is affecting the pace of development at Hampton, and will for a period reduce the company's ability to fund discretionary (ie non-s106) projects.

G37. The other principal source of funding for green grid projects has been Growth Area Funding (GAF) from central government. This worked well between 2006-08, when £1m was available to SPGP for quick wins, but in the current Housing Growth Fund round no funds have been allocated to SPGP.

Funding for central resources

G38. A further consequence of the decision on the Housing Growth Fund is that one of the Peterborough City Council officers allocated for SPGP work – in effect the project officer – has been reassigned. Natural England are seeking a resolution to the issue, though their own post previously focussing on SPGP is vacant as a consequence of public expenditure constraints.

G39. The result is that there is no identifiable individual charged with driving implementation of the SPGP Delivery Plan, including providing support and advice to partners, helping develop identify funding sources and develop bids, and monitoring progress.

Funding for long-term maintenance

G40. At some point in the future, O&H Hampton Ltd will have completed their work at Hampton and will disengage. This leaves open the question of how the green infrastructure there will be maintained and repaired after their departure. Making provision for future maintenance was not a condition of the initial planning permission, and there is no enforceable remedy. Nor is there any obligation on the City Council to take on the responsibility, and it does not have the resources to be able to do so. Uncertainty over responsibility for future maintenance is also a constraint on bringing forward projects, because sponsors do not want or cannot afford the long-term commitment. The issue is not specific to Hampton, or even SPGP.

G41. Earlier development in Peterborough, managed by the former Development Corporation, included extensive managed new green space along the banks of the River Nene west of the city centre. The future management and stewardship of this area was vested in the Nene Park Trust, which received from the Development Corporation a capital sum in perpetuity for investment to generate revenue funding for continuing maintenance. Options for establishing a new trust, or inviting the Nene Park Trust to take over the Hampton green space, are being explored by O&H Hampton Ltd in relationship to those parts of the SPGP which it owns.

BENEFITS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benefits

G42. SPGP benefits are expressed in general terms, focussing on the benefits to communities and biodiversity of designed, connected and managed greenspace. For communities, the benefits are expressed largely in terms of health, recreation and educational opportunities.

Monitoring

G43. Monitoring of delivery of SPGP is currently minimal, for the reasons set out in paragraph G38. The Natural Networks steering group carries out some monitoring of progress.

G44. At Hampton, O&H Hampton Ltd monitor development of the site, including the creation of green space as part of their normal business.

Evaluation

G45. Because SPGP overall is in the early stages of delivery, there has been no systematic independent evaluation of the extent to which the vision is being realised and of the outcomes from those projects which have been implemented.

G46. The Hampton development has been identified as an example of best practice in developing urban extensions on reclaimed edge-of-city land[57]. Natural England has highlighted the Hampton development as an example of what could be achieved through partnership to deliver green space[58].

THE FUTURE

G47. The future delivery of SPGP remains uncertain, for the reasons set out above.

G48. An expected consequence of experience to date is that the City Council will seek stronger s106 agreements when negotiating development consents for further sites in the SPGP area.

FURTHER INFORMATION

G49. There is no single website for South Peterborough Green Parks, but the following are useful:

www.peterborough.gov.uk/page-14739
www.ohhampton.co.uk
www.naturalnet.org.uk/page-about-natural-networks

[57] *Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements: A report on emerging good practice* TCPA for Communities and Local Government, March 2007

[58] Press release at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/press_releases/2008/190508.aspx