



WENP Board Meeting

Teleconference // 16 September 2020 // 14:00 – 16:30

Items

SGr welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was held via teleconference. SGr requested any comments on the draft minutes from the March Board meeting. As no comments were received, the minutes were approved and are now available on the WENP website ([click here](#) to view).

SGa provided an overview of the actions from the previous meeting – a list of open actions can be found at the end of the document.

1. Update to Terms of Reference

SGr explained that the Terms of Reference for WENP had been updated to take into account the role of the Executive Group, which represents WENP funders and meets ahead of each Board meeting. The Board agreed to the suggested changes to the Terms of Reference and the proposed role of the Executive Group.

The updated Terms of Reference, in which the role of the Executive Group is explained, can be found on the WENP website ([click here](#) to view).

2. Financing Nature-Based Solutions

2.1 Bristol Avon Catchment Market

Guy Thompson (GT) and David Young (DY) presented on the Broadway Initiative's paper on [accelerating private investment in nature-based solutions](#), which makes the case for government to make a cornerstone investment in nature-based solutions through a number of mechanisms including a catchment market, and the proposal to develop a catchment market in the Bristol Avon. The slides from this presentation have been included in the post-meeting distribution for this meeting.

It was explained that, based on the principles contained in the Broadway Initiative paper, Wessex Water has proposed to submit a bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for funding for habitat creation to 'kick-start' a Bristol Avon Catchment Market (BACM). The proposed BACM would provide an environmental marketplace within the Bristol Avon catchment where buyers and sellers (i.e. landowners) of ecosystem services can undertake transactions to deliver nature-based solutions (see the section 'Catchment Markets' for further detail on how a catchment market would operate).

The bid would be for £2-4 million of investment in nature-based projects in the Bristol Avon, which would be used to 'kick-start' the BACM. This would be achieved by generating environmental credits from these projects, which could be sold and reinvested in further nature-based projects, thereby leveraging private investment. It is estimated that leveraged private investment would triple the outcomes delivered for nature.



The bid would be led and funded by Wessex Water, in partnership with Avon Wildlife Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. All of the grant would be invested in nature-based projects. Wessex Water would retain a right to charge a brokerage fee on subsequent sales of credits generated by the projects, although the majority of this would be reinvested in the market.

In response to questions from the Board, it was explained that:

- Catchments have been chosen as the best geography on which to base markets for nature-based solutions as they can account for downstream effects of interventions.
- The catchment market approach (as well as Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) are very flexible in accommodating different types of services, including interventions in urban areas, to the extent that there is a buyer. The inclusion of biodiversity offsetting would facilitate interventions in urban settings, and there may be an opportunity to finance nature-based social prescribing in cities.
- The blending of public and private finance incentivises long-term land-use change where public finance alone may not be sufficient.
- There has been engagement with the agriculture sector in the production of the Broadway Initiative Paper, and dialogue with the NFU has suggested that they are favourably disposed towards market-based solutions but require practical examples of the approach working.

It was agreed that governance arrangements would be crucial in ensuring that the proposed catchment market delivers strategic priorities in the region, and in ensuring that the market operates transparently and fairly.

Board members agreed to support from WENP in developing and applying the catchment market approach in Bristol. It was agreed that SGa would speak to GT and IB regarding the provision of a letter of in-principle support from WENP for the Bristol Avon Catchment Market bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

IB noted that the proposed catchment market would be an approach for financing nature-based solutions in the West of England, but not the only approach. There could be an ecosystem of mechanisms that work across the area.

2.2 Green Recovery Challenge Fund

IB provided a summary of the bids that Avon Wildlife Trust were planning to submit to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which were sent around to Board Members post-meeting.

SGa added that Bristol Avon Rivers Trust were planning a bid in the Chew Valley, and that there would be a bid for River Frome Tributaries through the River Frome Reconnected project.

It was agreed that it would be useful for WENP to coordinate a letter of support for bids to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in the West of England, noting the strategic context in the region and drawing links between the bids and regional priorities.

Post-meeting note: the letter of support will be sent on behalf of WENP, the BACP, WECA and the four Local Authorities, also noting the links between the projects and the JGIS.

Post-meeting note: the list of projects being submitted to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in the West of England was shared with Board Members after the meeting.



ActionSep20/01: SGa to coordinate with Guy Thompson and Ian Barrett on providing a letter of in-principle support from WENP for the Bristol Avon Catchment Market bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid.

ActionSep20/02: SGa to coordinate a West of England letter of support for bids submitted to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

3. NRN Implementation WG Update

SGa provided an update on the work of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) Implementation Working Group and presented the most recent version of the NRN Prospectus of investible projects, which was circulated to members pre-meeting. The prospectus aims to bring together, in one place, strategic projects in the region that would make a significant contribution to the NRN. As well as being a reference for partners, this can help to inform the investment of resources into nature's recovery by providing a project 'pipeline' that can be referred to when funding for nature recovery is made available.

RK noted that there needed to be a very clear reference to the Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS) and NRN, to leave no room for doubt.

AH noted the importance of mosaic habitats and the potential to utilise natural processes with the projects listed, and suggested some equivocation be used in reference to particular habitat types to encourage this approach.

RW noted that there could be reference to the 25 Year Environment Plan objectives that each project would contribute to. SGa replied that this was done indirectly through the references to the NRN goals, which are based on a regional interpretation of the 25YEP goals. IB added that it would be useful to start thinking about where in the West of England would be appropriate for Nature Recovery Areas, based on the thinking in the Prospectus.

IB explained that the next step is to work up these projects and programmes towards becoming shovel-ready, and that any capacity to do so would be useful. MM added that it would be useful to work up the projects and programmes using the JGIS assessment forms, for consistency with the approach of the Green Infrastructure Working Group.

It was requested that any additional comments on the Prospectus, and the programmes and projects therein, be sent to SGa for update.

It was agreed that an updated version of the Prospectus would be brought to each Board meeting for approval.

ActionSep20/03: Board members to provide any further comments on the NRN Prospectus to SGa.

ActionSep20/04: SGa to update the NRN Prospectus based on comments received at the meeting and any additional comments received post-meeting.

4. West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy Update

SGa provided an update on the work on the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy (full title: The Forest of Avon Plan – a Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England), as summarised in the written update provided to members pre-meeting. The work of the Forest of Avon Trust on the Strategy has been



completed, and SGa is now working to complete the document. There is a need for funding for the design of the finished version.

SGr observed that there was currently a lack of reference to key areas for woodland creation, as are identified in the NRN Prospectus. It was also noted that an improved read-across to the NRN and JGIS would be useful.

Post-meeting note: SGa met with the Woodland Trust to discuss communication of the Tree and Woodland Strategy, where it was agreed to produce 'interim' an Executive Summary and Principles ahead of publication of the full version of the Strategy next year.

[ActionSep20/05: SGa to write a formal note of thanks to the Forest of Avon Trust for their work on the Tree and Woodland Strategy.](#)

5. Environment Officer Steering Group update

SGa provided members with a brief update on the Environment Officer Steering Group (EOSG), which has been set up to ensure all organisations can respond effectively to deliver the requirements of the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP) and Environmental Bill alongside those for housing, place-making and clean growth. A key role of the EOSG is coordinating resource and intelligence.

The EOSG comprises representatives from WECA, the four West of England Unitary Authorities, WENP, BACP, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The first meeting of the group was in August 2020. The purpose of the meetings of the EOSG is to ensure that officers responsible for developing environmental policy & strategy and delivering projects under the green infrastructure portfolio have a forum to share cross portfolio information. This is to facilitate cross collaboration and best practice.

It was noted that it would be key to ensure that the work and decision-making of the EOSG and WENP is closely coordinated and is complimentary.

[ActionSep20/06: SGa to send the Terms of Reference for the EOSG and presentation given at the first meeting of the EOSG to WENP Board.](#)

6. Update on Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategy

SGa provided an update on the national approach to the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), based on the DEFRA LNP Webinar received in August:

- The **Nature Strategy** will be the overarching strategy for halting and reversing BD loss in England, linking with other strategies such as the England Tree Strategy. It will set out the overall level of ambition and more specific goals for habitat and species recovery over ten years (e.g. restore 75% of protected sites to favourable condition).
- The **Nature Recovery Network** (NRN) is seen as an 'expanded, improved and increasingly connected network of places across England that are richer in wildlife, help recover our species and are more resilient to climate change and other pressures', and will be consistent with the goals of the Nature Strategy. Protected sites will be the core of the NRN, enhanced and connected via new and improved wildlife-rich places, and **Nature Recovery Areas** at a landscape/catchment scale will make a significant



contribution to the network. Spatial tools to plan locally and nationally will be needed, and for delivery strong partnerships and integration into funding streams will be crucial.

- **Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs)** are spatial strategies for nature, which will support delivery of biodiversity net gain and planning strategies. They will agree priorities for nature's recovery, map the most valuable existing habitat, and map proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.
 - LNRSs will be non-binding, but there will be a duty to regard them in planning.
 - There are pilot of LNRSs ongoing in five areas, including Cornwall.
 - It was confirmed that production of each LNRS will be led locally by a responsible authority from the list of public bodies set out in the bill.
 - LNPs will be key in the development of LNRSs.

MM observed that there may need to be a Memorandum of Understanding between WECA and the four UAs for the production of the LNRS for the West of England.

RK noted that it could be useful to communicate with DEFRA that there is a need early coordination between Nature Recovery Areas, the NRN and LNRSs.

7. Partner updates

SGr requested any updates from partners.

- **Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership (BACP)** has offered a role for an assistant to the Catchment Coordinator, which will increase the capacity to work through BACP and joint ventures.
- Andy Hicklin will be leaving the **Environment Agency** soon, but a replacement has been recruited to start in November and will continue to engage with WENP. The Board thanked Andy for his valuable contribution to WENP and wished him luck for the future.
- The **Woodland Trust** provided an update on the Nature for Climate Fund bid led by the Forest of Avon Trust. DEFRA has offered early revenue funding, but a full decision is expected from DEFRA in October or November. This could be worth an update at the next WENP Board meeting.
- **Avon Wildlife Trust** has had to make redundancies due to the financial impact of Covid-19. The organisation has restructured to maintain front-line delivery, refocusing on the NRN, nature-based solutions and integrating engagement in these works. AWT was successful in its bid to Wessex Water for the continuation of the North Somerset Levels and Moors Partnership.
- **Bristol Water's** strategic approach will be shaped by regional strategies such as the JGIS and the Tree and Woodland Strategy.
- **North Somerset Council's** rewilding programme is continuing, with 20,000 trees to be planted this winter. The North Somerset GI Strategy is being prepared, with the first draft planned for November. A motion for a nature emergency policy will be going to full council. JF has received funding for two new members of staff: a flood risk manager and a principal ecologist.
- An ecological emergency was declared by Bath and North East Somerset Council, which is now reflecting on what roles are needed to act on it and to replace the GI Coordinator post. The Somer



Valley Rediscovered Programme is gaining momentum. James Bevan's speech on investment in natural environment being an investment in the NHS was welcome.

[ActionSep20/07: SGa to share the information on Bathscape with the WENP Board.](#)

8. Any Other Business

SGa reminded attendees that the [WENP Conference](#) would be held on 8th October 2020, and requested it was shared within partner organisations.

The Wetland component of the NRN is being updated through BACP, adding water quality and barriers to fish passage to the existing mapping, and looking at possibilities to map riparian habitat connectivity.

It was recommended that a joint letter be sent to the Western Gateway Chair with Gloucestershire LNP and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, as it has not been possible to engage Welsh LNPs.

JF suggested there should be more engagement with work on the Severn Estuary, and suggested inviting a representative from the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. RC noted that there was also a Severn Estuary Partnership Steering Group.

SGa explained to members that internships through UWE, part-funded by Santander, would be explored to support work on the NRN Prospectus.

[ActionSep20/08: SGa to finalise joint letter of engagement to Western Gateway Chair.](#)

[ActionSep20/09: SGa to explore who the best representative would be on the WENP Board for the Severn Estuary.](#)

Attendance

Attendees

Selena Gray (Chair) – SGr	West of England Nature Partnership
Ian Barrett – IB	Avon Wildlife Trust
Mark Minkley – MM	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Richard Cresswell – RC	Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Richard Ennion – RE	Bristol City Council
Natasha Clarke – NC	Bristol Water
Andy Hicklin – AH	Environment Agency
Rachel Williams - RW	Natural England
John Flannigan – JF	North Somerset Council
Laura Ambler – LA	West of England Combined Authority / LEP
Ross Kennerley – RK	Woodland Trust
Stuart Gardner – SGa	West of England Nature Partnership

Observers

Guy Thompson – GT	Wessex Water / EnTrade
David Young – DY	Wheatley-Young Partners

Apologies

Sally Hogg	Bristol City Council (representing Directors of Public Health)
Marion Steiner	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
Paul Cottington	National Farmers Union
Russell Ashfield	National Trust
Tom Boden	National Trust
Savita Wilmott	Natural History Consortium
Brian Glasson	South Gloucestershire Council (representing Heads of Planning)
David Villis	South Gloucestershire Council
Ruth Barden	Wessex Water

Actions

Action	Description	Lead(s)	Status
ActionMar20/02	PC to send SGa list of ELMs trials so that it can be circulated to Board Members	PC	Open
ActionJun20/02	SGa to explore with partners what are the areas of demand and mechanisms that they would be interested in trialling	SGa	Ongoing
ActionSep20/01	SGa to coordinate with Guy Thompson and Ian Barrett on providing a letter of in-principle support from WENP for the Bristol Avon Catchment Market bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/02	SGa to coordinate a West of England letter of support for bids submitted to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/03	Board members to provide any further comments on the NRN Prospectus to SGa	All	Open
ActionSep20/04	SGa to update the NRN Prospectus based on comments received at the meeting and any additional comments received post-meeting	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/05	SGa to write a formal note of thanks to the Forest of Avon Trust for their work on the Tree and Woodland Strategy	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/06	SGa to send the Terms of Reference for the EOSG and presentation given at the first meeting of the EOSG to WENP Board	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/07	SGa to share the information on Bathscape with the WENP Board	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/08	SGa to finalise joint letter of engagement to Western Gateway Chair	SGa	Open
ActionSep20/09	SGa to explore who the best representative would be on the WENP Board for the Severn Estuary	SGa	Open