

Regeneration & Neighbourhoods

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Date: 11/09/2019

Natural Assets Working Group

Fiona Hurworth, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council; Dave Askey, Stockton Borough Council; Martin Allen, independent ecologist; Phil Roxby, INCA; Jeremy Garside, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust; Simon Blenkinsop, Middlesbrough Borough Council
Chair: Graham Megson
Secretariat: Rachel Murtagh

Minutes of last meeting (12/06/2019)

Apologies – SB, JG.

MA emailed MPs.

NE's Tom Charman says further work is needed on Lowland grassland inventory, but no budget. NE has twelve (local?) grassland sites requiring survey. Considered writing to NE (cc in ERIC) with a list of potential lowland grassland sites which TVNP believe should be on their register.

TVCA has bought and re-named the Airport. Stobbarts own 25%. Should airport fail, back-up plan is to recoup the money via housing development.

Concerns over LPAs missing key ecology assets, e.g. in planning, due to lack of ecological expertise. NB: TVWT and TVNP do not check weekly planning lists. Has been consideration of TVNP commenting on major applications. Great for biodiversity but not covered in Council financial contributions...

Consideration of whether NAWG should flag lack of Ecologists with Tees Valley LPAs.

MA talked about the (poor?) resilience of sites and the importance of local genetic material.

RM said that there is an element in the funding bid for a natural assets register.

GM to write to ERIC with proposed LWSs that have not been ratified by LPA (airport and North Ormesby sites). **CARRY OVER.**

GM to find out when next SDL 160-00 return for LWSs in management is due. **Currently 30/09/2019 but extension asked for as NE has not provided data on which sites fall within Countryside Stewardship and are therefore, by definition, in management.**

MA to draft a brief for the Natural Capital Account Commission(?).

GM to write to Scott Bros re: Billingham Beck Saltmarsh North – send map and details and request permission to survey next spring. **CARRY OVER.**

Potential LWS at Billingham Beck Saltmarsh South – info being prepared by INCA. **CARRY OVER.**

Potential LWS at Hardwick Dene – DA and MA to survey next spring. **CARRY OVER.**

Potential LWS Hart Burn beck – Kirsty Pollard to survey. If water vole droppings found on map the site meets LWS criteria. **CARRY OVER.**

MA to continue to update the spreadsheet of de-designated LWS. Turning point in terms of condition is often change of ownership.

MA proposed new LWSs – two in MBC area. Stranton Way grassland (E and W verges may not be continuous) and Brass Castle Lane verges. MA to prepare info and send to SB to progress. **CARRY OVER.**

GM has prepared a de-designation note for High Newton Hazard Verge (now destroyed by housing development). Agreed to de-designate. GM to let ERIC know. **CARRY OVER.**

MA has written to NE about damage to Briarcroft Pasture SSSI (in SBC) on Darlington Back Lane (trees and a pond on grassland). No reply yet from NE.

Discussion on (presumed and actual) decline in condition of many LWS due to lack of management. Discussion on monitoring. Costly for no actual 'on the ground' improvement. Many sites privately owned.

Discussion on how natural assets might be built into a the project framework for community engagement (poss to discuss at next meeting).

Agenda for meeting of 11/09/2019

NA/02.02.19

New sites, site amendments and potential sites:

Outstanding LWS recommendations:

Billingham Beck Saltmarsh - north []

Billingham Beck Saltmarsh – south ML/PR submit details for application []

Potential new grassland site – Hardwick Dene, west of Hardwick Dene nature reserve. **DA** submit details for application []

Hartburn Beck – **DA** submit details for application []

R&C Council, area Greystones LWS? **GM** []

Darlington Council area Central Park LWS deselection

Darlington Council area, Blackwell Grange Golf Course amendment needed []

Spreadsheet containing details of de-designated LWSs - **MA**

NA/03.02.19

TVNP Business Plan – actions for NAWG - discuss timetabling etc. []

NA/04.02.19

Local Nature Recovery Strategies in the Environment Bill see biodiversity net gain consultation summary.

NA/05.02.19

AOB:

National Lottery Community Fund Bid – brief update and feedback.

Latest version of the Defra Biodiversity Metric has been published.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>

Terms of Reference: TVNP Natural Assets Working Group.

Darlington Ecologist?

Date of next meeting

2pm, 11/12/2019 at TVWT, Margrove Park.

Notes for meeting prepared by GM

There is already some justification for requiring biodiversity net gain from the **NPPF** para 170 (d) and 175 (d).

Also in the Planning Guidance (July 2019) paras 22-28.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

How can biodiversity net gain be calculated?

Using a metric is a pragmatic way to calculate the impact of a development and the net gain that can be achieved.

The [biodiversity metric](#) can be used to demonstrate whether or not biodiversity net gain will be achieved. It enables calculation of losses and gains by assessing habitat:

distinctiveness: whether the type of habitat is of high, medium or low value to wildlife.

condition: whether the habitat is a good example of its type.

extent: the area that the habitat occupies.

The information needed to populate this metric is taken from habitat surveys of the site before development and any related habitat clearance or management, and for the habitats proposed within the development as well as any additional habitat improvement off-site. The metric translates habitat distinctiveness, condition and extent into a score which is presented in biodiversity units. It also uses multipliers to account for risks in delivering habitat creation or enhancement. To achieve net gain, a development must have a sufficiently higher biodiversity unit score after development than before development.

Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 8-025-20190721

Revision date: 21 07 2019

The 10% uplift figure is indicated in the latest **update on the Environment Bill**:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-environment-principles-and-governance-bill-2018/environment-bill-summer-policy-statement-july-2019>

This July statement includes:

Following public consultations on biodiversity net gain, conservation covenants and England's trees and woodlands, the Environment Bill will enshrine in law our commitment to deliver environmental policy that will make a real difference in local communities. We will ensure that targeted action not only preserves our natural environment for future generations, but helps reverse damage suffered in the past.

We are committed to sustainable development across our country and delivering much-needed housing does not have to come at the expense of vital biodiversity. Through the Bill, we will introduce a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain. This will require developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced, with a 10% increase in habitat value for wildlife compared with the pre-development baseline. Exemptions for certain types of development will be made in a targeted way, and we will continue to work to establish potential approaches to achieving biodiversity net gains for nationally significant infrastructure projects and marine development, which remain out of scope of biodiversity net gain in the Bill.

To help guide key policies like net gain, planning and the future Environmental Land Management system, we will introduce a new statutory requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These strategies will help to map out important habitats and opportunities for the local environment to be improved, linking communities' knowledge and priorities with national environmental objectives.

We will also give communities a greater say in the protection of local trees. To enhance the safeguarding of urban trees, government intends to introduce a duty on local authorities to consult with local communities to ensure that consultation takes place when a street tree is to be felled.

End