

Strategic Priorities for Environmental Enhancement in the Tees Valley

1. Strategic vision

- 1.1. The Tees Valley Nature Partnership (TVNP) has a strategic vision of a Tees Valley where more people are connected to bigger and better wildlife rich spaces.
- 1.2. The vision will be achieved by the collective efforts of all involved, from the individual to national organisations. All enhancement is good enhancement and we recognise and value the many actions by many people.

2. Strategic Projects Group

- 2.1. The Strategic Projects group ('the group') was formed as a sub group of the wider TVNP as part of its Business Plan 2019-2022.
- 2.2. The group has a specific remit to explore, encourage, champion and support the development of strategic environmental projects that typically might require the support of multiple partners and larger budgets to deliver on a landscape scale, over multiple sites, or other strategic initiatives.
- 2.3. The group was tasked under the TVNP Business Plan to produce this scoping report confirming the strategic priorities for environmental enhancement in the Tees Valley for discussion at the TVNP Steering Group in December 2019.
- 2.4. The group was also tasked with identifying a list of known and candidate key strategic projects with leads, support and actions identified. An initial list is provided but this is not exhaustive, does not preclude support for other projects, and is expected to change and develop as ideas come forward.

3. Strategic Priorities for Environmental Enhancement in Tees Valley

- 3.1. The Strategic Projects Group aims to be inclusive to encourage projects with an environmental focus within Tees Valley and adjacent naturally connected habitats.
- 3.2. An initial review of environment baseline is provided at Appendix A. It is proposed that the TVNP may wish to develop this baseline to detail other specific local elements.
- 3.3. An initial set of priorities includes projects that
 - provide a habitat network resilient to climate change through adaptation and mitigation, including broad habitats of
 - Woodland
 - Grassland
 - River and Wetland

- Urban mosaics
- have the potential to improve, enlarge or connect existing sites
- align with BOA mapping, including opportunities for nature recovery and re-wilding
- are at a landscape or catchment scale or over multiple sites
- provide wider economic, social and health outcomes through proximity to people particularly in areas of deprivation
- enhance the Tees river environment

3.4. It is recognised that the expertise of others will be required to determine detailed priorities. It is proposed that the TVNP may wish to develop this initial list to detail other specific local priorities. In particular the input of the Natural Assets group will be invaluable in identifying potential strategic enhancement projects relating to local sites.

3.5. The partnership should have regard to the following local, national and emerging plans and strategies when determining priorities.

3.6. The Tees Valley Nature Partnership Business Plan 2019-2022 lists three evolving strategic priorities

- Natural Assets – Protecting and improving the natural environment
- Natural Growth – Nature and economy working together
- Natural Health and Wellbeing – Reconnecting people and nature

3.7. Strategic documents providing a local steer on priorities include

- Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy
- National Character Area Profiles
 - Tees Lowlands
 - North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills
- Biodiversity Opportunity Area Mapping and Statements
- Northumbria River Basin District Management Plan
- Northumbria Flood Risk Management Plan
- Special Protection Area Site Improvement Plans

3.8. Strategic documents providing national steer on priorities include

- UK Government 25 Year Environment Plan 2019
- Five Point Salmon Action Plan
- National Planning Policy Framework

3.9. Further steer may be provided in emerging documents including

- Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill
- Nature Recovery Strategy and Networks
- Combined Authority/Local Authority Local Plans and Strategies
- Northumbrian Water's Business Plan 2020-25
- Climate Change Strategy

- Natural Capital Baseline studies

4. Key Strategic Projects

4.1. A list of known candidate key strategic projects is provided at Appendix B

5. Initial objectives of the Strategic Projects Group

5.1. Ensure appropriate sharing of information on the initial list of known current and potential projects by 31 March 2020.

5.2. Ensure appropriate engagement with funders and delivery mechanisms such that relevant bids for feasibility, design or construction are submitted for 2020/21 funding.

Tees Valley Nature Partnership

Strategic Projects Group

December 2019

Appendix A – Initial Tees Valley environment baseline

Woodland

UK woodland cover is 11.5% of land area and for the Tees Valley is 6.8%. Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (the most important type ecologically) is 1.2% of the land area of the UK and is the same for the Tees Valley.

More work would be needed to provide detailed figures for woodland type such as the area of “Priority Habitat Inventory Broadleaved Woodland” and establish a baseline from which change could be measured

The Forest Commission National Forest Inventory England, 2014 attempted such work although a review of local details has identified some errors and false assumptions.

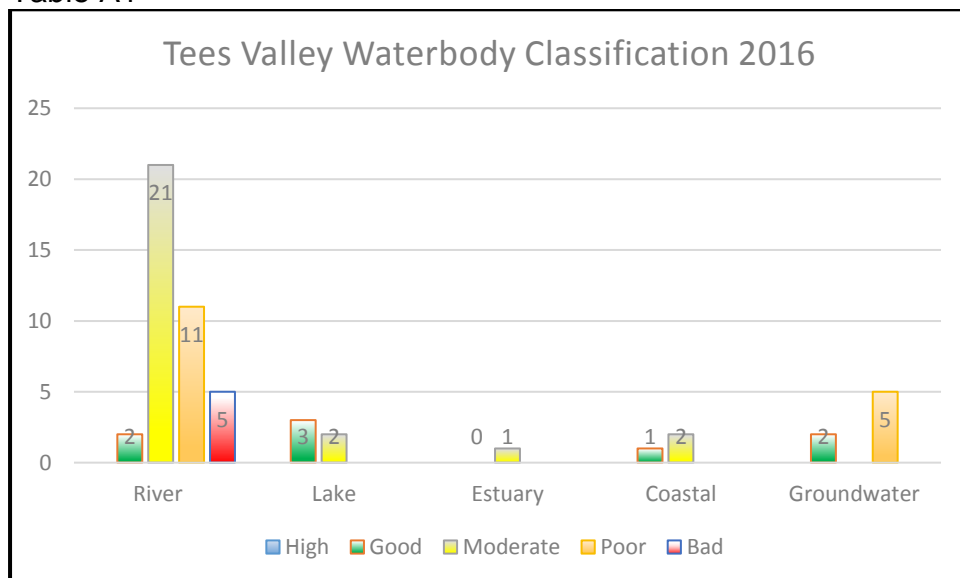
Grassland

To be confirmed

The Water Environment – Rivers, streams, wetlands, estuary and coast

A summary of the ecological classification of all waterbody types that are in whole or in part within the Tees valley area is shown in Table A1 below.

Table A1

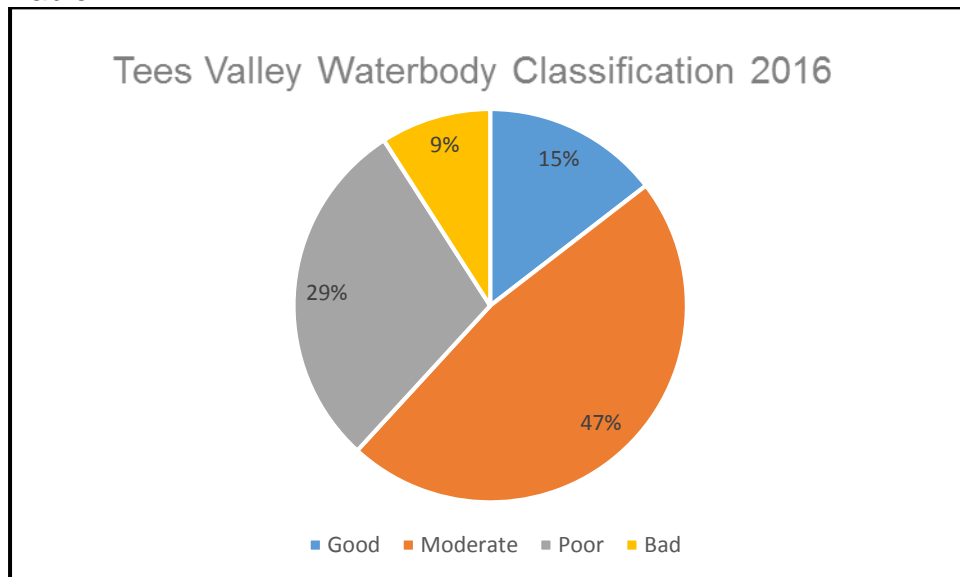


There are 55 waterbodies that are either wholly or partly within Tees Valley. These include rivers, lakes, estuary, coastal and ground waters. These are routinely monitored for a range of parameters that are used to determine the ecological and overall classification under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The Tees Valley has no waterbody at High classification. Only 8 waterbodies are considered to be at Good Ecological status.

A summary of the ecological classification of only surface water bodies that are in whole or in part within the Tees valley area is shown in Table A2 below. This does not include small catchments, ponds or water dependent habitats which although equally valuable, do not have formal classifications.

Table A2



Urban Mosaics - Accessible Natural Greenspaces

Natural England (NE) do not give any specific advice on greenspace provision but suggest that “Everyone should have access to local natural greenspace and can benefit from the physical and mental health benefits that it provides.”

NE propose that local targets might be set, such as one hectare of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1000 people, and / or two hectares of natural greenspace within 300 metres of where they live, and a 20-hectare site within two kilometres.

There are 29 LNRs in the Tees Valley with a combined area of 634 hectares. With a population of 667,500 (in 2015) this gives a total of 0.95 ha per 1000 people.

The LNR designation can only be applied to land under local authority control. With the addition of the 330 ha of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust nature reserves, the area per 1000 people increases to 1.44 ha. Further non-LNR community greenspaces would boost the figures further.

More work would be needed to determine the proximity of greenspaces to communities. Middlesbrough has the lowest LNR to 1000 population figure at 0.23, while Redcar and Cleveland has the highest at 1.73. The indication is that the most urban-deprived communities, which might need the physical and mental health benefits of natural greenspace most, have the poorest access to it.

Appendix B - Strategic projects

Table B1 – Known strategic projects

Project name	Status	Lead partner	Supporting partners
Discover Bright Water Landscape Partnership	Active		
Hogweed initiative	Active		
Rethinking Parks	Active	RCBC	
River Tees Rediscovered Landscape Partnership	Active		
South Bank Borderlands	Active		
Billingham Beck Restoration	Development		
Eston Hills	Development	TVWT	
Flood Alleviation Programme	Development	EA , LLFAs	
Garden Village – Faverdale	Development		
Garden Village – Skertingham	Development		
Improving the Water Environment	Development	NWG	(All)
Living Leven Partnership	Development		
Lustrum Beck	Development	NWG	
Portrack Area	Development		
Saltersgill Beck	Development	NWG	
Seascapes Partnership	Development		
South Tees Development Corporation site	Development		
Stainsby Beck	Development		
Tees Estuary Habitat Vision	Development		

Table B2 – Potential strategic projects

Working Title	Interested Lead	Potential partners
Curlew Project	NPUC / NPAONB	
Darlington Stockton 2025		
Darlington Tree planting		
Mayoral River Tees Initiative	Groundwork NE & Cumbria	
Middlesbrough Urban trees		
Northumbrian Water Trees		
South Gare	GNE&C	
Stockton River Tees Delivery and Management Framework	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	
Stockton Tree planting		
Tees Estuary Habitat Vision		