



## Natural Connections

Achieving more with less across rural and urban landscapes

landscape scale projects ■ green infrastructure ■ integrated management  
multifunction-multibenefit ■ connectivity ■ ecosystem services  
stakeholder participation ■ joined up thinking ■ big society

Conference 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011



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## Agenda

# Natural Connections

Achieving more with less across rural and urban landscapes

9:15 Registration, coffee and tea will be available.

9:45 **Welcome**

Diana Pound, Director,  
dialogue matters ltd (IUCN Commissioner)

### Setting the Scene

- Living Landscape
- Vision for the future

Paul Wilkinson Head of Living Landscapes  
The Wildlife Trusts  
Merrick Denton-Thompson OBE - Landscape  
Institute

### Why Bother?

- Natural Connections, The Big Society and Policy Context (including the Coalition's agenda, Lawton Review, the White Paper)
- What are the benefits of green infrastructure? – the evidence and a resource to help make the case

Tanya Arkle, Deputy Director for Sponsorship,  
Landscape and Recreation, Defra

Tony Hutchings, Head of Land Regeneration  
and Urban Green Space / Carl Foster, URGB  
Coordinator. Forest Research

11:15 **Tea and Coffee**

### Making connections for nature, water, people and places

11:35 **Connectivity for wildlife**

Dr Kevin Watts ialeUK (International  
Association for Landscape Ecology)  
Cathy McGarvey, South West Water

- Upstream Thinking - Integrating land and water management

- Involving people – integrating ideas and delivery through good practice stakeholder dialogue

Diana Pound, Director, dialogue matters ltd

12:40 **Lunch**

### Discussion Session: Delivering multifunction and multibenefit natural connections/green infrastructure

1:30

- What are we already doing that is on the right track?
- How can we strengthen and enhance this?
- What else do we need to do - or do differently?
- What do you wish for? To move this forward if you could have one wish, what would you most want to see happen?
- Two actions – following today what two things will you go away and do?
- What resources tools and case studies do you know of?

### Tools and ideas that work

- Don't reinvent the wheel - ideas and tool kits that work

Ingo Schuder, Sustainable Land Use Delivery  
Leader, Natural England

3:00 **Tea and coffee**

### Stories and thinking to inspire you

3:20 **DIY - local people taking the initiative**

- New Partnerships, new future, new benefits  
Mayesbrook - climate change park
- Catalysing conservation: achieving more with more

Vanessa Jones, Chair, Bredhurst Woodland  
Action Group  
Robert Oates, Director, Thames Rivers  
Restoration Trust  
Richard Smithers, ialeUK  
Principal consultant Biodiversity and Ecosystem  
Services, AEA

### Quick feedback on headline messages from discussion session

4.30 **Close**



# Setting the Scene

## 1. Living Landscape - Paul Wilkinson

Head of Living Landscape  
The Wildlife Trust

### Biography

Paul is Head of Living Landscape for The Wildlife Trusts and has responsibility for leading and supporting the achievement of the vision across the UK. He previously worked as the Director of Regional Policy for The Wildlife Trusts in the East of England, during which time he was a member of the East of England Regional Assembly and chaired the region's Biodiversity Forum for 6 years. Paul is a Member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, has been the Norfolk Biodiversity Coordinator and worked as the Development Manager for an environmental education charity in Norfolk.

### Summary

In order to understand the future of conservation we need to understand the past. Visionary and passionate individuals have helped to secure legislation and important sites to protect species and wildlife rich habitats, however many species and habitats are still in decline. We have tried to stop the rot, but have not yet turned the tide. For decades, planners, politicians and others have seen wildlife as a luxury. Now it's clear that we can't exist without it. We therefore need a paradigm shift, a step change, to secure nature's recovery. This will require us to not only restore and reconnect fragmented habitats, to allow species to adapt to climate change, but also to reconnect people with nature. As a society we need to establish a clear and ambitious vision for the future of the natural environment and find new ways of communicating how to achieve it and the benefits of doing so.

The evidence, and political will is (currently) in our favour. The Lawton Review of wildlife sites and networks *Making Space for Nature* concluded unequivocally that as a country we do not have an ecologically coherent network of wildlife sites capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. Over the last 8-10 years local, regional and national partnerships have come together to identify areas of opportunity or strategic importance for species and habitat conservation and restoration and have begun to embed this in policy. We need to heed the warnings from the TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) study and the National Ecosystem Assessment, as well as the multitude of other indicators which demonstrate that the natural environment has enormous value, and that more needs to be done to secure and enhance it.

We have entered an age of austerity where money is tight and there is a forensic level of attention on every pound of public and private money spent. The Big Society concept is permeating key public policy decisions and priorities and this poses opportunities but also challenges in securing sufficient will and action to secure nature's recovery. We need to demonstrate the value of restoring the natural environment, for its own sake, but also in terms of flood risk management, carbon storage, water quality improvements, wellbeing and community cohesion and promote a more holistic and inclusive vision of the future.

The Natural Environment White Paper, due in May 2011, presents a massive opportunity to make the step change. It could mark the dawn of a new era of nature conservation, building on protection, towards restoration and recovery. The White Paper consultation generated an unprecedented 15000 responses from organisations and, perhaps more importantly, individuals who made the case for change. We need to use this public support to apply and maintain pressure to ensure that the White Paper is ambitious in stating what it will do to facilitate a significant shift in thinking and action and ensure that this is implemented. We need to remain focused on the big picture, the vision and the challenge ahead and remember that it is critical that we succeed.

## 2. Vision for the natural world 2050 - Merrick Denton-Thompson OBE

CMLI for the Landscape Institute

### **Biography**

Merrick is a Landscape Architect who has worked in the public and voluntary sectors. His last appointment was to the Board of Natural England. Before that he directed the Rural Pathfinder for the South East, he was a Board Member of the Cross-Compliance Board and a Member of the Agri-Environment Review Group. He was the Assistant Director of Environment for Hampshire County Council, a post he held for many years.

He is currently founding Trustee of the Learning Through Landscapes Trust, Trustee for the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, Trustee of Marwell Wildlife and Chairman of its Conservation and Education Committee. He is a member of the Editorial Board of Landscape, the Journal of the Landscape Institute.

### **Summary**

#### **Setting the Scene**

Just like the complex symbiotic relationship individual species have with whole ecosystems so the cultural, political and economic drivers in society impact on our ability to transform the status and fortunes of natural systems. As individuals we can do better, but feel powerless to influence our neighbours, as a country we could do so much more but recognise our insignificance when compared to the population and economic giants of our interconnected world. The short life of political horizons seems incapable of securing the level of transformation that is essential if we are to avoid cataclysmic collapse of land and marine ecosystems, upon which our lives depend. This raises the fascinating question about our motives for caring. Is it really about securing our future because without humanity does it matter? Is our concern rooted in utilitarianism or is it pure sentimentalism?

Today we sit in the middle of one of the most destructive regions in the world, consuming at least three times the amount of resources that could ever be justified and our only answer to economic depression is to consume more. The obscenities of city bonuses seem to nurture another species of humanity, hell bent on fuelling the destruction of the natural world. Some of us are actually celebrating the opening up of the North Pole to oil exploration made possible by climate change - how perverse is that?

The majority of the world's troubles have energy supply and irreplaceable rare earths as the catalyst to conflict. The Government have accepted that demand for oil, worldwide, will not be met by supply beyond 2014 and so begins an increasingly difficult time for humanity. The focus on innovation and research is concentrating on technological advances to sustain our current levels of consumption, mobility and destructiveness rather than achieving a cultural shift in our behaviour. There seems to be a complete inability to transform our relationship with natural systems or even to secure the most basic of needs of a population of 7 billion, such as the urgent imperative to obtain sustainable supplies of food and water. Of the 7 billion people, 1 billion is starving, 1 billion is undernourished, 1 billion relies totally on unsustainable fishing and the remaining 4 billion relies on unsustainable agricultural systems, that are too dependent on oil and natural gas for cultivation, production, cropping, distribution and processing.

Most certainly the downsizing of the public purse in this country is crucial to rebalance the relationship between wealth generation and public services but we are in danger of missing the opportunity to restructure services around future needs of sustainable living rather than regurgitating the same mechanisms that have got us in to the mess we are in today.

#### **The Industrial Revolution and Natural Systems**

Are we as a Nation still crowing about how we transformed the world through the industrial revolution? We developed our power base and stimulated the profligate use of stored energy,

built up over millions of years of sunlight, just to burn the lot in 200 years. In fact the world does now know that the future of humanity will rely on making the best use of 'today's sunlight rather than depending on yesterdays'. What the world has not decided on yet is the best way of capturing and making use of this energy. What will the balance be between the level of technological mechanisms and the level of natural systems that will secure our future? As an optimist I think Great Britain will play a crucial part in transforming humanity back to having a symbiotic relationship with the natural world, indeed I think it is already doing it. I make this prediction partly because of our current circumstances as a small island, partly because I believe that our rich multicultural society has immense, unrealised, potential for solving problems and partly because of our powers of communication.

### **Vision for 2050**

Looking forward to 2050 I think that the diversity of humanity will be the recipe for success in securing a sustainable relationship with natural systems and this will be empowered by international collaboration on a scale we could never envisage today. Long gone will be the shallow aspirations of consumerism, of greed, corruption and religious fundamentalism. You will hate it but the world will be semi-natural but not in a farmed sense, there will remain pristine ecosystems but only because reversing the demise of such priceless assets was achieved just in time. The world in 2050 will be where we are today in Great Britain, a landscape fragmented by a mixture of mediocrity and a plethora of designated sites many of which are threatened by their isolation and fragility. The motivation will be complicated, a mixture of pure utilitarianism – a never ending source of bio-medicinal opportunities, of scientific intervention through processes like genetic modification (the innovation of the science having put equal attention into genetic security as it has into the power of the primary scientific achievement), of biological mimicry and most important of all, the total realisation that all ecosystems are inextricably linked to the future survival of humanity.

An ecologically mature Great Britain will be a very different place. It will have come to terms with its semi-natural state, the realisation that even our most treasured habitats of Chalk Grassland and European Lowland Heath were created and sustained by humanity, by our extensive relationship with natural systems.

The fragmented approach and narrow confines of designations would have disappeared, designations like SSSI, NNRs, SACs, SPAs, RAMSAR, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will all have been made redundant. Redundant designations because the narrowness of definition was seen to be no longer fit for purpose and because the boundaries could no longer be subject to continuous expansion to reflect the positive transformation of neighbouring land. However the 75% of British waters designated as Marine Protection Areas will still be in place because the management of the marine environment remains immature.

The transformation of our relationship with natural systems was stimulated by the move away from single use landscapes, to multi-functional landscapes. All landscapes are now the sources of food, of clean water, of clean air, they are powerful sequestrators of carbon and manipulators of climate, they are vibrant ecosystems and generators of energy. At the same time they are very accessible and their productivity relies once again on human effort and this has transformed the health and well being of everyone, especially the young and old.

A new relationship between society and private landownership has been forged where all landowners accept that they are 'tenants for life'. Public intervention majors on clarity of Vision and the provision of funding for those assets for which traditional cost benefit analysis can not apply. Behind it all will be a strident penalty system for actions seen to be anti-social. The Vision will have been established locally, driven by the distinctive variations in soil, geomorphology, geology, water, climate, biological content and opportunity. Public intervention systems will concentrate on the needs of the place and its' people. The National Character Area map, which

today has been largely ignored, will have formed the framework for delivery, for collaboration between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The intensive, mechanised, industrial agricultural systems will have been transformed, there will be no intensive animal rearing, apart from worms. Soil is no longer banished to a growing medium, the categorisation of soil as being 'most flexible' is now viewed with abhorrence, because in the new world soil has driven the sustainability of food growing systems. The biodiversity of soils is the most cherished and nurtured natural resource with its huge capacity to refresh itself and ability to sequester carbon. The amount of carbon in the first foot of soil is about the same as the amount of carbon in our atmosphere but it has huge capacity to return to being the portal for carbon capture.

All arable systems depend on integrated crop management alongside sophisticated development of perennial seed bearing crops. Vertical farming will exist, in built farm estates within our urban places, in a totally controlled environment using hydroponics and aeroponic nutrition systems, based on sustainable technological development. Our diet has also been transformed, meat is eaten but it is very expensive because it derives solely from extensive grazing. We have moved from the Sunday roast to April's roast. There are huge variations in the tastes of meat because the modern breeds have disappeared, banished by society as being unsustainable. The grazing and browsing characteristics of what were rare breeds are once again highly valued.

Multi-functional forests have been enormously successful in making the best use of land resources and they have been the focus of the restoration of despoiled agricultural land, particularly in our urban fringes. These open forests are a major source of food with Cob Nuts, Sweet Chestnuts and Walnuts now forming a major part of our diets. You may have seen Rebecca Hosking's film – A Farm for the Future where it accounts for an acre of corn feeding 10 people for a year and the products of an acre of Sweet Chestnut being able to do the same. Just think of the contrast in carbon footprint and human intervention between these two food producing systems.

At the same time all of our woods and forests have returned to cyclical cropping through short and medium term coppicing for both construction and biomass fuel for energy, with the 10% target of renewable energy from biomass having been reached years ago. Perhaps the most dramatic transformation in our behaviour is in the level of human contact with food production and the land management, gone from 2% in 2010 to a gross 40% in 2050. The farmed rural landscapes are much more populated, where human effort plays a much more important role. The impact on well being, mental and physical health has been dramatic with the only losers being those who invested in health spas.

As a result the sterility of our past urban and urban fringe landscapes are now rich, productive, exciting places, teeming with wildlife and food growing. Because mobility had to be curtailed a new national emphasis was given to achieving high quality, multi-functional, living environments, all new houses are designed to live in, to play and work in.

### **Catastrophe or Empowerment**

What did it take to bring about such a transformation, to draw us back from the brink of catastrophe? Was it a change to short term politics? Were there riots and hunger strikes? Did we have to ration energy? Or was it a series of cataclysmic climatic events that shifted our behaviour? Yes circumstances did have a part to play, but the main drivers to the dramatic changes in culture and behaviour originates in two fundamental actions the first was the new imperative for Localism and the importance of a rich, diverse and high quality, local landscape. The second driver was the empowerment of the young achieved through education and influence. Instinctively our children understand that the demise of ecosystems cannot be allowed to continue. The connection forged between children and natural systems by parents, teachers and voluntary organisations will achieve the cultural shift that we as adults know is necessary

but we just cannot see the route to achieving it . In my view it is impossible to quantify the powerful influence of people like David Attenborough on building cultural change, we trust him more than any politician or cleric and I doubt you would argue that he is doing for the natural environment what Nelson Mandela did for celebrating the diversity of humanity.

Where David misses a large proportion of society then other warriors take up the battle like James Cameron turning the appalling relationship we have with natural systems into an epic thriller – Avatar – a violent film about nature conservation. The power of film and our sophisticated communication systems have to be combined with changes to our approach to education.

We have to invest in reconnecting young people with ecosystems through programmes like those promoted by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and the Learning Through Landscapes Trust, accepting the obvious that learning styles vary and many more people learn through direct experience than society is prepared to admit to. How many of us can see that the sterility of the school yard is having a profoundly negative impact on the 7 million young people who are at school at any one time and yet transforming the school yard into a rich, stimulating learning environment in which the connections with nature can be forged into unbreakable partnerships, is fundamental to building the foundation to cultural change. The release of teachers from the rigid framework within which they have had to operate over the last 20 years, will result in their passion, innovation and commitment to developing young minds, being celebrated and trusted by society once again.

I could be accused of being naively optimistic and so to counter such an accusation I want to emphasise that we must remain vigilant and proactive, we have a responsibility to drive the message forward despite the myriad of diversions thrown at us every day. My simple conclusion is that we may indeed feel isolated, ineffective and far too passive to secure the required changes to individual, communal or national behaviour, but our absolute passion and commitment as individuals, combined together, is developing an unstoppable movement.

### **References**

1. The Future of Food and Farming <http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/our-work/projects/current-projects/global-food-and-farming-futures/reports-and-publications>
2. A Farm for the Future – Film by Rebecca Hosking
3. The Learning Through Landscapes Trust [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)
4. The Landscape Institute <http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/>
5. The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom [www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk)

## Why Bother?

### 3. Natural Connections, Big Society and the Policy Context - *Tanya Arkle*

Deputy Director for Sponsorship  
Landscape and Recreation  
Defra

#### **Summary**

The Coalition is committed to a programme of reform that will change the way Government operates.

The Government wants to bring about a power shift, taking power away from Whitehall and putting it into the hands of people and communities. Green space is important which is why it is reflected in both the Defra and Communities Departmental Business Plans. These Plans are key tools for holding departments to account for the implementation of Programme for Government commitments, replacing the old top-down systems of targets and central micromanagement.

There is already considerable evidence on the benefits of green infrastructure and many examples of local action. Green Infrastructure is important across Government Departments. The consultation on the Strategy for Public Health in England recognises the role of green space in healthy lifestyles and the associated Public Health Outcomes Framework includes access and use of green spaces as one of the indicators for measuring improvements in the factors that drive health problems amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged in our communities.

The Natural Environment White Paper, a key part of the Defra Business Plan, will set out the Coalition Government's proposals on how it will work with civil society local authorities and local people to help incorporate and protect green infrastructure in their communities.

## 4. What are the Benefits of Green Infrastructure? - The evidence and a resource to help make the case - *Tony Hutchings & Carl Foster*

Tony Hutchings is Head of Land Regeneration and Urban Green Space

Carl Foster is Coordinator Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership

### **Biography**

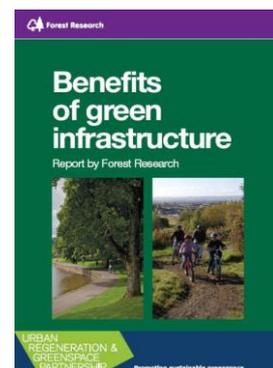
Tony Hutchings leads the Land Regeneration and Urban Greenspace Group at Forest Research within the Centre for Forestry and Climate Change. This is a multi-disciplinary research group which works across scientific disciplines to deliver a £3M project portfolio for clients including the FC, EU, SNIFFER, CLAIRE, EP, WDA, EA, Defra, CLG, EPSRC, BERR, Local Authorities and wider industry. He has considerable experience in this field having dedicated more than 16 years to research and producing associated guidance on green infrastructure.

Carl Foster co-ordinates the Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership. He also managed the Defra/CLG funded Benefits of Green Infrastructure project. Prior to this he led the development and implementation of Forest Research's quality management systems. Between 2002 and 2006 he worked as Field-station manager for FR Technical Services Unit, planning and managing research and survey programmes in Wales, West Midlands and the Forest of Dean.

### **Summary**

What are the benefits of green infrastructure?

- Where is the evidence to help make the case for green infrastructure?
- Why review the evidence?
- Research outputs



The formation of the Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership (URGP)

Aims

Partners

Resources

Future



### **References**

- Benefits of Green Infrastructure project  
[www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/9DA5059BD7A3918D802577BC0050B34E](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/9DA5059BD7A3918D802577BC0050B34E)
- URG [www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/urgp](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/urgp)

# Making Connections for Nature, Water, People and Places -

## 5. Connectivity for wildlife - *Dr Kevin Watts*

ialeUK (Institute for Landscape Ecology)

### **Biography**

Kevin Watts has been working on landscape ecology research at Forest Research, the government research agency of the Forestry Commission, since 2002. His research has focussed on the development and application of landscape ecology tools to enable forest and land managers to target and evaluate their actions on biodiversity. These tools have been applied at a range of scales, including forest, catchment/watershed, region and country. More recently he is working with colleagues to improve the underpinning scientific evidence through a number of studies on species movement, metapopulation dynamics and landscape genetics. He is also keen to consider the impacts of land use change on a wider range of ecosystem services. He has a broad knowledge of landscapes ecology and management from both an academic, as a student, lecturer and researcher; and practical perspective, as a habitat surveyor, consultant and practical conservationist.

### **Summary**

Through the use of annotated images, Kevin will briefly outline some of the issues affecting wildlife in fragmented landscape and how these may impact on connectivity. He will then illustrate a number of conservation actions, from the site to landscape-scale, which may improve connectivity and aid wildlife conservation. He will then sum up some issues associated with connectivity conservation and the need to integrate these actions with other landscape management options to benefit ecosystem services.

### **References**

[www.forestry.gov.uk/forestresearch](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestresearch)

[www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/woodlandbiodiversity](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/woodlandbiodiversity)

[www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/landscapeecology](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/landscapeecology)

[www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/habitatnetworks](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/habitatnetworks)

## 6. Upstream Thinking – integrating land and water management - Cathy McGarvey

Environmental Coordinator  
South West Water

### **Biography**

Cathy has worked for South West Water for 11 years, initially in Finance, as her background is in accountancy. However, she was pleased to use her degree in Geography, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Decision Making by taking up the position of Environmental Coordinator.

In addition to involvement on the catchment management project, Cathy coordinates a range of Corporate Responsibility Initiatives, from wildlife management on operational sites, to our Community Engagement programme with employee volunteering. She chairs the Sustainability Forum where new initiatives are promoted and progressed and also writes the company's Corporate Responsibility Report, develops and collates progress on CR targets and answers investor surveys about CR performance within the company.

### **Summary**

Climate change is affecting the quality and quantity of raw water supplies collected in reservoirs and abstracted from rivers. South West Water promoted two series of actions from 2006 to 2009 to respond to this, based on moorland restoration on Exmoor and successfully reducing soil loss and pollution from farms. A more extensive programme of changes to uplands and farmed land was promoted in the last Periodic Review (PR09) with support from all environmental regulators, Ofwat and CCWater.

Our catchment management programmes rely on the co-operation of third parties as South West Water's direct landownership above our river abstractions and reservoirs is limited. The skills of Westcountry Rivers Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Cornwall Wildlife Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group been mobilised as they have the ability to identify problems and implement improvements with the support of landowners and land managers.

The development of a private company/voluntary sector approach to addressing pollution in a long-term partnership offers targeted improvements which start field by field and extend to entire catchments, with minimal overheads and on-costs.

We are now implementing a 3,000-hectare restoration on Exmoor, a 110-hectare trial on Dartmoor and seven catchment-scale farmland improvements above key intakes and reservoirs. Fifteen further catchment investigations are being undertaken to examine risks and identify where further catchment-based interventions are likely to succeed. South West Water has branded this programme of water quality and quantity protection as 'Upstream Thinking'. It avoids costly longer-term water treatment upgrading and when assessed over 30 years, in line with Ofwat's instructions for PR09, offers a benefit to cost ratio of 65:1 or better. Dealing with water quality and quantity challenges at source offers long-term gains with multiple benefits, only a few of which are currently valued.

The current improvement programme for moorland and catchments raises £9.1m for local projects to restore the natural water-storage ability of uplands and limit the damage to rivers from farmland from 2010 to 2015. These projects are included in the South West River Basin Management Plan as they will contribute to 'Good Status' delivery for the Water Framework Directive. The cost to our water customers is an additional 65p on bills by 2015, compared to a PR09 'willingness to pay' for environmental improvements of £2.40 per customer.

In preparation for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the next Periodic Review (PR14) South West Water is working with Natural England and other stakeholders to design a

practical method of making eco-system service payments to reward best land management practices above our principal water sources.

**References**

<http://www.southwestwater.co.uk/index.cfm?articleid=684&searchkey=upstream%20thinking>

## 7. Involving People – integrating ideas and delivery through good practice stakeholder dialogue - *Diana Pound*

Director  
Dialogue Matters Ltd

### **Biography**

**Diana Pound** is Director of **dialogue matters ltd** which she set up in 2000 to design and facilitate stakeholder dialogue about the natural environment and to provide training. Her background is in natural resource management on land, at the coast and for the sea. Diana is an advocate for integrated and equitable management of the natural environment through well designed and well run stakeholder negotiation processes. She has designed and facilitated over 45 stakeholder processes including 65 workshops. She works in a wide variety of situations and at local, national and international levels.

### **Summary**

#### **Introduction**

Those who care about the natural environment are thinking big. There have been rapid developments in science, GIS mapping and modelling and greater understanding about ecological function and ecosystem services. This is combined with increasing ambition about multifunction and multibenefit land and sea use, managed at scales undreamt of before. However what is not keeping pace with all this is in the environment sector, is an understanding of good practice around involving stakeholders in shaping and influencing what happens and in agreeing integrated action.

It takes more than good science, persuasive language and stronger laws –the mechanisms most used by conservationists. After all, we have had all that for years and it hasn't been enough! We need a shift in understanding about decision-making processes, a shift in attitude towards other stakeholders, and a shift in understanding about what is good practice participation.

#### **Involving people**

It is not commonly realised just how much the way decisions are made affects what decisions are made. A poor decision making process which alienates stakeholders, or ignores some forms of knowledge, will get poor results however good the quality of scientific information, aspirational language and expert advice. What is needed is for environmental organisation to get better at working with others rather than for others. This will mean relinquishing any predetermined vision in order to develop a shared one with other people and then working out how to achieve this in an integrated and equitable way.

It is true that there is increasing recognition amongst the natural environment sector of the importance and benefits of stakeholder participation, but there is less understanding of the principles of designing effective and coherent stakeholder processes, the techniques and skills used, and what constitutes good practice. In fact, stakeholder participation and conflict management has now developed as a field of research and expertise in its own right, and the skill of process design and facilitation is emerging as a new profession.

To be regarded as good practice, stakeholder processes require a well-designed, coherent and inclusive participation process with impartial facilitation. Stakeholders are engaged at an early stage when options are open. Everyone shares knowledge and insights. Possible actions, ideas and consequences are explored before decisions are firmed up and committed to paper. The process captures the knowledge, views and ideas of a wider group; it builds social capital, enriches the discussion and leads to better informed, better-understood and better-supported outcomes.

### The importance of social Capital

A key reason why well run stakeholder processes work, is because they develop and build 'social capital'. Pretty and Ward (2001) argue that social capital should be seen as one of five key assets essential for sustainable living alongside: natural, physical, financial, and human. They define social capital as the sum of connectedness, trust and goodwill between people and suggest that it has four elements:

- Relations of trust
- Reciprocity and exchanges
- Common rules, norms and sanctions
- Connectedness networks and groups.

Social capital results in co-operation and collective action and so where the agenda is to plan and implement management of landscapes for sustainability, it is essential to understand how to build social capital and harness it for positive change.

### Building Social Capital

Organisation with decision-making power can relate to other stakeholders in one of four categories based on the extent that stakeholders influence the outcome. The more decision-making power is shared the more social capital will be generated.

	Role of Stakeholders	Stakeholder's influence over outcome	Amount of social capital likely to be acquired
Information giving	Stakeholders are told what has been done or decided	None	Least
Information gathering	Stakeholders are asked for data that informs the decision making	↕	↕
Consultation	Stakeholders views are passed to decision makers		
Shared decision making	Stakeholders share directly in the decision making	Most	Most

Where issues are controversial or complex (as with ecosystem management) investing time and money in shared decision-making is the best approach because it builds the social capital required for change. In this situation, if specialists decide amongst themselves and then just tell those affected it is likely to prompt a backlash from other sectors.

### Whose knowledge counts

When entering into a dialogue with other parties, each person comes with their own knowledge base and their own view of reality. For example nature conservationists frame reality through science, tend not to consider the value judgements that have been used to develop that science, and find it hard to understand how others cannot accept this 'reality'. However, people from other sectors or interests frame reality differently and use different forms of evidence and knowledge to shape their understanding. Part of a well-run stakeholder process is to develop a shared understanding of reality so that decisions are well informed from all perspectives. Of course not all of each interests knowledge will be used, and not all will be accepted, but by working to share knowledge and find agreement more sustainable outcomes will result.

		Who knows	
		Us	Them
Our Knowledge	Us		
	Them		

		Who knows	
		Us	Them
Their Knowledge	Us		
	Them		

		Who knows	
		Us	Them
Shared Knowledge	Us		
	Them		

### Managing conflict

There is now sufficient example of conflict management to know that it demands the very best practice to have a chance of success. It requires careful preparation to: understand the situation, identify all key stakeholders, and evaluate existing or likely tension. Having done this, a trained and skilled person can design a process that deliberately encourages people to build consensus and focus on common ground (not difference). The process should help people to work up from small areas of agreement towards developing trust and finding mutually acceptable solutions. Conflict is immediately reduced when stakeholders feel:

- They have been involved at an early stage when options are open
- They have a genuine opportunity to influence the outcome
- Their knowledge and insights are respected
- They feel listened to

### A shift in attitude

Interestingly (and depressingly) at an IUCN workshop of experts (Managing Change in Conservation and Sustainable Development. Valsain, Spain. June 2004) people agreed that one of the biggest problems to achieving better ecosystem management was the attitude and actions of ecologists and other natural scientists. For effective management to take place a shift in attitude towards other stakeholders is needed (see box below).

Change in attitude of environmental managers		
From:		To:
Focus on scientific and technical knowledge	→	Many forms of knowledge are needed and used
Seeing other stakeholders as the problem	→	Realising we are all part of the problem - and all part of the solution
Seeing other stakeholders as a distraction and drain on resources	→	Realising they are a resource – of information, ideas and endeavour
Telling others what to do	→	Listening with an open mind
Pushing others to change	→	Working with others to agree change
Behaving as experts	→	Behaving as partners
Formal approaches	→	Informal and interactive approaches
Our ideas and solutions	→	The best most workable ideas and solutions

Diana Pound 2004 Adapted from Conservation Results by Managing Change. The role of Communication, Education and Public Awareness. IUCN

The IUCN workshop concluded that real progress would only be made when environmental managers understand good practice in communication, have an attitude of respect towards others, engage in principled (the desire to find win/wins and mutual benefit) negotiation and participation, and when capacity has been built to establish good skills and deliver good practice.

If we care deeply about the genuinely sustainable use and management of the natural environment, then good practice stakeholder participation is vital. Stakeholder participation must not be an afterthought in the budget and planning of change. Process need to be well-designed and well-run. When they are, they do what is needed. They:

- Handle complexity
- Integrate science
- Harness other forms of knowledge and know-how
- Handle uncertainty
- Build understanding
- Integrate agendas
- Can be used to plan for the long-term
- Build momentum and support for delivery of crucial actions
- Lead to better informed, better-understood and better-supported outcomes

### Good Practice Design - steps and stages in a stakeholder negotiation process

Not all stakeholder participation is equal – some can even do more damage than good. What is needed is careful, skilful and thoughtful design. This allows people to step down from their

starting positions, integrate their knowledge and understanding and agree a shared future that they are willing to commit resources of time and effort to work towards.

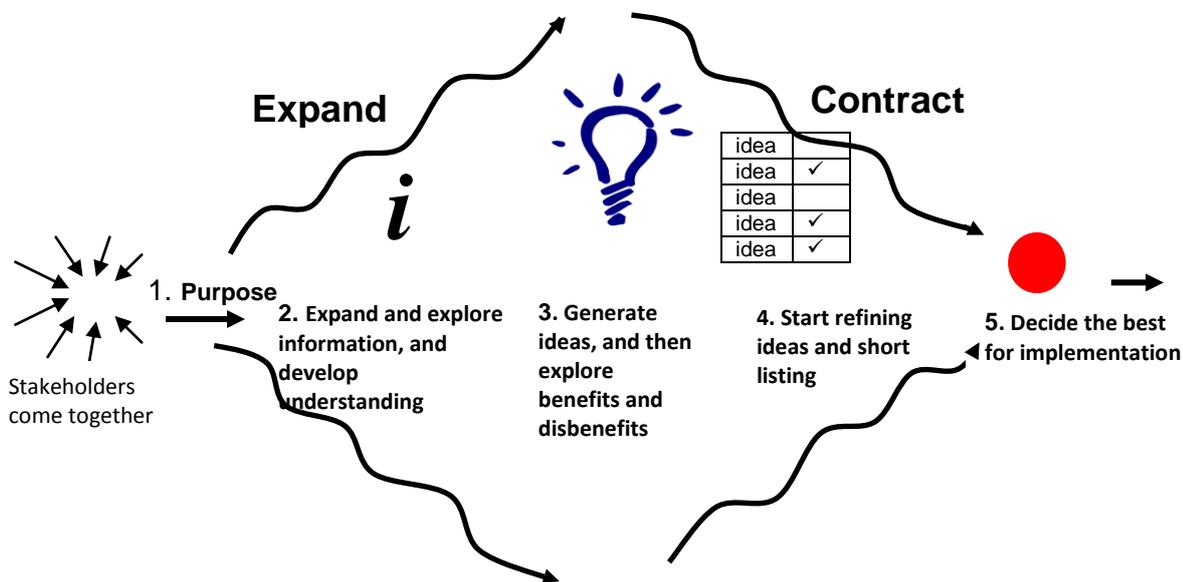
Helping people move from positional negotiation towards cooperation and collaboration involves clear stages:

**Stage 1:** The process helps stakeholders move from the current starting point of varying knowledge and perspectives, to expanding and broadening out discussion to develop understanding.

**Stage 2:** The next stage is to generate and explore creative solutions and ideas and explore the benefits and disbenefits of each.

**Stage 3:** The final stage is to narrow the discussion back down again to agree the way forwards.

The sequence is broadly illustrated in the diagram below, which shows the process expanding out before contracting back and leading to decisions. (Based on De Bono TEC Chart). The sequence is explored further in the following text.



### Conclusion

Key to achieving the multi-function, multi benefit management of valued places is good understanding amongst resource managers about the role of participation and the crucial importance of good practice process design and facilitation. It will also be necessary to build the capacity needed to commission, design, facilitate and run effective, interactive participation processes with all key stakeholders entering into a genuine dialogue.

## Tools and Ideas That Work

### 8. Don't reinvent the wheel – ideas and tools that work - *Ingo Schuder*

Sustainable Land Use Delivery Leader  
Natural England

#### **Biography**

Ingo has been living and working in Newcastle since 2000. After successfully completing a PhD in Pest Management Science he first joined the Rural Development Service and then the Countryside Agency, which both merged into Natural England in October 2006. While his background is Ecology he has worked in a diverse range of roles including communication, partnership working and advice on agri-environment schemes. Ingo is currently the Delivery Leader for Sustainable Land Use in the North East region. This includes the overall co-ordination of Natural England's statutory case work responses, pro-active engagement with Local Authorities and a broad range of activities on Green Infrastructure, including advice on strategy development and engagement in exemplary projects.

#### **Summary**

##### **Good practice – how do I know what you are doing?**

I would like to encourage you to seek and disseminate good practice. You may be holding someone else's last piece in the jig-saw puzzle or vice versa someone else may have yours. I trust my presentation gives you some new ideas, too. I encourage you to pick and choose and tweak it to your local circumstances. All projects and approaches presented worked in the North East context.

##### **North East – Good practice adopted**

I would like to give credit to partner organisations and good practice developed outside the North East and natural England's partners. These are ideas we took and adapted to our circumstances.

A number of resources referred to below as being published on [NE GI page](#) can be found on Natural England's North East Green Infrastructure web page, [http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/north\\_east/ourwork/green\\_infrastructure.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/north_east/ourwork/green_infrastructure.aspx), including:

- Green Infrastructure Update (March 2011)
- Green Infrastructure signposting document
- St Lawrence Park case story
- Easington Colliery concept statement
- Presentations from previous conferences and workshops
- The Limestone Landscapes Access and Green Infrastructure audit

*(this page may disappear in April with the restructuring of Natural England being imminent)*

What started in 2005 with some emerging evidence that money does grow on trees ([www.cabe.org.uk/publications/does-money-grow-on-trees](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/does-money-grow-on-trees)) evolved in the North West to a very robust approach to understanding and selling the Economic Value of Green Infrastructure ([www.nwda.co.uk/PDF/EconomicValueofGreenInfrastructure.pdf](http://www.nwda.co.uk/PDF/EconomicValueofGreenInfrastructure.pdf)). It was Peter Wilmers from Natural Economy North West who I first heard using the phrase: "Who is going to buy which function?" (of multifunctional Green Infrastructure). In the North East we used this way of thinking to shape GI strategies, projects and resulting case stories.

From this thinking a number of regions and organisations, including five Regional Development Agencies (RDA); and in the North East the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure partnership developed the **Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit**. Environmental valuation is an area of increasing interest, especially at a time when funds are at a premium and the pressure to

achieve value for money never greater. It represents the latest step forward on what will undoubtedly be a long road. Defra are undertaking long term work to pursue environmental valuation within the context of their work on the Ecosystem Approach.

The existing toolkit has been released as an experimental prototype covering User Guide, Case studies and Calculator to assess. A network has been set up to allow interested parties to maintain contact and hopefully engage in longer term open source development of better science, better evidence and better tools necessary for future improve toolkits.

[www.bit.ly/givaluationtoolkit](http://www.bit.ly/givaluationtoolkit) or email [givaluation.network@merseyforest.org.uk](mailto:givaluation.network@merseyforest.org.uk)

Another really useful resource has been the **North West Green Infrastructure guide**.

[www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk/resources/GIguide.pdf](http://www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk/resources/GIguide.pdf) , a hand on guide to developing a Green Infrastructure strategy in five simple steps:

- Partnership
- Audit
- Functionality Assessment (what do GI assets do?)
- Needs assessment
- Implementation

This has provided an essential focus and structure to many Green Infrastructure strategies in North East currently nearing completion. In the North West and Yorkshire it has been used to inform planning at City Regional, District and Local scales.

- City Region Scale - Greater Manchester and Leeds  
[http://www.leedscityregion.gov.uk/uploadedFiles/Research\\_and\\_Publications/General\\_Publications/00000\\_LCR\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.leedscityregion.gov.uk/uploadedFiles/Research_and_Publications/General_Publications/00000_LCR_Exec_Summary.pdf)
- District Scale - The Liverpool City GI Strategy  
<http://www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk/liverpool/>
- Local Scale – Liverpool Knowledge Quarter. Full detail at;  
[http://www.liverpoolvision.co.uk/Key\\_Documents/Development.aspx](http://www.liverpoolvision.co.uk/Key_Documents/Development.aspx); case study at  
[http://www.urbed.coop/journals\\_show.php?j\\_id=172](http://www.urbed.coop/journals_show.php?j_id=172)

An approach developed by the Countryside Agency in liaison with the Planning Co-operative is **Concept Statements**. These are a clear expression of the kind of place that development should be creating, not in technical terms but in simple, everyday language that anyone can understand. They include a map, key principles and objectives, a description of assets and of proposed features. The advantages to a more traditional masterplan are:

- Quick and cost- effective
- Provides a sound basis for calculating land values
- Allows proper budgeting by the development industry
- Establishes a clear brief to assess development proposals

Concept statements can be adopted as a statutory document, e.g. as part of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Examples include Local Authorities in the East of England such as

Examples of concept statements Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk (<http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/Concept-Statements-and-Masterplans.cfm> ). South Hams District Council was first to prepare concept statement for every site proposal in draft LDF in 2002. Resulting Concept statements are here:

[http://www.southhams.gov.uk/index/residents\\_index/ksp-development\\_and\\_planning-forward/sp-development\\_and\\_planning-forward\\_concept.htm](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/index/residents_index/ksp-development_and_planning-forward/sp-development_and_planning-forward_concept.htm)

While there are similar elements it is important to understand the difference between a masterplan and a concept statement and how they can complement each other in the process towards a sustainable housing development.

<http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/pdf/planning/helpdesk/St%20Edmundsbury%20GI%20Information%20Pack%20WEB%20VERSION.pdf>.

To be convinced about concept statements, you simply have to do one! I was quite amazed how in Easington Colliery after only two half-day sessions with technical expert stakeholders and the

community something close to the final version emerged from the hands of the Planning Co-operative. (see report and final product at [NE GI page](#)).

Moving closer towards delivery it is essential to get sustainability embedded in new housing delivery and to embed Green Infrastructure into the design of new housing schemes.

**Green Infrastructure by design** –adding value to development, developed by a partnership in Milton Keynes is an excellent tool to do this. It is a really practical guide. Most of it is not specific to Milton Keynes location and the rest can be easily adopted to suit your Local Authority area. Flyer available in pack / on info table.

([http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/MKSM%20GI%20by%20Design%20Guide%20Single%20Page%20Spread%20Web\\_tcm6-19781.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/MKSM%20GI%20by%20Design%20Guide%20Single%20Page%20Spread%20Web_tcm6-19781.pdf)).

### **North East – Good practice developed**

Natural England in the North East has always put a lot of emphasis on communication, sharing good news from partners and disseminating good practice from within and outside the North East. This includes a newsletter, the **Green Infrastructure Update** ([NE GI page](#)). This is disseminated to all those with an interest in Green Infrastructure, from strategic partners to delivery partners, developers and many more. A few copies available on information desk (March issue).

This runs in conjunction with a **Green Infrastructure signposting** document that captures previous issues and summarises sources of evidence, publications and initiatives by topic ([NE GI page](#)).

With funding becoming increasingly more challenging and uncertainty over how the political climate will favour Green Infrastructure delivery, it has become very important to produce a new style of **case stories**, which combine the qualitative narrative with hard hitting quantitative evidence about the socio-economic and environmental benefits of Green Infrastructure projects. This aims to influence decision makers and sceptics. It has also started to change the thinking of those delivering projects towards the need for advocacy, dissemination and evidence gathering. The first new style case story will be completed in March 2011 and/or is available on the information desk (St Lawrence Park, Byker) and later on the [NE GI page](#).

To increase capacity for Green Infrastructure delivery in the North East, Natural England initiated the creation of two **Green Infrastructure implementation posts**. Our current model sees Groundwork North East hosting two posts in the Tees Valley and Durham working as a team with complementing skills. Long-term we are aiming to demonstrate the value of these posts to “mainstream” them. Funding packages vary, but have a fairly large public sector contribution which may prove a challenge with the way forward. Much Green Infrastructure delivery has already been achieved through these posts and many decision makers across the transport, regeneration and housing agenda have been influenced.

Natural England has been working in partnership with a broad range of Local Authorities and other partner organisation to **deliver exemplary GI projects**. In the last two years 7 flagship projects were initiated, creating or significantly enhancing 534 ha of multifunctional high quality Green Infrastructure, an additional 17 ha of BAP habitat and over 20km of access routes. The projects levered in well over £1m of funding.

**Ashington Community Woodland** led by Groundwork North East brought together the health, access and biodiversity agenda in a highly deprived area in South East Northumberland. The project initiated creation of a much wider network of Green Infrastructure around Ashington leading to many social, economic and environmental benefits.

**St Lawrence Park, Byker**, in the east end of Newcastle was transformed over 3 years led by Groundwork Newcastle and South Tyneside. With very little funding a community group and a

green exercise group were created and nurtured. The community brought in their time to transform the park with personal health benefits at the same time. This project is a good foretaste of Localism and Big Society, considering that the group is anticipated to be self-sufficient by April 2011. Of the regular participants, 75 % improved their health and 20% successfully moved from unemployment into employment.

Case study available on [NE GI page](#) and some copies on information desk.

### **Some more good practice from “Up North”**

The **GI Factor toolkit** – attached to the ERDF programme in the North West and its sustainable buildings policy – asks projects to use the toolkit to identify and design in opportunity for GI. One of the main priorities of the Northwest Operational Programme (NWOP) is to enhance and support the Northwest regional economy. Environmental sustainability has been included in the NWOP to enable negative environmental impacts from projects to be minimised, or mitigated, and positive impacts to be maximised, whilst achieving a lasting and positive difference to the economy and people of the Northwest: <http://www.erdfnw.co.uk/resources/> or go directly to [http://www.erdfnw.co.uk/admin/uploads/attachment/Environmental\\_Sustainability\\_Guidance-GreenInfrastructure.pdf](http://www.erdfnw.co.uk/admin/uploads/attachment/Environmental_Sustainability_Guidance-GreenInfrastructure.pdf)

**Natural Economy North West** which was involved in a number of the projects and initiatives above has produced a series of case studies based on the 11 economic benefits of Green Infrastructure:

<http://www.naturaleconomynorthwest.co.uk/resources+case+studies.php>

### **Green Infrastructure in a tough world – creative & innovative partnerships and approaches**

Some of the conclusions and emerging principles from the above projects and initiatives include:

- Don't be parochial – adopt good practice
- Share your good practice
- Tough economic and political climate requires creative and innovative partnerships and approaches, e.g.
  - A diverse funding package bringing in as many organisational beneficiaries as possible
  - Building capacity for projects and groups to become independent of public sector funding.
  - Projects that work across an organisation's targets or themes and across Local Authority departments
  - Being both strategic and opportunistic in planning and securing funding
- Use new opportunities as they present themselves
- We have been using elements of localism and big society already and Green Infrastructure as a concept should be able to adapt to the new context relatively easily and quickly

## Stories and Thinking to Inspire You

### 9. DIY – local people taking the initiative - *Vanessa Jones*

Chair

Bredhurst Woodland Action Group

Bredhurst Woodland Action Group (BWAG) was formed in May 2005. Initially, an Advisory Committee to Bredhurst Parish Council, it was approved as a Registered Charity in 2009 (No.1129178). BWAG's objective is to restore and preserve Bredhurst Woods, an area of 600 acres of ancient woodland, surrounded by chalk grassland situated on the North Downs; six miles north of Maidstone in Kent.

BWAG started with just six people in 2005 with the aim of stopping the destruction of the woodland. Support has rapidly grown and they now have around three hundred members and have secured funding of approximately £85,000 from various sources.

They also have strong support from many local businesses, Cllr Paul Carter (Leader of Kent County Council) and our MP, Hugh Robertson. They work closely with the Mid Kent Downs Project, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council. BWAG also works closely with a variety of organisations including the Ramblers Association, Kent Bat Club, West Kent Badger Group, Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group, local ornithologists, archaeologists and cub and scout groups.

## 10. New Partnerships, New Future, New Benefits – Mayesbrook climate change park - *Robert Oates*

Director  
Thames Rivers Restoration Trust

### **Biography**

Robert has been the Director of TRRT since March 2008. Prior to this, he was the Manager of the WWF 'Natural Rivers Programme' in the UK for six years and before that worked on water and wetlands policy and practice with RSPB, Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust and Suffolk County Council. Robert had a previous career in government service in Whitehall.

### **Summary**

#### **The project**

The Mayesbrook Project is creating the UK's first Climate Change Park to demonstrate how urban greenspace can help to reduce the impacts of climate change. The project is an example of how to achieve more with less through an innovative partnership of public and private organisations. The project partners are the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Environment Agency, Natural England, London Wildlife Trust, Design for London, GLA, TRRT, RSA (the global insurance company based in the City of London) and the SITA Trust.

The partners and funders have raised £1m for Phase 1 of the project to start work in March 2011. None of the partners could have funded or delivered the project alone. But by putting together their available funds a sizeable project is being delivered. The project is also delivering enhanced flood protection for the area through the use of natural flood water storage techniques rather than replacing expensive hard engineering control structures.

Phase 1 will restore the Mayes Brook through the park to a more natural structure and create a new one hectare floodplain. This floodplain will safely and naturally hold the increased flood water that is expected in the area due to climate change. The restoration will improve the ecological quality of the brook and make it more resistant to the impacts of climate change such as floods and drought. Phase 1 also includes planting of trees to create five hectares of urban woodland in the park. This woodland will help to shade and cool the park, mitigating the higher temperatures in future. The woodland will also increase local biodiversity and make it more resilient to climate change impacts. New signage and information in the park will inform local residents about climate change and how to adapt to it.

Phase 2 of the work will proceed from 2012 to 2015 and will include the creation of a visitor hub green building with café, toilets and ranger facilities. Inside there will be a permanent exhibition about climate change. Two polluted lakes in the park will be restored to increase their wetland biodiversity and resilience to climate change impacts. The cleaner lakes will contribute to cooling the area and will provide boating and angling for the community.

The Olympics Delivery Authority is building an athlete's training centre in the park. So by 2012, Mayesbrook will be part of the green legacy of the games.

#### **The background**

Mayesbrook Park is a forty five hectare public park in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, in the East of London. The park is some eight kilometres (four miles) east of the business district at Canary Wharf and a similar distance from the site of the London Olympics 2012. The park is laid out as a typical minimum maintenance public park with large areas of mown grass, some football pitches and a sports stadium in need of refurbishment. The park is an underused asset in an area of high social deprivation and low biodiversity.

The Mayes Brook runs through the park but is fenced off from public enjoyment. It has an artificially engineered structure resulting in poor wildlife value. This was originally done as part of

the hard engineering flood management scheme that operates in the park, but which is coming to the end of its functional life. But climate change is expected to bring increased pressure on the flood management system. Therefore the partners have agreed to use a natural flood management approach of creating an area of floodplain in the park. This natural flood management system will be cheaper than replacing the hard engineering structures. It will also provide a new wetland for wildlife and a visual attraction for park users.

**The Mayesbrook Park Project will:**

- Provide 21<sup>st</sup> century outdoor recreation for local people, through an innovating and inspiring landscape
- Create the first demonstration site in London for adapting an urban environment to the impacts of climate change
- Demonstrate natural flood management techniques in an urban setting
- Contribute to the East London Green Grid, London Rivers & Streams Habitat Action Plan, London Rivers Restoration Action Plan and the London Biodiversity Action Plan
- Provide a long-term and sustainable asset in an area of social deprivation
- Attract a range of public and private sponsors

**Climate change**

Climate change is considered to be the greatest environmental threat to society. For Londoner's it brings the threat of dangerous rises in temperature, more intense air and water pollution, increased droughts and floods, loss of wildlife and increased pests and diseases. There is an urgent need to demonstrate how society can adapt to climate change, especially in urban areas. The Mayesbrook Park project will demonstrate how green space can help with that adaptation, in ways that are practical, cost effective and attractive.

## 11. Catalysing Conservation; achieving more with more - *Richard Smithers*

Chair, ialeUK

Principal consultant Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, AEA

### **Biography**

Richard is Principal Consultant (Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services) at AEA. He is a well-respected national expert on: landscape ecology; climate change impacts on biodiversity and adaptation; and native woods and trees, their biodiversity and ecosystem services. Richard has been at the forefront of landscape-scale thinking in the UK for more than a decade and is chair of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (UK). He has steered and provided expert input to many high-level policy-relevant projects for Defra and Forestry Commission, government environment and conservation agencies, the European Environment Agency, and European Centre for Nature Conservation. For 23 years, Richard worked for the Woodland Trust in a wide range of pioneering roles and led development of the organisation's conservation approach.

### **Summary**

Is nature conservation trapped in a labyrinth of its own making? Are nature conservation's fears that it needs to achieve more with less, more a product of its focus and less a product of reality? Can nature conservation really hope to defy the Second Law of Thermodynamics; is it not axiomatic that trying to achieve more with less will inevitably lead to achieving less with less? For example, will targeting 'ecological restoration zones', as advocated by the Lawton Review, inspire wider action or promote continued polarisation of land use?

Given that biodiversity underpins the very fabric of life - the food we eat, the air we breathe, the soil beneath our feet - would nature conservation not achieve more by enabling people across all sectors to gain ownership of an ecosystem approach that looks to biodiversity as an emergent property rather than as the focus for action? Does concentrating on the fate of species keep conservationists honest, as is often suggested, or does it do just enough to salve society's conscience and thereby continue to consign biodiversity to the margins?

We all hold out great hope for the Natural Environment White Paper, but will it truly be owned by Government rather than by Defra? Being optimistic and assuming the former, what role should nature conservationists play and be playing now? Is development of a new England Biodiversity Strategy by Defra, aided and abetted by the nature conservation movement, likely to enable people across all resource and land use sectors to engage with the ecosystem approach? If it is to do so, should nature conservationists not encourage everyone to: identify environmental outcomes and measures that address their impacts and dependencies on the natural world and the associated risks and opportunities; and, define success by reference to their own objectives and to shared goals rather than to those of nature conservation organisations and to biodiversity? If so, what might such outcomes and measures look like? For example, might the water industry, with encouragement and liberty to develop a green tariff, adopt a substantial increase in the length of native riparian woodland as an outcome? It would do wonders for water quality and hydromorphology, but would conservationists rest easy in the knowledge that it would also deliver a greater biodiversity?

Nature conservation has been at a pivot point for over a decade. It has broadened its ambitions from a site-centred, species-orientated, designation-focused view of the world, also to embrace the dire need for landscape-scale action. The challenge for nature conservation organisations now is to gain appreciation that: they cannot hope to achieve the scale, scope or speed of actions required; and, creating bigger nature reserves on their own or on other people's land can only ever make a marginal contribution. Nature conservation cannot continue as a segregated activity undertaken by a worthy elite; it needs to be the foundation on which a self-sustaining society builds its future. Government needs to encourage people to organise themselves to use

resources sustainably by ensuring that: expected benefits are greater than costs associated with rules governing those benefits; loss of short-term economic gains are offset at least in the medium to long term; and, potential for cheating is minimised.

There is a need to create a new narrative across 'Big Society' that ensures conservation of a healthy and resilient natural environment is the starting point for all activity, as the basis for a healthy and resilient society and economy. This does not mean that we should turn our backs on nature's intrinsic value; indeed, there is a need to tap into and unlock people's innate love of the natural world. But it does demand that people are encouraged to cherish the common-place and not to just think of wildlife as something that conservation organisations have been established to sustain. There is a need to foster everyone's understanding of their reliance on their environment, the impacts of their actions, and the need to take responsibility for alleviating them. It is crucial that, as nature conservationists, we should do all we can to impress these messages about the natural world's functional value upon all those who have the ability to deliver the ecosystem approach anywhere and everywhere in the UK. Only with more will we achieve more.

## 12. Refurbishment Of Swan Meadow Pond In Saffron Walden - *Peter Riding.*

Chairman, Saffron Walden Initiative  
12 March 2011

### Summary

#### **A Case Study Of Community Involvement**

In recent years both the District Council and the local Residents' Association have wanted to refurbish Swan Meadow Pond in Saffron Walden by removing an island along with the rotting pond lining and years of silt and by replacing the vertical sides with gently sloping ones with aquatic plants. The aim was to improve the biodiversity aspect as well as the amenity. However, funds were not forthcoming for this project.

Saffron Walden Initiative is a community organisation registered as a private company limited by guarantee with around 200 members. In August 2009 the Initiative was asked by a District Councillor if it would try to raise funds for the project on behalf of the District Council who own the pond. The Saffron Walden Partnership Board (of which the Initiative was a member) agreed to support the project and offered the services of its then Project Officer to help with preparing a specification, approaching possible contractors and completing funding applications.

Essex Biodiversity Project was invited to visit the pond and give detailed advice on how it could be made more wildlife friendly through earthworks and new planting. Three regional contractors were approached for quotations and, in the event, two of them did quote but with different interpretations of what needed doing.

The Initiative then approached Essex County Council's Community Initiatives Fund and also Essex Environmental Trust but neither was able to help with the necessary funding. However, in March 2010 the Initiative was successful in applying to Viridor Credits Environmental Company for a total of £17,100. In August 2010 Biffaward gave conditional approval for an award of £18,105 provided that the Initiative applied to ENTRUST to become an Environmental Body. This was unexpected, took time and involved complicated forms to submit. The Initiative then arranged for the District Council to pay the required 10% Third Party Contributions.

In general the Initiative found the grant application process in itself to be complicated and time consuming, requiring some considerable knowledge of environmental and access matters - for example, in deciphering the relevant sections of the regional Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) which might relate to the project.

The biggest surprise for the Initiative came when the District Council said that, as the Initiative had applied for the funding, it would have to be responsible for drawing up and signing a contract with the selected contractor and then managing the project. Specifically, the Council said that it was not able to offer any help with drafting the contract and the Initiative found itself responsible for every aspect of the project including Health & Safety. During the earth moving phase the pond was surrounded by security fencing but on numerous occasions sections were pushed over by vandals and

the police had to be called out. The Initiative might have been liable if a member of the public had drowned because of the damaged fencing.

Due to the freezing weather before Christmas 2010 the earth moving works had to be stopped a number of times which, in turn, meant that the project timetable slipped by six weeks and the payment schedule with the funders had to be re-arranged. During this stage of the works the Initiative had to be on site most days to discuss practical issues as they arose. It also arranged site meetings with the District Council.

The next phase was for the contractor to prepare a planting plan based on the works specification prepared by the Initiative with advice from the Essex Biodiversity Project. This, in turn, had to be approved by the District Council with feedback also requested from the local Residents' Association. The contractor then advised that it would be better if the planting was delayed until the end of March, so a further delay in payments had to be arranged by the Initiative with the funders.

One practical consequence of the works was that a large amount of pond water had to be pumped into an adjoining stream causing it to become silted. The District Council has asked that the contractor remove the silt and, at the time of writing, it is not clear if this will increase the overall cost of the project and who will pay for any cost over-run.

From start to finish this project will have taken over 20 months and involved the Initiative in dealing with over 550 emails.

### **Learning Points**

- 1) A community organisation needs access to considerable skills when preparing project specifications and applying for substantial funding.
- 2) A community organisation needs to have the administrative capacity to manage projects over long time scales.
- 3) A community organisation should not be expected to be responsible for the contracting and management of a project where the facility is owned by a Council.
- 4) A community organisation may need to budget for unseen costs arising from the project (as per the silt removal from the stream).

## Participants List

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Email address
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**C. OTHER COMMENTS**

Likes:	Suggestions for improvement:
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**D. HOW DID YOU HEAR OF THIS EVENT?**

**E. FUTURE EVENTS?**

**\* Natural Connections – an annual event**

Already some people have suggested that, with the fast moving policy context and with the wealth of new learning, this should be an annual catch up event including policy updates, new case examples and new learning.

Yes

No

Do you think this is a good idea or not?

If yes what aspects would you want to hear more about and discuss?

**\* SIMILAR STYLE – DIFFERENT THEME/TOPIC/SUBJECT?**

If we did another one-day event in this style, what theme or subject would you be interested in?

**Please hand this in on your way out  
Thank you**