



Natural Networks and land use planning in the Tees Valley

- Applying landscape scale and ecosystem services approaches of the NPPF and The Natural Environment white paper

Tuesday 25th June 2013

Coepen Bewley Woodland Centre

Workshop Report

Applying landscape scale and ecosystem services approaches of the NPPF and the Natural Environment white paper to Land use planning in the Tees Valley

The Tees Valley Nature Partnership (TVNP) organised a half day workshop at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park Centre, Stockton on Tuesday 25th June. This event was for local authority planners to explore with the TVNP practical ways of approaching conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment in the Tees Valley through local plans and development management.

1. TVNP Workshop objectives

Key objective

To help the TVNP in achieving its vision of a high quality natural environment by assisting planning authorities in taking a landscape scale / ecological network approach through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) so that is reflected in Local Plans and other strategic documents.

1. To communicate the progress of the TV Natural Network and Opportunity Mapping (NNOM) project and provide an opportunity for planning officers to influence the development and presentation of the work to ensure that it is maximises its relevance for the LA planning process
2. To further develop dialog and working relationship between the TVNP and LA Planning Officers to facilitate the TVNP role in “plan making”
3. To contribute to considering the natural environment across administrative boundaries
4. To evaluate if Local Nature Improvement Areas could/should be applied in the Tees Valley.

2. Attendance

The event was led by Jeremy Garside and Susan Antrobus of the TVNP with support by the Wildflower Ark. It was attended by 18 local authority officers, representing all five of the Tees Valley local authorities (appendix 1).

3. Event Programme

The event was a mixture of presentations and discussion sessions (appendix 2). The event started with the national context, in which Jeremy Garside provided a giving a brief overview of how the publication of the National Ecosystem Assessment and Lawton’s Making Space for Nature report have shaped the Government’s policies on land use management, conserving biodiversity and the NPPF.

This was followed by the Tees Valley context in which Susan Antrobus covered the role and remit of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership. An outline of the preliminary results of the Tees Valley Natural Network and Opportunity Mapping programme (NNOM) and its potential applications was presented.

Copies of the Powerpoint presentations are available on request from the TVNP.

This was followed by two discussion sessions which are summarised below.

4. Discussion sessions

How can we use ecological mapping and identification of key landscapes for wildlife in the Local Plan process? Relationship of ecological networks with Green Infrastructure plans and policies?

How do we produce Local Plan policies that support ecological networks?

1. The NNOM provides a robust evidence base on the natural environment for local plans and can be used to plan opportunities for restoration, linking and expanding existing ecological networks as the NPPF requires.
2. Local Authority planners are required to demonstrate use of the most up to date data available at the time of the plan production. The ecological data for the NNOM was collated in 2012/13 using best available validated data across a wide range of national and local sources. The digital bibliography gives a clear source of the data. This also enables planners to source ecological data updates from sources provided in the digital bibliography in the future.
3. The use of the NNOM by planners will show evidence of the “duty to cooperate” with the LNP and cross boundary working that is advocated by the NPPF. In addition it demonstrates local authority commitment to the “NERC Biodiversity Duty”.
4. The NNOM provides information on priority habitats and species not covered by national designations which is especially useful as an evidence base as this data was not fully available before. This will be useful in plan preparation and development control.
5. GIS is extensively used by planners so any information and maps that can be provided in that format will be useful.
6. For development control the NNOM will be valuable in helping to identify where and how developer’s contributions can be allocated.
7. The NNOM will be useful in the sustainability appraisal part of the plan making process by contributing to the evidence base by enabling comparisons between sites proposed for development.
8. For development control the NNOM will be valuable in identifying ecologically sensitive areas as an alert where further ecological information/survey is required.
9. The NNOM can be used to identifying key gaps in ecological data and help plan where to focus recording/survey effort.
10. A discussion took place on the Local Authority annual monitoring of the local plan impact e.g. biodiversity net gain, and if the mapping could help identify appropriate monitoring methods- agreed that more discussion and work would be needed to assess practical options.
11. Darlington has a policy on the creation of BAP habitat in relation to the size of development. The NNOM will assist in providing a rational for type and location of habitat.

12. In local plan documents a general policy can be written to reference NNOM. More detailed policies would be in supplementary planning documents.
13. The production of maps and tables for each local authority area in addition to the landscape areas would be very useful, especially in relation to GI e.g. Hartlepool GI strategy currently in development.
14. Query from Hartlepool on the boundary of landscape areas in the Borough, and possible expansion of the Coastal Arc- further discussion needed.
15. A future use of the mapping could be adding an accessibility layer, which would include public rights of way, cycle routes and areas of biodiverse land with public access. This would be useful to help identify where there are deficits/opportunities to increase public access and joined up networks for access.

5. How do we develop the role of the TVNP in the plan making process in the Tees Valley?

1. The five planning authorities have common needs- the TVNP can assist work in a collaborative way on approaches to natural environment and ecological networks in planning policies
2. There was an aspiration to bring in the TVNP to be used as a pre-public consultee to a greater extent.
3. TVNP can play an important coordinating role in the developing evidence base on natural environment to support policies
4. TVNP input on conditions/mitigation/106 agreements- with assistance with ecological information/expertise on what is needed and where
5. TVNP play a key role in the Local Sites programme in terms of selection criteria , maintaining register, coordinating surveys, and reporting on positive management for single data set indicator.
6. Maintain communication channels. This can be done through the Development Plans Officers (DPO) meeting (Malcolm Steele a member of both DPO and TVNP management group). Also through local authority representation on management group. (Note- Sue Antrobus to send a list of who on board, management group to planners so they are aware of relevant contacts).
7. The issue of protected species surveys potentially causing delays to development (raised by Darlington). This is where land has an historical allocation for development and when a planning application comes in, the timing often isn't ideal to undertake great crested newt surveys etc , and a lot of data is historic- agreed that we need to explore mechanisms to reduce delays.
8. Explore how the TVNP can assist planners in monitoring the implementation of local plans.

Biodiversity Offsetting

This subject area was also discussed. There was interest in finding out more and a strong agreement that offsets would need to be “spent” in the area of impact otherwise political issues would arise.

6. Key actions to take forward

1. To ensure that the TVNP Management Group and Development Plan Officers (DPO) group provide a forum for continued communication and joint working. TVNP to send planning officers a structural chart of the TVNP
2. For the NNOM the TVNP will:
 - Publish NNOM in September, and follow with mapping along the same format for each full local authority area.
 - Investigate data sharing issues to access which information can be provided in a GIS format
 - Reevaluate the boundaries of the landscape maps to access Ark.
 - Work with Hartlepool planners to use mapping to assist the development of its GI strategy.
 - When funding allows, carry out an evaluation of accessibility of the ecological network by developing further GI layers on public access networks.
3. Planning authorities to work together to write policy statement(s) on ecological network to provide a consistent approach across the Tees Valley.
4. TVNP to further investigate the relevance and application of biodiversity offsetting and Defra’s Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) in the Tees Valley
5. TVNP to develop a long term programme for natural environment recording, and mapping in the Tees Valley with input from relevant local authority officers and Defra agencies.
6. To ensure the TVNP has the capacity to respond to the needs of local planning authorities, planning officers to communicate key dates or input which can then be incorporated into the TVNP’s planning work programme timetable.

Appendix 1: TVNP workshop 25 June 2013 - Delegates booked

No	Name	Organisation	Details
1	Katherine Whitwell	Planning Policy Group Leader, Planning Services Middlesbrough Borough Council	Katherine_Whitwell@middlesbrough.gov.uk
2	Anne Gladwin	Countryside Manager Landscape Development, Middlesbrough Council	Anne_Gladwin@middlesbrough.gov.uk
3	Janet Horne	Principal Planning Officer, Development Management, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	Janet.Horne@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
4	Alex Conti	Planning Strategy Team Leader, Regeneration Services Directorate, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	alex.conti@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
5	Fiona McGloin	Regeneration Services Directorate Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	fiona.McGloin@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
6	Karen Johnson	Planning Policy, Planning and Environmental Policy, Darlington Borough Council,	Karen.Johnson@darlington.gov.uk
7	Planning student from Darlington	Contact details via Karen Johnson	
8	Dan Ashe	Planning Policy, Planning and Environmental Policy, Darlington Borough Council,	Daniel.Ashe@darlington.gov.uk
9	Roy Merrett	Development Management, Planning and Environmental Policy, Darlington Borough Council.	Roy.Merrett@darlington.gov.uk
10	Tom Britcliffe	Planning Policy Team Leader Hartlepool Borough Council	Tom.Britcliffe@hartlepool.gov.uk
11	Matt King	Planning, Hartlepool Borough Council, Department of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Matthew.King@hartlepool.gov.uk
12	Helen Williams	Planning, Hartlepool Borough Council. Department of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	Helen.Williams@hartlepool.gov.uk
13	Chris Scaife	Countryside Access, Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Borough Council	Chris.Scaife@hartlepool.gov.uk
14	Hannah Woodhouse	Countryside Access Parks and Countryside, Hartlepool Borough Council	h.e.woodhouse@hotmail.co.uk
15	Ian Bond	Ecologist, Planning, Hartlepool Borough Council, Department of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	ian.bond@hartlepool.gov.uk
16	John Dixon	Planning, Stockton Borough Council	John.Dixon@stockton.gov.uk
17	Graham Clingan	Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Graham.Clingan@stockton.gov.uk
18	Rosemary Young	Spatial Planning Manager, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.	rosemary.young@stockton.gov.uk
19	Helen Herring	Wildflower Ark	wildflowerark@hotmail.com
20	Jeremy Garside	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	jgarside@teeswildlife.org
21	Martin Allen	Wildflower Ark	wildflowerark@hotmail.com
22	Susan Antrobus	Tees Valley Nature Partnership	santrobus@teeswildlife.org

Workshop Programme

2.00 - 2.10	Welcome and introduction
2.10 - 2.20	The national context - A brief overview of how the publication of the National Ecosystem Assessment and Lawton's Making Space for Nature report have shaped the Governments policies on land use management, conserving biodiversity and the NPPF.
2.20 – 2.45	The Tees Valley context – The role and remit of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership. An outline of the preliminary results of the Tees Valley Natural Network and Opportunity Mapping programme and their application.
2.45- 3.15	Discussion Session 1 How can we use ecological mapping and identification of key landscapes for wildlife in the Local Plan process? Relationship of ecological networks with Green Infrastructure plans and policies? How do we produce Local Plan policies that support ecological networks?
3.15 - 3.35	Vintage Traditional Afternoon Tea
3.35 - 3.45	Review of Session 1
3.45 - 4.15	Discussion session 2 How do we develop the role of the TVNP in the plan making process in the Tees Valley? Biodiversity Offsetting– should/how we be taking this forward in the Tees Valley? Other mitigation approaches?
4.15 - 4.25	Review of session 2
4.25 - 4.30	Key points, recommendations and actions