



TVNP Strategic Projects Group Meeting Agenda
1.00pm, 4th March 2021 via videocall

Invited	Graham Clingan Stockton Borough Council; Jeremy Garside Tees Valley Wildlife Trust; Chris Hood Environment Agency; Kate Lowes and Chris Hood Environment Agency; Rachel Murtagh Tees Valley Nature Partnership; Lucy Chapman Groundwork North East; Jim Cokill Durham Wildlife Trust; Clare Deasy (Sophie Wild) Northumbrian Water
Chair	Graeme Hull Environment Agency
Secretariat	Louise Richards Tees Valley Nature Partnership

Agenda Item	Notes
Background	TVNP Business Plan 2019-2022 . Activity 1.3: Establish a 'Large projects subgroup' to enable cross sector support on identifying and promoting/supporting the development of key strategic projects. Activity 4.1: Work with TVCA and the Mayor on large strategic projects including the Mayors 'River Tees Initiative' to develop local exemplars of sustainable development.
SP/01.01.21 1.00 – 1.15	<i>Actions from previous meetings</i> Minutes from meeting 04/12/20
SP/02.01.21 1.15 – 2.00	<i>Ongoing strategic projects updates</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discover Bright Water - Living Leven - Greatham NE and Portrack flood alleviation schemes – KL and CH (EA) - Northumbrian Water Periodic Review 2019 programme (and 2024?) WEIF - Borderlands - Climate Action Middlesbrough - You've Got This - River Tees Initiative - Festival of Thrift - North East Climate Coalition - VONNE Climate Action Alliance - Local Nature Recovery Network Pilot Northumberland – for information - Tees Swale: naturally connected – for information
2.00 – 2.10	<i>Break Stretch and Move</i>
SP/03.01.21 2.10 – 2.30	<i>Potential strategic projects – development support</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Festival UK*2022 – TVNP is part of one of the 30 teams taking part in the festival R&D. Festival UK* 2022 will then be ten open, original, optimistic, large-scale and extraordinary acts of public engagement selected from these 30 teams. - STDC 'Teesworks' Environment and Biodiversity Strategy - Discussion on potential ideas
SP/04.01.21 2.30 – 2.50	<i>Emerging funding opportunities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defra Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Fund – Tees Tideland - Natural Environment Readiness Fund - Environmental Land Management Pilots Test and Trials - National Lottery Heritage Fund - Green Recovery Challenge Fund II ? - Highways England Environment Designated Funds
SP/07.01.21 2.50 – 3.00	<i>AOB</i>
Date of next meeting:	

Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) launched

On Wednesday 10 February, the Government launched the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF). Nature projects in England which tackle climate change, create and restore habitats, or improve water quality will benefit from the **new £10 million fund** to help them both deliver environmental benefits and attract private sector investment.

NEIRF will provide grants of up to £100,000 to environmental groups, local authorities, businesses and other organisations to help them develop and deliver environmental projects. The Environment Agency cannot apply; however, we can be a partner in bids. The grants will help them get specialist advice, engage investors and build capacity to develop their nature projects to the point where it is ready to attract and repay private investment.

The Environment Agency has been designing the NEIRF in partnership with Defra and Natural England, working with HMT and Access Foundation for Social Investment. We will be delivering this pioneering fund on behalf of the Defra group.

Supporting 25 Year Environment Plan and EA2025

NEIRF will help deliver on commitments in the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and [Green Finance Strategy](#), supporting the [Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#).

By delivering the fund it will help us achieve our ambition as set out in [EA2025](#) and will contribute to the goals set out in our [Funding and Investment Plan \(FIP\)](#) and James Bevan's message: [Attracting the funding we need for the environment](#).

Applying for NEIRF

We would like you to promote the grant with your partners and stakeholders and consider how the fund could be used to maximise your contributions to the [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

Examples of projects that could be eligible for NEIRF grants include:

- **the creation of new woodlands and the restoration of peatlands**, providing habitats for wildlife, green spaces for the public and carbon sequestration to help the government achieve its net zero target. This will generate carbon units which can be sold to businesses that want to offset emissions.
- **the creation of new coastal wetlands**, which benefit wildlife and reduce tidal flooding, while also attracting investment from developers needing to deliver biodiversity net gain and even delivering revenue through eco-tourism.
- **the restoration of river catchments**, helping to both improve water quality and reduce flood risk. As well as benefitting nature and people, these environmental benefits will deliver financial incentives to water companies (with reduced costs for water treatment) and encouraging them to invest.

Applicants have until 26 March to apply. Application forms and guidance can be found on [GOV.UK](#) and further information including FAQs and case studies, provided by the Green Finance Institute, are available on [SharePoint](#). Nature projects proposed need to be replicable and scalable.

During the application window, two workshops bookable via [Eventbrite](#) will be held on 25 February and 3 March for potential applicants to ask questions about the application process. Once successful applicants have been announced a community of practice will be developed to share knowledge, best practice and form connections. Key learnings will be made public to encourage similar approaches to access private sector finance for nature projects in future.

Email the NEIRF team IRF@environment-agency.gov.uk if you have questions.

Environmental Land Management Tests and Trials – Landscape Recovery Tests and Trials

Open early engagement - This means that a procurement idea is currently active, it is in the early stage of development and judging interest from potential suppliers. **Expressions of Interest by 30 April 2021**

Tests and Trials are important components of an incremental approach to building the new Environmental Land Management scheme.

We began the Tests and Trials work in 2018 as a vehicle to engage with a wide range of farmers, land managers and stakeholders to harness their ideas to conduct research to contribute to the design of the new Environmental Land Management scheme. Farmers and land managers taking part in the Tests and Trials co-design elements or building blocks of the new scheme in their real-life environment. We use this evidence and learning they generate to understand farmer and market behaviour and to help shape and inform scheme design.

Tests and Trials are a safe space to fail, learn and improve. As well as Testing the key building blocks of the new scheme, we are also Trialling new ideas and innovative approaches to understand if and how they could be built into the new scheme and help to shape the national pilot.

Tests and Trials and the National Pilot are important components of an incremental approach to building the new scheme. The learning they generate will help us build a tried and Tested framework for the wider roll out of the new scheme. This learning and improving won't stop there as we will continue testing until 2028, with the overall aim that in 10 years' time, we will have a tried and Tested 'co-designed' system that is world-class.

The scope of Tests and Trials is outlined below:

- Co-design and Test how potential **elements of the new scheme work in a real-life environment, with different user groups, across different geographies**
- **Trial new or innovative approaches** that we haven't previously utilised to understand if and how they could be used within a new scheme
- Provide **real time evidence** to help shape policy and delivery
- A means to **engage with a wide range of farmers and land managers** to help **prepare the sector for change** and **harness ideas and delivery solutions**
- It **will not assess** if specific interventions or delivery practices achieve **environmental outcomes**

We are using a **phased approach** to deliver Tests and Trials inviting proposals from stakeholders, this call represents our third phase with Tests and Trials due to continue until 2028, supporting the design and implementation of the Environmental Land Management scheme. This approach has enabled us to prioritise Testing the building blocks as we analyse and evaluate the results from Tests and Trials to feed into our policy development process.

Call Purpose and Scope

To help the development of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme(s) we are conducting a variety of Tests and Trials, aimed at conducting research to contribute to our understanding of how parts of the new scheme work in a real-life environment. We are working with a range of different stakeholders, across different geographies to undertake the Tests and Trials, including farmer groups, representative bodies and non-governmental organisations.

The most ambitious component within the Environmental Land Management scheme(s) is Landscape Recovery. Landscape Recovery will support the restoration and enhancement of natural ecosystem function at scale through transformative land use change projects delivered over the long term. Such projects will restore wilder landscapes in places where this is appropriate, through the creation of woodland, restoring wetlands and peatlands, enhancing bogs, fens or saltmarshes or a mosaic of different habitats. These projects will **contribute towards Environmental Land Management environmental objectives** and support local environmental priorities while making an important contribution to national targets. We expect that this component will be competitive.

Tests and Trials are inviting proposals from stakeholders to Test and Trial the mechanisms required to deliver long-term land use changes with farmers and land managers, for example Testing the practical elements of long-term commitments (30+ years), developing models that can be rolled out more widely and Trialling innovative mechanisms such as conservation covenants. Tests and Trials should be designed to be able to make policy and delivery recommendations that are suitable for roll out within landscape recovery throughout England, rather than recommending approaches that are only applicable in specific circumstances or locations. The specific areas of interest identified for this call are:

- a) How to balance the delivery of national and local environmental priorities in selection and design of projects (e.g. develop and Test models that identifies national opportunities aligned with local priorities and the role of individuals, groups and organisations in balancing local delivery with national priorities);
- b) How to construct agreements for different land ownership structures e.g. individual and group agreements, tenants, commons
- c) How to blend public and private finance in funding projects (e.g. identifying and Testing innovative mechanisms to use public investments to leverage private sector funding);
- d) How to align Landscape Recovery projects (as distinct from Local Nature Recovery projects) to wider Defra initiatives such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature for Climate projects which may also deliver land use change (e.g. Testing the practicalities of differentiating between work delivered under wider Defra initiatives and actions and outcomes which might be delivered under an Environmental Land Management scheme agreement).
- e) How to incentivise land manager participation and collaboration in landscape recovery projects and determine appropriate payment mechanisms (e.g. identify and Test the measures which would encourage participation, the level of incentive required and the mechanisms for facilitating incentivisation);

- f) How to construct long-term agreements (30+ years), potentially incorporating conservation covenants, to safeguard investments in land use change and associated environmental outcomes (e.g. Test what information might be required to deliver and safeguard long term commitments to land use change);

Through Tests and Trials, we will test and trial the mechanics of how Landscape Recovery could work and make policy and delivery recommendations that can be built into the National Pilot. Over the next four years through the National Pilot we will establish 10 Landscape Recovery projects to help restore wilder landscapes, with a focus on large-scale sites. Later this year we will publish more details on how we will choose early pilot projects and invite nominations of potential sites. Together, the National Pilot and Tests and Trials will provide us with a solid basis for testing the delivery capability and implementation of Landscape Recovery, which in turn will help inform the full roll out of Environmental Land Management in 2024.

Tests and Trials are a safe space to fail, learn and improve, they allow us to look at new and innovative approaches that we haven't tried previously to help us understand how they could be used within the new scheme. For example, we are Testing the Payments by Results approach with farmers in Yorkshire and East Anglia. The Trial will examine how the behaviour of farmers changes as they take greater responsibility for delivery of the outcomes, Testing the accuracy of self-assessment and the potential role of remote sensing in validating results.

By Testing and Trialling elements of the new scheme, Defra is looking to work together with farmers and land managers and other stakeholders to harness their ideas, gain their feedback and build something that works for the diverse needs of the agriculture sector, whilst also improving our environment.

We have used a **phased approach** to deliver Tests and Trials inviting proposals from stakeholders. This has enabled us to prioritise Testing to help prepare for the National Pilot and 2024 scheme design. We have Tests and Trials that cover 7 areas or themes:

- **Land Management Plan** – what would be included in a plan, how long it should be and what information is needed to support the land manager or farmer
- **Role of advice and guidance** – the level and role of advice and guidance land managers and farmers would need to put together a plan and implement it effectively
- **Payments** – to Test different approaches to and how these might work in practice
- **Spatial prioritisation** – to Test how different spatial mechanisms identify and agree local priorities
- **Collaboration** – to Test how different methods of collaboration work to deliver environmental outcomes on a greater scale
- **Innovative delivery mechanisms** – to Test how innovative solutions work on the ground and in what circumstances. Examples include reverse auctions and payment by results
- **Strategy** – Testing the different models, mechanisms and approaches to achieve ambitious land use change

More information

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/cf1dcfa5-34af-4cee-819c-dd327e8cf2d5>