



BIODIVERSIFY

DEVELOPING A NATURAL CAPITAL PLAN FOR EASTERN ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

Water Resources East is teaming up with Biodiversify and WWF – UK to develop a natural capital plan for Eastern England. This plan will be stakeholder led and will seek to identify where natural capital action should be prioritised across the landscape in order to deliver outcomes for nature, water and society.

This important project will also feed into the water resource management plans that WRE will be developing over the next 18 months and will help make sure that the changes in water management directly support the recovery of nature. The plan will be developed using Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) which is the international best practice approach for landscape level management of biodiversity, the environment and natural capital.



THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN:

The main aim of the plan is to develop a shared vision for the restoration of nature across the WRE region. This plan will identify priority areas for different types of natural capital actions across the region. These are not intended to dictate anything or force anyone to do anything they do not want to, instead they just indicate where actions should take place in order to deliver natural capital outcomes as effectively as possible. This is partially about being as effective as possible but also about coordinating action across the area so that everyone is pushing in the same direction.

STAKEHOLDER OWNERSHIP:

We want this plan to be owned by the stakeholders of Eastern England. A plan like this will only be valuable if the people and organisations who live and work across this landscape feel that this reflects their wishes. We believe that the only way to achieve this is for stakeholders to play a leading role in the development and creation of the plan. To achieve this we will be facilitating a transparent process designed to put stakeholders in the driving seat and give them the power to collectively develop a shared vision for Eastern England.

WHAT IS SYSTEMATIC CONSERVATION PLANNING?

Systematic Conservation Planning is a combination of two things, a social process and a prioritisation analysis. The spatial prioritisation analysis identifies how and where to act to improve natural capital in the most cost-effective manner. This analysis is embedded within a social process which uses an inclusive dialogue to give stakeholders ownership over the plans.

The approach also seeks to manage nature in a holistic way and develop a plan which considers many different elements of natural capital at the same time, rather than separately in a piecemeal approach. By looking at the bigger picture in this way, the spatial prioritisation analysis looks for synergies; where can you act so that you achieve multiple benefits simultaneously and give the best outcomes for people and nature with the resources available. Because the objectives, actions, and targets are set by the stakeholders the plans also represent the best outcome for everyone; the plans show how people can coordinate across a landscape to achieve common goals as well as having their own needs met.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

- The first step in developing the plan is to set objectives and actions. Objectives are the desired outcomes, for example improved connectivity between patches of natural habitat or reduce flooding. Actions are the steps taken to achieve those objectives, for example restoring natural habitat or planting trees near rivers.

TARGETS:

- Targets are essentially the objectives and actions expressed in numerical terms. For example, a target for woodland restoration might be “establish 5,000ha of new woodland”. They are linked to desired objectives, for example “restore 3,000ha of riparian woodland” might be a target set to reduce flood risk.

WHAT THIS PLAN WILL DO:

This plan will identify priority areas across the WRE region where actions should take place to achieve natural capital objectives set by stakeholders. This plan will be designed to inform and coordinate on-the-ground action delivered by government bodies, environmental organisations, farmers, local communities, volunteer groups, the private sector and any other person or organisation who feels they can contribute.

WHAT THIS PLAN WILL NOT DO:

This plan is not statutory and has no legal status. The plan and its recommendations will not force anyone to do anything that they do not want to do. There is also no funding attached to the plan, although we hope that identifying regional priorities will be very helpful to anyone seeking funding.



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HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Stakeholder input is at the centre of this process so we're very keen to get your views. There are multiple ways that you can be involved throughout the planning process.

1. TELL US ABOUT YOUR PROJECTS

It is critical that this plan builds on the great work being done across Eastern England, whether it is historical, underway or planned. Please send us details of your plans for nature or conservation projects and we will include them in the analysis that underpins the plans wherever possible.

2. SET THE OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS OF THE WRE PLAN

The objectives and actions of the WRE plan will be determined by the stakeholders. There will be a webinar to explain everything on 03/11/2020 and we will share forms to help you provide your input.

3. SET THE TARGETS OF THE WRE PLAN

Stakeholders will set the targets based on the objectives and actions. Once we have a final draft of the objectives there will be a webinar to explain everything on 12/01/2021 and we will share materials to help you provide input.

4. GIVE US FEEDBACK ON EARLY DRAFTS

Once we publish the first plan, we will enter an iterative process of reviewing, discussing and revising. At this point we will revisit the objectives, actions and targets as well as any other aspects of the plan.



ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME

The main outcome of this work will be a shared vision for nature in Eastern England. The plan will communicate this and identify where action should be focused to make this vision a reality.

WHAT WILL THE FINAL PLAN LOOK LIKE?

The plan will be centred around a map of the WRE region. It will identify parishes where natural capital action should be prioritised in order to achieve the objectives as cost effectively as possible. For each priority parish there will be a list of suggested actions that are of regional significance, however it will be up to local people and organisations to decide how, where and when these actions should take place.

WHAT IF I MISS A DEADLINE?

We will initially be taking your input on objectives, actions and targets in phases until early 2021. We will still be keen to receive your contributions even after deadlines have passed because we will re-open the discussion when we release the first draft in early 2021.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

The plan will identify regional priorities, i.e. actions which provide a significant benefit to the wider landscape. This could include planting trees near rivers to reduce flooding further downstream or to establish new connections between habitat patches. There will also be local priorities, i.e. those that provide an important benefit to the immediate vicinity. These could include restoring green spaces in order to provide access to nearby communities. Local priorities will not be included in this plan unless they provide an important regional benefit. This does not mean they are not important, simply that the benefits they provide are less relevant to the wider region.