



TVNP Shadow Management Group Meeting

10 am, 11 December 2012 at Billingham Beck Country Park

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions

2. The TVNP vision for the natural environment

Developing a vision document is a priority so that we have clear objectives for the TVNP, which are widely supported and understood by other sectors. **Action:** Establish a task and finish group to take forward.

3. Key priorities for the next 12 months

Reviewing our wide ranging objectives, where should we concentrate our effort and resources in the next 12 months? What do we need to do to achieve these and who will do it? **Action:** Discussion on prioritising and planning work programme for 2013 to present at the Board meeting in January.

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. **Action:** Discussion on how we take this forward in the Tees Valley including a process for working with the local planning authorities and establishment of a delivery group.

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.

6. Local Sites Partnership

The TVNP will be taking over the role of the Tees Valley Local Sites Partnership from the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership. Ian Bond (Hartlepool Borough Council) has developed a mechanism for how we can deliver this function within a Local Sites and ecological data delivery group. **Action required:** Decision on mechanism presented

5. TVNP website and communications

Development work is being carried out to replace the current TVNP communication blog with a website. This will incorporate a member's area that will allow for a discussion forum to support meetings and facilitating effective communication across the partnership. **Action:** feedback on proposals

6. Preparation required for the TVNP board meeting

Discussion on the role of the board, agenda items for board meeting and pre meeting briefing of board members.

7. Meeting dates and agenda item themes for year ahead – 2013



TVNP “Shadow” Management Group meeting 11 December 2012

Attendance: Jeremy Garside (Tees Valley Wildlife Trust), Malcolm Steele (TVU) Rob Brown (TV Local Access Forum) Sarah Scarr (Hartlepool Borough Council), Phil Roxby (Darlington Borough Council), Helen Herring (Wildflower Ark), Phil Jones (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council), Nick Brodin (Natural England), David Tarttelin (Environment Agency), Anne-Louise Orange (Groundwork North East), Bob Pailor (Industry and Nature Conservation Association), Anne Gladwin (Middlesbrough Council), Graham Clingan (Stockton Borough Council), Crispin Thorn (Forestry Commission), Sue Antrobus (TVNP).

Apologies: Amanda Miller (RSPB), Kate Roberts (Forestry Commission- replaced by Crispin for this meeting).

2. The TVNP vision for the natural environment

A vision statement for the TVNP was developed during the stakeholder workshops earlier this year. This is for *“a rich and healthy natural environment in the Tees Valley to create a vibrant place for people to live, work and learn.”* Malcolm Steele has been doing some work assessing the need for a more detailed vision document, what this should contain, and who it would be aimed at. It should be long term and inspiring and be used to build consensus and buy in whilst reflecting the views of the wider partnership, be realistic, show what the Tees Valley wants to achieve and identify clear priorities. The vision could describe the natural assets of the Tees Valley, outline the challenges, have statements of intent, and be as a working document to guide the work programme of the partnership. Put simply - *this is what we are doing, and why and how we are going about it.* The Environment Statement produced by the former Tees Valley Environment Forum is a good document to build on. There was discussion on the need to recognise the visions of other sectors and how these can be integrated. Also discussed was the need to consider the audience and how it could be adapted to communicate with different sectors.

Action 1: ALO to forward the vision of the River Tees Rediscovered landscape partnership to MS

Action 2: A task & finish group to be established to take forward, involving Malcolm Steele, Lucy Marshall, Richard Hall and Bob Pailor. They will develop an outline document and report to the next management group meeting

3. Key priorities for the next 12 months

The key priorities are to create the vision document which will enable the development of a work plan. Over the next three months the Natural Networks and Opportunities Map will be a key priority. This is a good short term achievable goal with an end product. Engaging with the health and wellbeing sector is also a priority for the next few months, along with developing a working partnership with the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership. Also suggested by DT was the need to gain a picture of natural environment activity across the Tees Valley by doing a quick audit of what partner organisations are doing that link to the broad aims of the partnership, which would be useful to inform the partnership’s board. PJ proposed that a diagram of the different organisations and how they are linked through the TVNP would be useful.

Action 3: SA to collate information to produce an audit of current and planned natural environment activity in the Tees Valley from partner organisations.

Action 4: SA with assistance from PJ to produce a diagram describing organisations and environmental partnerships in the Tees Valley.

4. The role of the TVNP in planning policy

The government has stated that it intends to add 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. MS has drafted a paper for the board meeting with the objective to discuss how the TVNP can engage with the local planning system in the Tees Valley and recommends a way forward that

provides an effective contribution to policy development and implementation to the benefit of the natural environment and local communities. The paper outlines the aspiration of the TVNP to be a valued partner in the local plan making processes and to work with planners during the development of plans so that by the time a plan comes to the consultation stage there will be very little for the TVNP to say. It was agreed that the TVNP would be involved in strategic planning and not in development control, which would remain for partner organisations to respond to.

The programme for Local Plans under the NPPF is going to be very busy over the next 12-18 months. It was suggested that capturing the timetable/programme for plans for each local authority was needed so that we can establish where and how the TVNP can get involved. PJ also mentioned making use of the TV DPOs group. MS and SA had given a presentation on the TVNP and the Natural network and Opportunity Mapping at the Tees Valley DPO 's meeting. As a result a workshop in Feb/March so that the results of the mapping can be communicated and discussed with planners.

Action 5: MS to collate key dates for Local plans

Action 6: The existing Tees Valley Development Plans Officer Group will be the main vehicle for involving the TVNP in strategic planning matters

5. Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map

An update was provided by SA and HH on the project. This is a joint project between the Tees Valley Nature Partnership and Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership. A Tees Valley Natural Networks and Opportunities Map is planned 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 will use ecological and land use data sets to describe the natural and local environment of the Tees Valley that we are seeking to protect, promote and enhance and 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. The work started with some funding from the Defra LNP development fund and a recent grant from Natural England is enabling the project to be completed by the end of March 2013. The project has so far brought together the technical data and is now using the data to produce descriptive maps. It was noted that although GIS is being used for the project, that this is simply a tool and the real benefit of the project will be how the data can be used in different ways to increase understanding of the Tees Valley's natural environments and how it will enable evidence based strategic discussion and decision making at a landscape scale. ALO mentioned that the information on ecological assets on the River Tees would be useful for the stage 2 HLF application of the River Tees Rediscovered landscape project. Crispin highlighted the work of the Defra agency evidence group. BP asked about resource to ensure data sets are kept up to date. It was recognised that ERIC NE (Environment Records Information Centre) have this role for the North East.

Action 7: CT to send summary of datasets that the Defra family holds in the Tees Valley to SA and HH.

Action 8: SA to feed intelligence from mapping to ALO for the River Tees Rediscovered project

6. Local Sites Partnership

JG provided a background on the collaborative work that has taken place on local non-statutory sites in the Tees Valley and introduced the paper on Local Sites by Ian Bond. The paper was well received and accepted as a way forward for local sites within the TVNP framework. Additional comments were to ensure the inclusion of geological sites through partnership with the Tees Valley RIGS Group and the suggestion that the Local Sites group could also look at setting ambitious but realistic local targets for the management of local sites and ways to engage with landowners.

Action 9: Local Sites Partnership meeting 7 Jan 2013. If wishing to attend contact Ian Bond at HBC.

5. TVNP website and communications

A robust website with facility for membership forum is being developed by communications and web company, House of Type. This will replace the current TVNP blog which was useful whilst the partnership was being set up. The purpose of the website will be two fold; To provide a general online presence for TVNP to communicate we are a new and dynamic professional partnership that is effectively taking nature forward in the Tees Valley, engaging with other sectors- providing a portal for people to contact us and interact with us with news feeds to keep up to date. The anticipated audiences are policy makers, local authority members and officers, professionals from other sectors

such as industry, economic growth, health and wellbeing etc. It will also provide a point of contact and information for TVNP members. A member's only part of the website will allow forums to be set up and be a focus of discussions and information exchange between meetings.

A discussion took place on the relevance of social media as a communication tool linked to the website. It was considered that twitter and linked-in would be of growing significance and important tools for the TVNP to use. The website will be launched in January 2013 .

Action 10: SA to recruit guinea pigs to try out the website and the members area before wider release.

GC discussed the work that he is doing in Stockton to bring together information on the natural environment of the Borough through the Stockton Green Infrastructure Partnership for local people, such as where to visit, how to volunteer etc. As the opportunities and information is provided by a range of partners as well as well as Stockton Council he is exploring the possibility of hosting these pages with the TVNP rather than Stockton Council, which would act as a portal to different organisations websites. He has discussed with JG and SA the opportunity to fund this development and if successful it may be a format that other Local authorities may want to use. There was some concern expressed about loss of Local Authority branding and a discussion about the need to ensure web based information comes out high in search engines. The question was raised of the purpose of the LNP website- for strategic partners or for general public?

6. Preparation required for the TVNP board meeting

The Board will meet for the first time on 22 January. The first meeting will be very much scene setting and establishing the group. A suggestion was made that a discussion topic for them to tackle would be how to involve the health and wellbeing sector. SA is currently developing the agenda and supporting papers. The board will be asked to approve the composition and the remit of the management group, as it is currently acting as a "shadow" management group "

Action 11: SA to ensure that TVNP management group receives papers, agenda and minutes of the board.

7. Meeting dates and agenda item themes for year ahead – 2013

It was considered that rather than establish meeting dates for the year 2013, that we need to wait till the board have met and decided the frequency and timings of their meetings, so that we can ensure appropriate fit with the Board meetings. In the meantime a meeting in February 2013 was suggested- SA to arrange a suitable date.

The role of chair for the management group was discussed. JG had chaired this meeting as an interim measure but considered that it may be beneficial to have the chair from a different organisation to the TVWT as the Development officer for the partnership, SA was also based there. It was suggested that a different organisation each year acts as the chair. DT expressed a willingness to chair the next meeting, which was welcomed.

Action 12: SA to ensure management group receive the board papers, agenda and minutes.

Tees Valley Local Nature Partnership

Local Sites sub-group briefing note

Background

Local Sites are defined areas with substantive nature conservation interest, either biological or geological or both. They are ratified by a Local Sites Partnership (LSP) as having met one or more of a suite of established criteria for nature conservation interest. The criteria have been developed by the LSP based on national and local conservation priorities (Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, 2010). In the Tees Valley, the LSP previously operated as part of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership but is now a sub-group of the Tees Valley Local Nature Partnership.

Local Authorities have two principal responsibilities with regards to Local Sites. The National Planning Policy Framework requires them to have policies on Local Sites in their Local Plans as part of a hierarchy of sites that includes internationally and nationally protected sites. All sites meeting the criteria should be selected for designation.

Under the now abolished Local Area Agreements, Local Authorities were required to report on National Indicator 197, which was the proportion of Local Sites in their area that are in positive management. This indicator has been carried over to the Single Data List. The indicator covers all Local Sites in an Authorities area, not just those that the Local Authority owns or manages.

Although Local Authorities are expected to take a lead on Local Sites, nevertheless Defra guidance (2008) is that management of the Local Sites process, eg selection, de-selection, verification of positive management etc, should be the function of the LSP so as to avoid possible manipulation of the system by any one party.

Purpose of the Local Sites Partnership

The LSP has several roles to play in the management of the Local Sites system which could be said to fall under three main areas;

i) designation of sites; ii) documenting management of sites; iii) facilitating management of sites. These are considered in more detail below:

i) Designation of sites

Selection criteria – these have been in place since 2008 and have been subject to minor amendments in the light of additional information. The current criteria would appear to be suitable to encompass all known sites in the Tees Valley that are generally regarded as having substantive nature conservation interest. Further minor amendments may be required should additional sites with obvious nature conservation interest come to light that are not caught by the current criteria. It may also be necessary to periodically amend the criteria should current knowledge on the status of habitats and species in the Tees Valley change.

Identification of sites – All five boroughs have been surveyed to identify sites which meet the selection criteria. This has included a review of all sites that had been identified in existing Local Plans as well as surveys of additional sites that potentially had substantive nature conservation interest. In some cases where it was not possible to access a site, identification of a Local Site was based on historical data. Each Local Authority now has a list of Local Sites in its area which includes a record of the reasons for selection, ie which selection criteria each site meets. The Local Sites are included in the relevant Local Authority planning documents. It is likely that a small number of additional sites will come to light.

De-selection of sites – Where a site has lost its nature conservation interest it should be deselected

Notification to landowners – Landowners of proposed Local Sites should be informed of the proposed designation and landowners of current sites informed of any de-designation. All owners of current Local Sites have been informed of the designation and given the opportunity to comment. (NB designation is based on a site meeting the relevant criteria and is not dependent on landowner approval of the site designation.)

ii) Documenting management

Management criteria - Sites are only regarded as being in positive management if they have documented evidence of management that maintains or enhances the features for which they have been selected. The sorts of evidence which would be relevant have been set out in Defra (2008). There is a need to determine what would constitute positive management for each site. This has been done for most sites though probably not all.

Review of management actions - Actions that form positive management need to have occurred in the five years prior to the reporting period. It is therefore necessary to review each site on a five yearly basis, although this may be a desk survey in some cases.

Audit trail of management - A clear audit trail of evidence should be maintained. The LSP has set up a table to record sites and their management which includes columns identifying the type of evidence of positive management and the location of that evidence. Each Local Authority updates the table for Local Sites in their area on an annual basis. The information is then scrutinised by the LSP to verify it prior to submitting the Single Data List return.

iii) Facilitating management

In order for Local Authorities to show an improvement in the indicator it is necessary to increase the number of Local Sites in positive management year on year. This represents the greatest challenge for the LSP. There are various options or achieving this, including but not limited to:

- Provide management advice to landowners. For this to count towards the indicator, it would be necessary to determine whether the advice has been acted on.
- Support owners/managers in producing management plans to promote the management for the nature conservation interest feature.
- Non-intervention can be classed as positive management if that is the most suitable process during the five year period prior to reporting. For those sites where this is the case it would be necessary to provide management statements to justify that.
- Look for funding options to get sites into positive management.

It is envisaged that the LSP will be responsible for all aspects of the management of the Local Sites system. Where decisions have wider implications and specifically in the selection and de-selection of sites and reporting against the Single Data List this should be presented to the management group to be signed off and minuted.

As the Tees Valley LSP has been established for some time many of the potential tasks of the LSP have been addressed. Further likely actions or those that are likely to continue to need to be addressed are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Issues for the Local Sites Partnership

Action	Who	Timescale
Potentially a need to amend selection criteria in the light of new information.	Determined by LSP	As required

New Local Sites may come to light or may need de-designating.	Proposed by LSP. Ratified by management group. LAs incorporate in to planning documents and inform landowners.	As required
Report against indicator in Single Data List	Local Authorities calculate figures and report. LSP verify figures. Ratified by management group.	Annually
Review existing Local Sites to ensure that they still meet the criteria and to assess positive management	Local Authorities responsible for providing the information. Information verified by LSP	Five yearly
Increase the number of Local Sites in positive management	LSP	As the opportunity arises but aiming for an annual increase

Bibliography

Defra (2008) Guidance on the Improved Local Biodiversity Indicator (NI 197) Proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented. Revised guidance note – December 2008

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (2010) Guidelines for the Selection of Local Wildlife Sites in the Tees Valley – *Version 7, June 2010*

