

NERR092 Appendix 1 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Approach Checklist

Natural England's Natural Capital Evidence Handbook helps you come to a strategic understanding about the natural environment in your place using natural capital evidence. This Evidence Information Note helps you access resources related to the [Natural Capital and Ecosystem Approach Checklist](#).

Background

A [Biodiversity 2020](#) target, Outcome 1C states 'By 2020, at least 17% of land and inland water, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services including through management of our existing systems of protected areas and the establishment of nature improvement areas' (p 12).

This target is about how nature conservation is done and in practice can be interpreted as implementing the Ecosystem Approach. Natural England has worked with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONBs) which together cover a wide enough area to deliver this policy target.

What did we do?

- A series of questions based on the principles of the Ecosystem Approach were developed into a self-assessment. The questions help partnerships to determine to what extent they are applying the Ecosystem Approach, whether they are contributing to the Outcome 1C target, and develop an action plan.
- With support from Natural England, the National Parks completed the self-assessment in 2014/2015.
- A revised and simplified checklist based on the self-assessment was developed and completed by the AONBs in 2018/2019.
- Both groups used the checklist to evaluate their partnerships; how they were already applying the Ecosystem Approach along with areas for improvement.

Outputs: What is available to use?

- The [Natural Capital and Ecosystem Approach Checklist and guidance](#) used by AONBs.
- Reports detailing the experiences of the AONBs and National Parks using the checklist, all available on [The Ecosystems Knowledge Network](#).

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- Natural England and Countryside developed [The Ecosystem Approach Handbook](#) (Porter and others 2014) to help landscape-scale partnerships benefit from the Ecosystem Approach. It is a practical guide to planning in an integrated way to deliver multiple benefits for nature and people. It contains useful advice and resources for partnership and collaborative working and helps completion of the self-assessment and checklist.

Lessons Learned

Both National Parks and AONBs found that the process of doing the checklist allowed them to:

- Think about the wider environmental benefits that their area is providing for people.
- Identify areas where they could work differently, to do more for people and nature in their place.
- Enable the embedding of the Ecosystem Approach and natural capital.
- Identify opportunities to deliver better local outcomes.
- Better align their plans with key policies, such as the 25 Year Environment Plan, and be able to demonstrate how their work contributes to these policies.
- Allow for better forward planning of actions to deliver improved quality and quantity of ecosystems and their associated services.
- Spend time focussing on how they work, rather than only what they do.

Partnerships found that using the checklist whilst undertaking a management review was more helpful than undertaking it at other points in their planning cycle. Those doing the checklist whilst undertaking a review were able to involve their partners more effectively, resulting in a more insightful experience.

References

Porter, J., Jagota, L., Brookes, J., Mahony, P., Howard, B., Waters, R., Hunt, D. (2014) Ecosystem Approach Handbook. Countryside, Manchester.