



TVNP Board Meeting

10 am-12.30 pm, 22 January, Stainsby Room, Middlesbrough Town Hall

Agenda

10.00 -10.15 **1. Welcome and introductions**

10.15-10.30 **2. Background to the development of the TVNP**

A presentation by Jeremy Garside to set the scene - covering why and how the TVNP came into being and progress on engaging key stakeholders, structures, vision and priorities.

10.30-11.00 **3. Discussion**

To include coverage of;

- The role of the board in the wider TVNP structure
- Championing the natural environment with other sectors – role of the board
- Priorities for the first year

11.00-11.15 **Refreshment break**

11.15-11.30 **4. The role of the TVNP in planning policy**

Defra envisages LNPs in playing a role in strategies, policies and the National Planning Policy Framework supports such a role. The TVNP Management Group has prepared a paper suggesting how the partnership takes this role forward for discussion by the board.

11.30-12.00 **5. Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map**

The TVNP has gained some additional resources from Natural England to work on this project, started during the development of the TVNP. This will bring together and map ecological data to inform opportunities for landscape scale working. An update on the progress of this project will be provided by Susan Antrobus

12.00-12.10 **6. TVNP website and communications**

Update on the TVNP website being created and discussion on use of social media and how the board would like to communication within the members only area of the website

2.10-12.20 7. Board meeting programme planning for 2013

Frequency of meeting, how a chair is selected, dates for 2013 meeting and key items for future agenda

12.20 8. Invitation to Ministerial event for Local Nature Partnerships

Any other Business

Meeting close 12.30 pm

**Minutes of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership Board Meeting
Held on Tuesday 22nd January 2013
Stainsby Room, Middlesbrough Town Hall**

Present: Chris Watson, Groundwork North East (environment sector rep) Stephen Catchpole, Tees Valley Unlimited (economic sector rep), Ivor Crowther, Heritage Lottery Fund (funding sector rep) Jeremy Garside, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (accountable body rep) , Richard Hall, Natural England (Defra family rep) , Doff Pollard, Tees Valley Rural Community Council, (community sector rep) John Mann, Teesside Environmental Trust (environmental sector rep), Susan Antrobus (TVNP Development Manger).

Apologies: Damien Wilson, Hartlepool Borough Council (local authority rep), Laurie Norris, NFU (agricultural/rural affairs rep).

B/01.01.13. Welcome and introductions

Jeremy Garside welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Board. He said that he was happy to chair the meeting, but that this should not be taken as any intention to take the role on a longer term basis.

B/02.01.13. Background to the development of the TVNP

Jeremy gave a presentation summarising why and how Local Nature Partnerships came into being with the publication of the government's Natural Environment White Paper and updated the Board with information about the engagement of key stakeholders, the development of an LNP structure, vision and priorities.

B/03.01.13. Discussion

There was a consensus that the partnership was heading in the right direction in terms of its structure, vision and priorities. There was discussion on how LNPs fitted into new Defra regional working and the different approaches that they were expected to take depending on local priorities. The TVNP is one of 48 LNPs that have been successfully "recognised" by government. LNPs do not report to Defra or receive any core funding; rather Defra has provided the general guidelines under which it envisages they will operate. The Defra agencies (Natural England, Environment Agency, and Forestry Commission) are recognised as supportive stakeholders in the LNP process, rather than leading them.

Doff Pollard told the meeting about the Food and Farming Network – "Food, Farming and Rural Affairs Tees Valley (FFRATV)" which is hosted by The Tees Valley Rural Community Council and is one of 14 Rural and farming networks that were established in 2012 that Defra established with local partners to "identify and feedback rural local issues and concerns straight to the heart of Government, in order to make policies more rural-friendly". FFRATV have developed three strands of working, economy, social and environmental, with Jeremy playing a role on the environment group and linking the two local partnerships.

John Mann asked whether LNPs had been given any powers by government and Sue confirmed that LNPs do not have a statutory roles or duties; but in planning terms they have been set up along the lines of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in that local planning authorities have a duty to have regard for the views of LNPs on strategic planning matters. Defra have encouraged LNPs to work to champion the natural environment with other sectors such as economic and health and wellbeing and is also working with other agencies to raise the concept of LNPs with these sectors nationally.

The funding arrangements for the TVNP were clarified. Annual core funding from the five Tees Valley local Authorities has been agreed by the Local Authority Directors of Place to start in April 2013, replacing their funding of

the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership. It was noted that there was strong level of support from the Directors of Place, who commissioned a research report into the opportunities for the Tees Valley Authorities to work within the Tees Valley Local Nature Partnership, which was carried out on behalf of the local authorities by Hartlepool Borough Council.

It was confirmed that the TVNP did not envisage developing into an organisation, with staff involved in project delivery but as an enabling partnership, promoting the value of the natural environment and offering a voice in response to major initiatives.

The development of a vision document was discussed. A task and finish group of the management group is meeting shortly to work on developing a document for the TVNP that will build on the vision statement and objectives that were developed through stakeholder consultation during the partnership's development period. Discussion on the importance and limitation of a strategy/vision document came to the conclusion that whilst having a vision document was very important in defining the priorities and remit for the TVNP, that strategies do have their limitations and just as important was working to influencing the strategies of other sectors. There is a need to identify which sectors and strategies we want to influence and to look at ways to make the natural environment agenda relevant to them.

In particular the Health and Wellbeing sector was discussed and the work of the emerging Health and Wellbeing Partnerships. It was felt that the best way into this sector was through Local Authority contacts. TVWT is currently doing some work on mental health benefits of conservation volunteering which is working closely with the health sector. Chris Watson said that Groundwork also has some good contacts for Sue to follow up. Reference was made to Health Watch, which is a new, independent consumer champion for health and social care in England that has local networks.

It was highlighted By Ivor Crowther that there was potential for the TVNP could play a valuable role in promoting /coordinating natural assets of Tees Valley in terms of local tourism.

Doff is organising Tees Valley Rural Community Council's "Rural Summit" for 2013 to take place in March at Preston Hall and plans to make the focus environmental , using it as an opportunity to launch the TVNP and to celebrate other environmental initiatives including the River Tees Rediscovered landscape project and the environmental work carried out by Tees Valley Arts. This was welcomed as a good opportunity to promote the TVNP and have dialogue with rural community groups and Parish Councils.

B/04.01.13. The role of the TVNP in planning policy

The role of LNPs in the local planning system under the National Planning Policy Framework was discussed based on the paper prepared by the TVNP Management Group. The partnership has the potential and the expertise on its Management Group to play a role in contributing to the plan-making process at a strategic level. It was recognised that input into development control would not be the remit of the TVNP, but would remain the responsibility of partner organisations. Stephen Catchpole agreed that the TVNPs role should be about supporting the evidence base and providing early input to the planning process and that this would not bind its partner organisations to a particular stance on specific plan issues or development proposals. It was also noted that strong links had been developed between the TVNP and the Tees Valley Forward Planners officer group.

B/05.01.13. Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map

A presentation was provided by Sue Antrobus on this project with a supporting paper. Some draft maps were shown to illustrate the progress of the project which is using ecological data to inform a piece of work that describes the ecological assets and networks in Tees Valley, to identify networks and opportunities. This was enthusiastically received as an important practical piece of work that will underpin the work of the partnership providing a baseline

for monitoring change and for identifying priorities. All agreed that it was vital that areas which lacked a rich ecological resource or, where the paucity of data was a problem, should not be presented as devoid of ecological interest, so that the opportunities and challenges of these areas could be addressed. There was discussion on the sensitive issues of data ownership and availability and also the maintenance of up-to-date data and how this could be funded. Richard Hall asked that the possibility of housing the mapping data on the TVNP website be investigated.

B/06.01.13. TVNP website and communications

Sue reported that the TVNP website / blog that was provided for the partnership's development is in the process of being replaced by a new website and this was being created and managed by the design company - House of Type. The site went live on 21st January and Board members were encouraged to visit. The website will include a members-only section and this is currently being tested. Once this is operational it will include a section to facilitate communication between board members.

The importance of having links to the website from partners' websites was highlighted, as was the need to keep the website updated with news of both the TVNP and its partners

B/07.01.13. Board meeting programme planning for 2013

In setting out plans for the TVNP it had been proposed that a minimum two meetings of the Board would be held annually, but all agreed that for the first year at least, it would be preferable to hold four meetings. Sue agreed to consult on dates for 2013 using Doodle meeting planner.

The role of chair was discussed. It was agreed that for the first year, members of the Board would share the responsibility and rotate the task for each meeting, also where possible providing a meeting venue. This would share the work and give a sense of shared ownership. It was agreed that a venue with easy access to rail network was advantageous.

B/08.01.13. Invitation to Ministerial event for Local Nature Partnerships

The first ministerial event for LNPs is being hosted by Defra on 11th February at Nobel House in London. Unfortunately, an agenda is not yet available and the invitation had been sent at very short notice. The meeting would involve a Q&A session with the Environment Minister and would also be attended by Defra officers and representatives from other government sectors. The Board agreed that a member of the Management Group should represent Tees Valley at the event and asked Sue to arrange this with the group's current chair.

Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map

1. Background

This work was identified as a key initial priority for the TVNP in its application to Defra to be formally recognised as an LNP. An opportunity to develop and delivery this project arose when the TVNP was given an opportunity to apply for Natural England under spend money in October 2012.

2. Objective

A Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map is planned order to inform the strategic economic development of the Tees Valley and enhance the quality of place for existing and future communities and potential investment. The project is being funded by small grants from Defra and Natural England.

This work brings together the existing ecological (and geological) data sets for the Tees Valley in a GIS format to produce a short document that will;

1. Describe the natural and local environment of the Tees Valley that we are seeking to protect, promote and enhance.
2. Identify and map the components of the local ecological network (designated sites), wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them so that it is possible to identify landscape areas for habitat restoration or creation.
3. Identify and map the biodiversity interest of strategic green infrastructure in urban areas and links with public rights of way and cycle routes.
4. Identify the key components of each area that we need to enhance to create robust functioning ecosystems. Using the existing TVBAP Habitat and Species Action Plans and Local Sites management targets where possible to provide targets for Local Plans that will promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and protection and recovery of priority species populations
5. Review of landscape-scale ecological delivery opportunities in the Tees Valley, bringing together the objectives of existing landscape partnerships and analysis of local data sets to identify key areas for landscape scale activity.

3. How the mapping work will be used

a) Support strategic development of natural environment and economic interests

This resulting document and GIS data resource will provide a robust evidence base for the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Nature Partnership in the strategic development of the Tees Valley. It will enable the LEP and the growth and regeneration sectors to gain a greater spatial understanding of the natural assets of the Tees Valley and will facilitate a Landscape scale approach to biodiversity. It will enable the TVNP to respond to role of LNPs as set out by the Natural Environment White paper (2011) in taking a strategic approach to the protection, enhancements and creation of the natural environment.

B) NPPF and local planning work with local authorities

This robust evidence based provided by the mapping and analysis will enable the TVNP to carry out its in its role its strategic local planning role and be used to assist the Five Tees Valley local authorities with the new National Planning Policy Framework . The work will also contribute to local authority development.

C) Green Infrastructure development

This work will take forward the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure plan and will provide evidence and analysis to assist local authorities with the development of GI strategies and GI delivery plans.

4. Project Delivery

The work is being informed using ecological expertise of the TVNP member organisations with land use planning and strategic planning expertise provided by the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership. The Wildflower Ark has been commissioned to conduct the technical aspects of data collation, management and mapping. Accompanying the mapping will be briefing papers and workshops will be delivered to a wide range of Tees Valley stakeholders from the economic, planning and neighbourhood sectors which will be planned for March and April 2013. The project has been warmly welcomed by Local Authority Planning Officers and the Defra agency family.

Local Nature Partnership engagement with planning

Purpose

To discuss how the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) can engage with the local planning system in the Tees Valley and recommend a way forward that provides an effective contribution to policy development and implementation to the benefit of the natural environment and local communities.

Background

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has stated that being a 'government recognised' LNP means:

- it will be seen as a balanced, strategic and knowledgeable partnership that can add value to important decision making in an area
- it will have an important contribution to make to strategic planning matters within their area

The government has added (January 2013) LNP's to the Duty to Co-operate in the Local Planning Regulations as soon as practical. This means that bodies bound by the duty to co-operate will need to have regard to the views of LNP's on strategic planning matters. This will include informing and working collaboratively with local planning authorities.

Local Nature Partnerships and the National Planning Policy Framework

In March 2012 the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) setting out broad planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. The NPPF makes clear that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development by performing a number of roles:

- **economic** – building a strong responsive and competitive economy by ensuring sufficient land of the right type is available in the right place and the right time, and by identifying and coordinating development requirements
- **social** – providing sufficient housing and creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services
- **environmental** – protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, and mitigate and adapt to climate change

There are some key statements in the NPPF about the natural environment, biodiversity and LNPs:

"Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, including.....moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature"

"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures"

"Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscaped areas will be judged."

"Local planning authorities:

- set out a strategic approach in their local plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.”

“To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale across local authority boundaries
- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them, and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations linked to local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests”

“Planning policies and decisions should be based on up to date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area.....working with Local Nature Partnerships where appropriate, this should include an assessment of existing and potential components of ecological networks.”

“Local planning authorities should work collaboratively on strategic planning priorities to enable delivery of sustainable development in consultation with Local Nature Partnerships.”

Developing a collaborative approach

The NPPF covers a lot of ground with a lot of potential areas for developing a working relationship between the Local Nature Partnership and the local planning authorities. While it and the Duty to Co-operate both give such a working relationship a high degree of ‘official’ backing, at the end of the day the main interest of both the LNP and the local planning authorities should be about achieving and delivering the best possible plan for local people, the environment and the economy.

The Local Nature Partnership, through its members, has an extensive resource of expertise with specialist knowledge of the Tees Valley’s natural environment and ecology that can be called on to provide an input to the local planning process.

There are a number of specific areas where the LNP can play a role in helping to develop policies and proposals in local plans, and help local planning authorities to comply with NPPF guidance.

i) Opportunity Mapping

Taking a ‘landscape scale’ approach to the natural environment is central to developing an appropriate policy response to current issues and challenges, and work is already well underway on a project to create a **Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map**. This is a review of landscape scale ecological delivery opportunities in the Tees Valley, bringing together the objectives of existing landscape partnerships together with an analysis of local data sets, to identify potential areas for landscape scale activity.

The work will be presented in a GIS format and will provide:

- a description of the features and characteristics of natural and local environment that we are seeking to protect, promote and enhance
- a visual representation of the components of the local ecological network including designated sites, wildlife corridors and the stepping stones connecting them so that it will be possible to identify key areas for habitat restoration or creation

ii) Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites (which are non-statutory but nevertheless form a key tier in the nature conservation site hierarchy) need to be identified in local plans along a policy reflecting the appropriate levels of protection, mitigation/compensation, and enhancement. The former Biodiversity Partnership developed a set of criteria allowing an agreed approach across the Tees Valley for local wildlife site assessment, backed up where necessary by

survey work and collation of data. A list of sites could then be put forward for recommendation to the local planning authority for inclusion in local plans, backed up by sufficient evidence for justification at a local plan examination.

The Biodiversity Partnership also acted as the Local Sites Partnership for the Tees Valley (as recommended in Defra guidelines on local sites) and this function should continue as part of the Local Nature Partnership governance arrangements.

iii) Commenting on plans, policies and strategies

A key area of the 'planning' role of the LNP should be to provide input and comment on plans, strategy and relevant policy documents produced by the local authorities, central government, government agencies and other key stakeholders. This is a role formerly undertaken by the Biodiversity Partnership and past examples include consultation drafts of the government's Environment White Paper, the NPPF, Hartlepool Core Strategy DPD Preferred Options, Stockton-on-Tees Environment DPD, and Darlington Tree Strategy.

While providing comments on key documents that may have an impact on the Tees Valley's natural environment is important, it is hoped that the LNP could play a more integral role in the local plan preparation process. By providing robust evidence (of which the Opportunity Mapping project forms part) and, importantly, interpretation of that evidence, showing what it can mean for policy formulation and implementation the LNP has an opportunity to be involved closely in plan preparation rather than just at the consultation stage. The LNP could play a particularly pivotal role on cross-boundary issues but clearly the whole process needs to be discussed and agreed with the local planning authorities but should provide positive benefits on all sides.

iv) Biodiversity Offsetting

Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities designed to deliver biodiversity benefits in one location to compensate for losses in another. Although there are six 'offsetting pilots' running in England, offsetting is not restricted to those pilot areas and a number of other schemes are already running.

Biodiversity offsetting may have value in the Tees Valley as a way of dealing with pressure on potential development sites that also have significant biodiversity value but are not statutorily protected. There are a number of different elements that need to come together for biodiversity offsetting to work effectively (including appropriate policy wording in local plans and the willingness of developers and landowners to take part) but it is considered that the potential for offsetting should be fully considered.

Proposed way forward

The local authority Directors of Place have already been closely involved in the LNP process and a report considering how the authorities could work with the LNP did identify a number of links around strategic planning, including work around biodiversity offsetting and linked habitats.

A presentation was also made to the Tees Valley Development Plans Officer (DPO) group in October 2012 which discussed a number of ways of potential working. The DPO group was particularly interested in the potential of the Opportunity Mapping project and its contribution to plan making, and a presentation on the project will be made to planners early in 2013.

It is proposed that a delivery group be established from the TVNP Management Group :

- to liaise with the local planning authorities and recommend a process for the LNP to become an effective partner in the local plan process
- to identify the main cross-boundary and landscape scale issues affecting the natural environment in the Tees Valley and demonstrate how these could be addressed through the local plan process
- demonstrate the value of the Opportunity Mapping project and how its evidence can be applied

- identify any gaps in the current evidence base for local plans and recommend how these gaps should be filled
- investigate the potential for biodiversity offsetting in the Tees Valley (although the recommendation may be for a separate Task and Finish Group to look at this issue)

It suggested that the delivery group may need to meet initially to agree its remit and working arrangements but after that could operate mainly as an email/electronic based group.

Other Strategic plans

As well as land use planning Defra envisage that LNPs will contribute to wider policies, such as regeneration, health and wellbeing, to promote the role of a quality natural environment. The potential for input is currently being scoped by the TVNP Management Group.