



## Connecting People and Nature in the Tees Valley

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Dear Ben,

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

### Building Back Better – For People and Nature

I write to you on behalf of the 42 member organisations of the Tees Valley Nature Partnership we represent from across the public, private and third sector who work and advocate for nature in the Tees Valley and beyond. As you may know the Nature Partnerships were established as a counterpart to the LEP's at the same time.

We fully support the ambition in the government's 25-year environment plan to 'become the first generation to leave that environment in a better state than we found it' and believe as many do that now is the time to put that into action.

We can help build a fair, green and resilient economy, with nature and our environment at its heart and see a great opportunity to further align our work with the economic development that TVCA are at the centre of, delivering economic growth whilst also enhancing health and wellbeing and our natural assets.

**Nature is good for our health:** In addition to the obvious physical benefit, its critical to our sense of wellbeing. 87% of the 1.5million adults surveyed in the governments MENE survey between 2009 and 2019 said that being in nature makes them happy.

**Nature is good for our economy:** Our Tees Valley Natural Capital account shows a total annual benefits of ~ £100 million per year to the Tees Valley with an equivalent asset value of around £3billion.

Over the past few months, we have seen an unprecedented rise in access to our local green spaces. This amplifies a national trend of increased visits at least once a week up by 65% in the last 10 years.

Whilst access is increasing nature and biodiversity are decreasing. The Tees Valley reflects the national picture of biodiversity decline too with 13% of species threatened with extinction from the UK.

The services and assets nature provides that cannot be quantified in a natural capital account such as biodiversity is significantly large too. Woodland cover in the Tees Valley for example is 6.8% of land area, 4.7% lower than the uk average. In addition, only 8 out of 55 waterbodies (rivers, lakes, estuary, coastal and ground waters) in the Tees Valley are considered to be 'good' ecological status.

### To start we are calling for:

**Bold policy action** to tackle the climate and nature crises, reflecting emerging national trends. We are encouraged that Paul Booth OBE, Chair of our LEP was one of the commissioners for IPPR Environmental Justice recent report 'Faster, Further, Fairer Putting People at The Heart of Tackling the Climate and Nature Emergency'. We need such vision and your support to:

\*Please note these are the collective views of the partnership rather than a representation of any individual partner organisation.





## Connecting People and Nature in the Tees Valley

- Build on the recently produced Natural Capital Atlas and Natural Capital Account **part commissioned by TVCA** and commission a Natural Capital Investment Plan with programme to ensure our natural capital is adequately valued and protected for the future.
- Integrate Natural Capital approaches into the Tees Valley Zero Carbon plans and ambitions. Recognise that man-made and natural solutions are both needed to achieve net zero. A set of actions to deliver net zero carbon from land use and natural capital has been laid out in our Local Natural Capital case study for the TVCA area.

**Bold practical action** to capture the real opportunities for a better life for people and nature that has benefits for all our communities.

- Help us develop projects to deliver the Natural Capital Investment Plan based on innovation and joint working, convened by TVCA, recognising that funding opportunities may change in the future.
- There needs to be more equitable access to our green spaces. National data shows that there is a 20% difference in access to green space between the more affluent compared with the more deprived areas. As a guideline 1 local nature reserve to 1000 people is the national measure, Middlesbrough has only 0.23:1000 compared to the highest Redcar and Cleveland 1.73:1000.

### Leadership on the climate and nature crises.

- Join us in the North East Climate Coalition. We can be a distinct sub-region with our own strengths and character within this wider whole, we have previously had representation from TVCA on our steering group and the formal membership of TVCA would help to guide this regional approach.
- Support our Tees Valley Conference for Climate and Nature this winter. Building on the success of our on-line [Tees Nature Conference 2020](#) this year.

**Help us build public support** for these ambitions to achieve a win-win-win for people, nature, and the economy.

- Of the 47 nature partnerships across England we are the only one to secure funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to run our partnership for the next 3 years. This is because they support our ambitions to reach wider and further into our communities to add their voice to our already flourishing partnership.
- You can strengthen and support our Nature Partnership by acting as champion and helping us to make connections and network across the Tees Valley.

There is much to discuss and plan as we find ourselves at this critical point. To this end please contact me via our manager Rachel Murtagh [rmurtagh@teeswildlife.org](mailto:rmurtagh@teeswildlife.org) to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

**Timothy Crawshaw MA MRTPI FRSA,**  
Chair, Tees Valley Nature Partnership

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