



# Review of the Kent Nature Partnership

Report to the Partnership Board  
December 2016



## 1. Background to Kent Nature Partnership

### 1.1 History of the Kent Nature Partnership

In 2011, the Government published the Natural Environment White Paper “The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature”. One of the actions in delivering an institutional framework for the recovery of nature was to establish Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) to strengthen local action. The purpose of the LNPs was to enable local engagement and raise awareness about the services and benefits of a healthy natural environment. The intention was that the Partnerships would break away from the traditional approach of delivering biodiversity conservation and focus on obtaining socio-economic benefits through conservation and good management of biodiversity. By having a strong strategic element, it was anticipated that LNPs would complement Local Enterprise Partnerships and the formation of strong links between the two was encouraged.

Funding was made available for the development of these partnerships and, in 2012, the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) was granted LNP status. After extensive collaboration and consultation with local stakeholders, and following government guidance for LNPs, the Kent Nature Partnership established a vision, mission and set of strategic objectives.

The Kent LNP has a **vision** for the Garden of England to have a healthy natural environment that is rich in wildlife, is enjoyed and valued by all and underpins our long-term economic, social and personal wellbeing

Our **mission** is to enable a diverse range of organisations to work in partnership and to make the best use of their available resources in order to achieve significant gains for our natural environment.

We do this by:

- Setting the strategic direction and policies to conserve and enhance Kent’s natural environment, whilst influencing change and maximising the social wellbeing and economic benefits that can be gained from it.
- Facilitating collaboration, and join up partner agendas and actions, in order to make best use of available resources and direct action to priority areas and achieve greater benefits for the natural environment.
- Enabling partners to work together across sectors and support natural environment priorities to create resilient ecological networks and protect and improve the natural environment so that social and economic benefits are maximised.
- Providing integrated advice and clearly communicate the value of the natural environment to the economy and society.
- Promoting and encouraging best practice across the county and advocating more vibrant and healthy communities.

The Partnership is steered politically and strategically by the KNP Board. The purpose of the Board is to provide direction for the Kent Nature Partnership and act as a champion, gaining support for the Partnership’s work and engagement across all sectors. Membership of the Board is at Executive level. The Board is supported by a Management Working Group, which provides a technical overview and management for the Partnership’s work; membership of the Group is at Officer level. The delivery of the Partnership’s work is undertaken and reviewed by three Delivery Groups of cross sector representation: Natural Capital Improvement; Health & Wellbeing; and Rural & Green Economy.

### 1.2 Drivers for the Kent Nature Partnership’s work and cross-sector approach

#### 1.2.1 State of Nature

Kent is one the UK’s most wildlife-rich counties, a result of its varied geology, long coastline, landscape history southerly location and proximity to mainland Europe. Its important wildlife habitats include estuaries, chalk cliffs, woodlands, and chalk Downland, and encompass some of the South East’s most iconic landscapes, such as the shingle headland of Dungeness and the White Cliffs of Dover.



Nonetheless, it is clearly the case that the last century has seen major losses in Kent's wildlife. During this period, 30 species of wild plant, eight species of butterfly, one amphibian, one reptile, 10 bird species, and two species of bat all became extinct in the county. In addition to this, many of the species that remain have seen big population declines, including butterflies and moths, birds and farmland wildflowers, wetland plants, Adders and Common Toads.

The causes of these losses and declines are various. However, amongst the most important are:

- Direct loss of land of value to wildlife to built development or intensive farming, which has reduced and fragmented populations of wild plants and animals.
- Intensification of the way land is farmed, particularly the use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers, which has resulted in losses of wildlife across the wider landscape, and has increased nutrient levels on land and in water.
- Changes in the management of woodland, resulting in loss of open space in woods and forests.
- Climate change, which increasingly shapes which species are, and are not, able to live successfully in Kent.

The recent State of Nature (2016) report has shown that the loss of nature continues in the UK; a new measure suggests that the UK has lost significantly more nature over the long term than the global average and indicates that we are among the most nature-depleted countries in the world. However the report also shows that well-planned (and resourced) conservation projects can turn around the fortunes of wildlife whilst also helping to mitigate climate change and improve flood resilience.

### 1.2.2 *Natural capital*

The 2011 Natural Environment White Paper recognised that nature is often undervalued, and the vital services and benefits it provides go unrecognised. A healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing.

Kent's natural environment provides goods, such as food and timber, as well as space for recreation; it helps to improve the quality of water and reduce air pollution; and it can help protect from heavy rainfall and flooding, high winds and rising temperatures. The way in which Kent's natural assets are arranged across the landscape also creates an attractive, characterful identity that draws in residents, employers and visitors. The supply of these goods, regulating and cultural services is highly valuable, and the ability of the natural environment to perform well will have a direct impact on Kent's long term prosperity and wellbeing.

It therefore stands to reason that effective action to benefit nature, people and the economy locally happens when the right people come together in partnership and address issues in a holistic and integrated approach, working at a strategic scale.

### 1.2.3 *Value of nature to health and wellbeing*

The value of bringing together around one table all the various constituencies connected with the health of the natural environment is of great importance to the health and wellbeing of Kent citizens. This section explains the connections with health and wellbeing in more detail and also outlines some of the current changes in the health care system which should encourage a stronger strategic alliance with the natural environment key players.

There is now a strong body of evidence supporting the assertion that human health benefits from proximity to nature and regular interactions with the natural environment<sup>1</sup>. This effect is powerful and applies to all ages, both sexes and most preventable conditions. It is important for both physical and mental health and in addition has an important role in stimulating social interaction and avoiding isolation. The degree of benefit has been quantified in some studies and can be as much as 30% reduction in all-cause mortality which would be very impressive and unusual as a result of a pharmaceutical intervention. Examples are numerous both in Kent and across the country of therapeutic and preventive programmes utilising this effect in a variety of ways<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Dose of Nature Report Dan Bloomfield 2014, Natural England Access to Evidence Information Note EIN018

<sup>2</sup> Kent Nature Partnership review of projects utilising the natural environment to improve health 2015



- People with easy access to nature are 3 times more likely to participate in physical activity and are 40% less likely to become overweight or obese.
- 90% of people reported an increase in self-esteem after an outdoor walk versus 17% indoors.
- Contact with nature has been shown to improve cognitive development in children, and reduce stress and disruptive behaviour.
- Research has shown that even five minutes spent in a hospital garden can decrease stress and anxiety.
- The most affluent 20% of wards in England have 5 times the amount of greenspace than the most deprived 10% of wards.
- A recent large-scale study showed that health inequalities related to income deprivation were lower in populations living in the greenest areas<sup>3</sup>

Importantly we know that use of green space to address health inequalities is the one preventive measure that has proved effective at a population level.

The many health benefits of the natural environment accrue through various means, such as psychological relaxation and stress reduction, enhanced physical activity, and mitigation of exposure to air pollution, excessive heat, and noise. In addition there are unquantifiable benefits from the value of a reconnection with a world which many have become alienated from but which has nurtured our species for millennia.

The NHS faces the biggest crisis in its history. Our model of healthcare has been very successful for over 50 years but now finds the resources (including clinical personnel) are not available to continue with this “care and repair” approach which relies heavily on technical intervention, pharmaceuticals and large expensive institutions to be effective. In addition the population has become accustomed to receiving care and treatment even when the problem is largely caused by lack of exercise or other behavioural causes. The fact that many long term conditions are now no longer fatal but not curable has added to the resource demands as people are now living for many years with a heavy burden of multiple long term conditions, a large proportion of which are preventable. The NHS has proposed a solution as set out in the Five Year Forward View 2014 which stresses the central importance of prevention. The natural environment can play an important part in scaling up our approach to prevention so every school, workplace and community has regular access and encouragement to take exercise and engage in activities which promote health and wellbeing. Another vital part of the health agenda is nutrition and food production, which also is a major element in the current threat to biodiversity as outlined in detail in the State of Nature Report 2016. The opportunities to improve health while also promoting biodiversity are huge and require strong engagement from health with the agricultural community.

Sustainability and Transformation Plans are the delivery mechanism for the Five Year Forward View. They require collaboration across all health care bodies and local authorities in a geographical area – for Kent there is one STP: Kent and Medway, led by Glen Douglas. The first STPs have just been published and there is controversy around the amount of public and clinical engagement. This engagement phase is starting now and it is vital that the natural environment advocates are part of that conversation. It is a very challenging process to produce these plans which are attempting to simultaneously reduce costs, change the health care culture and improve health. This is not made easier by lack of supportive legislation however in several parts of the country a genuine shift in emphasis is apparent. The challenge for the Kent Nature Partnership is to ensure it has a clear offer and a clear voice in the coming debate.

### 1.3 Powers available to Kent Nature Partnership

Defra established the formal application process for LNP status, with the intention that such status would provide successful applicants with credibility. Their intention was that by recognising an LNP, they would be signalling that it is seen as a credible partnership that has the potential to work with others effectively and add real value to important decision making in an area, including on local planning matters and strategic plans around local economic growth and the health and wellbeing of local people. They stated that all LNPs that achieve the status would:

- have recognition that Government sees them as a balanced, strategic and knowledgeable partnership that can add value to important decision making in an area.

<sup>3</sup> WHO report Urban Green Spaces and Health Evidence Review 2016



- have an important contribution to make to strategic planning matters within their area, to be enabled by inclusions of LNPs in the Local Planning Regulations' Duty to Co-operate in the Local Planning Regulations as soon as possible after the first LNPs have been announced.
- be part of a group of partnerships with the same credentials who can network with each other to share knowledge and experience.
- have access to Government, with the support of a liaison function within Defra and the opportunity to attend an annual Ministerial event.
- have their details published on the Defra website to help promote their profile with other organisations (national and local) and to help LNPs to network with each other.

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) are prescribed under the Local Planning Regulations as bodies which local authorities 'should have regard to' given their role in the management of natural environmental assets, supporting biodiversity and, in particular, identifying Nature Improvement Areas. The Localism Act (2011) Duty to Co-operate states that "Local Planning bodies that are subject to the duty must cooperate with LNPs and have regard to their activities when preparing their Local Plans". This requirement reflects that Nature Partnership should play an important role in assisting local planning authorities' strategic planning. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance states that local planning authorities should seek opportunities to work collaboratively with Local Nature Partnerships to deliver a strategic approach to encouraging biodiversity.

Furthermore, the NPPF (Paragraph 180) encourages local planning authorities to work with LNPs, stating that "Local planning authorities should work collaboratively on strategic planning priorities to enable delivery of sustainable development in consultation with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships". Paragraph 165 highlights the need to base policies and decisions on up-to-date information about the natural environment, stating that this should include an assessment of existing and potential components of ecological networks which, where appropriate, should be undertaken with the Local Nature Partnership.

In addition to these specific planning roles, Defra also encouraged the formation of strong links with Local Enterprise.

Section 40 of the NERC Act requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions.

The extent to which these powers have been realised and implemented by the KNP are further discussed in sections four and five.

## 2. Purpose and format of review

The KNP has now been in existence for four years and it is therefore timely that the effectiveness and achievements of the Partnership are reviewed and considered in order to shape what the future might be. The Partnership is also facing a critical time in terms of resourcing, with pressures within local government funding meaning that the KNP will soon need to be more reliant on external funding. We therefore need to determine if the Partnership is of value and ensure it meets the needs of partners and potential funders.

The KNP's current remit and structure was built on the Government's vision for Local Nature Partnerships and was designed to be broad enough to ensure that we had every opportunity to exploit any funding that may be forthcoming from government (this did not materialise). It is therefore now time to re-define what the Kent Nature Partnership is, to meet the county's needs and available resources.

The review has included interviews and consultations with the KNP Board, Management Working Group and members of the three working groups. This has been used to inform the following:

- The achievements and outcomes of the Partnership.
- Consideration of the KNP's strategic planning role.
- Analysis of the Partnership's strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities and challenges.
- Recommendations and options for developing the Kent Nature Partnership to better meet local needs, add value and continue to deliver under different resource scenarios.



It was intended that the KNP's progress should be considered against that of other Local Nature Partnerships but time did not allow for such analysis.

### **3. Achievements of Kent Nature Partnership**

#### **3.1 Delivery against Strategic Priorities**

The Kent Nature Partnership's Strategic Management Plan sets out the forward programme of work that will assist the Partnership delivering against five strategic priorities for work. These five priorities were developed following consultation with Kent stakeholders and in reference to Defra's Overview of the LNP role. This section considers how progress is being made against each of these.

##### *3.1.1 Set strategic direction for conservation and enhancement of the natural environment; early input and integration into strategic planning and significant proposals/policy*

The Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 sets targets that aim to secure a healthy natural environment that supports Kent's social and economic wellbeing; this is discussed in more detail in section 3.2.1.

The KNP has been heavily involved in the development of the Kent Environment Strategy, is a lead partner and is responsible for a number of actions that the KES Implementation Plan is taking forward.

The KNP's input to health planning is discussed in section 3.2.2.

The KNP's input to strategic planning is discussed in section 4.

The KNP has not generally realised this priority in respect of land management/agriculture/rural policy and large scale development, largely owing to resource restrictions. For the former, the development of new national policy for agriculture and the likely development of new funding frameworks in light of Brexit, presents an opportunity for the KNP to better engage in this agenda and define a role for LNPs with this sector. There are also a number of large scale developments, such as Otterpool Park Garden Town in Shepway, that could act as demonstration projects for how the KNP could engage; however the ability of the Partnership to take this forward will be entirely dependent on the ability to resource the work.

##### *3.1.2 Promoting the Natural Environment White Paper and Biodiversity Strategy 2020 aims and visions at a Kent level*

The Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 translates the national targets for biodiversity to the local level.

The KNP has led the development of an ecological network pilot project, Old Chalk New Downs, working with landowners and the local community to deliver habitat connectivity and enhancement in North Kent. Heritage Lottery Funding was secured for the first phase of the project, which was completed in September 2016; the outcome of the bid for £1.4m will be known before the end of 2016. Work is under way to identify further areas for ecological network projects.

Training on the county's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas has been provided to a number of districts and work to explore how these can be further promoted has been commissioned (see sections 3.2.1 and 4).

The KNP acts as a review panel (Natural Capital Improvement Group) and endorser (KNP Board) of the county's Local Wildlife Sites.

Work to improve access to nature for wellbeing benefits has been taken forward by the Health & Nature Group; more detail is provided in section 3.2.2.

##### *3.1.3 Establishing a working relationship with key partnerships, including the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership*

The Partnership has not yet succeeded in establishing a working relationship with South East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP); owing to the federated structure, efforts are currently focussed



on the latter. Just recently the KNP Chairs had a productive first meeting with the KMEP Chair and work will continue to move forward on this in 2017.

The KNP has however developed an excellent partnership with Kent Public Health that is driving forward work in relation to the health and nature agenda (further discussed in section 3.2.2).

The Partnership also works with LNPs in the South East and has recently collaborated on work to look at opportunities to jointly promote the Partnership offer and potentially secure funding. However, as with our own Partnership, the progress of this SE cluster is often hampered by resources to drive the work forward.

#### *3.1.4 Ensuring an effective and broad partnership, monitoring progress and celebrating success*

In 2016 the Partnership held a well-received conference, attended by 112 delegates from a broad range of private and public sectors including land owners, private business, local authority, health, government agency, environmental bodies, academia and the third sector. Communication is also delivered through a quarterly e-Bulletin, Twitter account and the Partnership website.

Work is currently underway to secure resources for the Partnership and to consider the Partnership's future in light of the progress it has made (of which this review is a key element). As previously mentioned, work is also underway to review progress against the KNP's biodiversity targets.

### **3.2 Achievements and outcomes**

The Kent Nature Partnership currently delivers its works through three working groups, made up of cross sector partners:

- Natural Capital Improvement Group (nee Habitat Improvement Group), chaired by Kent Wildlife Trust
- Health & Wellbeing Group, chaired by KCC Public Health
- Rural & Green Economy Group, chaired by Complete Land Management

The working groups have had varying degrees of success in terms of engagement and delivery (further discussed in section 5); the natural capital and health & wellbeing groups have been particularly successful. This section outlines the work delivered by these three groups since their conception. Links to the reports referred to can be found in section 7.

#### *3.2.1 Natural Capital Improvement*

##### *Kent Biodiversity Strategy*

The group identified Kent's offer to the England Biodiversity Strategy 2020 targets and Natural Environment White Paper's vision. It developed targets for the natural environment, including the social and economic services it provides, that ensures delivery of this contribution whilst recognising the county's priorities. The Kent Biodiversity Strategy was developed in order to secure a healthy natural environment that supports Kent's social and economic wellbeing.

The group identified the habitats at highest risk in the county, assessed national targets for the protection and restoration of these priority habitats, and identified appropriate aims and targets for delivery at a Kent level. This provides a framework for activity that contributes to Kent's natural environment.

KWT is currently undertaking mapping to show how progress on Kent Biodiversity Strategy is being made. This is likely to report in January 2017.

##### *A Spatial Framework*

The group reviewed the mapped Biodiversity Opportunity Area network, to provide a spatial framework for delivery of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets. The GIS maps were updated in response to new evidence provided by the 2012 Kent Habitat Survey and an extensive stakeholder consultation exercise. A statement setting out the natural environment and landscape priorities and targets was produced for each of the 16 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. An additional Kent-wide biodiversity opportunity statement was prepared for 'Built up areas and gardens'.



### *Planning Protocol*

In response to the policy requirement that Local Planning Authorities should have regard to the views of the Local Nature Partnership, the group produced a consultation protocol checklist for planners, to enable assessment of planning applications against Kent Nature partnership outcomes.

### *Promoting the delivery of KNP outcomes through the planning system*

Training sessions were delivered to planning staff from Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells, on the integration of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in spatial plans and how to use the KNP planning protocol checklist. A presentation on Local Wildlife Sites was made to the Planning Policy Officers Group.

### *Local Wildlife Sites*

Local Wildlife Site status is a non-statutory designation that recognises the high biodiversity value of sites supporting important populations of threatened species or priority habitats. The Group has reviewed and updated the Criteria for Delineation and Designation of Local Wildlife Sites. The sites are resurveyed on a rolling programme to confirm eligibility. The group has reviewed 93 proposals to update and confirm designations or to newly designate sites. Group members provide annual Single Data List reports to Defra on the number of Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management.

### *New Environmental Land Management Schemes*

Group members contributed to the development and validation of national target mapping for New Environmental Land Management Schemes (now Countryside Stewardship Schemes), the range of agreements developed to support farmers and landowners to deliver environmental benefits under the Common Agricultural Policy. This engagement enabled broad and representative engagement in the process by KNP stakeholders and allowed concerns to be raised regarding accuracy of national information and the provision of additional local evidence.

### *Facilitating Delivery of Natural Capital Resources*

A number of grant giving bodies require applicants to demonstrate that their projects will contribute to delivery of strategic biodiversity targets. The Group has provided letters for five KNP partners confirming this contribution for eight projects to five different funders.

### *Promoting Collaborative Working*

The group ran a workshop to share current partner activity and project aspirations. A need was identified for a resource to share success, enable more collaborative working and identify opportunities for future projects. As a result, the group is currently building a GIS map to capture partner delivery of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets across Kent. This will complement the work group members are doing to map opportunities for the delivery of multiple outcomes, particularly with regard to flood management and biodiversity.

## **3.2.2 Health and Nature**

### *Greenspace Needs Assessment*

The subgroup commissioned and delivered a green space needs assessment. This £30k project mapped accessible natural greenspace in Kent, the level of naturalness, and relationship between areas of high deprivation and physical inactivity. This piece of work has subsequently been used to inform and influence:

- Planning and development proposals for a number of small and medium-sized residential developments across Kent
- Borough & district council facilities, open space and play strategies
- Borough & district council planning officers and local plan development
- Public health commissioning
- The refresh of the Kent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Sustainability chapter
- The ongoing work of the KNP Health subgroup

### *Natural Ways to Wellbeing Workshop*

The subgroup organised and ran a successful workshop to discuss opportunities for joint working between health and natural environment professionals, leading to the development of a social prescribing pilot between High Weald CMP,



Explore Kent & primary care in Tunbridge Wells. This will include a publically-available online directory of natural environment projects that health professionals can access in order to signpost clients.

#### *GP Protected Learning Time*

Following this workshop, subgroup members have presented at GP protected learning time sessions on the health value of the natural environment to promote more social prescribing and improved relationships between natural environment providers and primary care

#### *GP Physical Activity Champions*

Subgroup members also co-delivered the GP Physical Activity Champions scheme in Kent, which encourages GPs to have conversations about being more physically active with patients. This included sharing information with GPs from subgroup partners including Kent Wildlife Trust, Explore Kent and the Countryside Management Partnerships (CMP).

#### *Outdoor Gyms*

A KCC Public Health project to promote outdoor gyms was expanded through the subgroup to include all outdoor gyms in Kent being listed on the Explore Kent website and promoted as part of Explore Kent marketing and promotion.

#### *Sustainability JSNA*

Subgroup members contributed to the Sustainability Chapter of the Kent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, a nationally-acclaimed needs assessment that summarises the health implications of housing, air quality, climate resilience, transport infrastructure and the natural environment.

#### *Air Quality Tools*

Subgroup members have developed working relationships with the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership, including input into 'Care for Kent Air', an air quality data portal, and the health and sustainability planning toolkit to assist development and transport planners.

#### *Monitoring & Evaluation*

As a result of subgroup meetings, KCC Public Health and the Kent & Medway Public Health Observatory worked with CMPs and other subgroup partners to advise on measurement and evaluation of conservation volunteering programmes, including standardised recording of mental health outcomes across programmes. This has allowed reporting of health outcomes from natural environment projects that was previously not available, and provided evidence of the health impact of conservation volunteering that is now supporting bids for external funding.

#### *Partnership Work*

The working group has achieved a good degree of cross-sector partnership working outside specific projects and has provided a useful forum for less formal collaboration and knowledge transfer. The subgroup has been well supported by a range of partners and significant investment into its successful working has been made by those on the working group.

### **3.2.3 Rural and Green Economy**

#### *Business innovation in the land-based sector*

It is clear that rural businesses which benefit directly from and contribute to the natural environment have often been set up due to the unique opportunities which exist at a local level. They are dependent upon someone recognising these opportunities and taking the initiative to turn them into a reality. To assist with this, the Group produced a report to identify new or innovative ways to use rural land and realised the potential benefits from links with the natural environment. The report looks at the various new approaches in rural land use in England and considered their viability in the Kent context. It presents an overview of the current situation in Kent including examples of innovative businesses which are linked to the natural environment; and identifies the potential risks and opportunities linked to the natural environment for these businesses and examples of how negative impact is being or could be addressed. Finally it makes recommendations about the most effective way to proceed with this area of work.

#### *Natural Capital Asset Check for Kent*

The supply of goods, regulating and cultural services is highly valuable, and the ability of the natural environment to perform well will have a direct impact on Kent's long term prosperity and wellbeing. The Natural Capital Asset Check represents the first phase in developing a Natural Capital Account for Kent. It draws on the comprehensive Kent Habitat Survey (2012) and other local and national data sources to provide a spatial 'stock check' of the county's natural assets.



This provides a baseline picture of the quantity and quality of natural assets in the county from which to monitor changes in the extent and condition of the stock of natural assets. Although often complex and non-linear, this in turn provides an indication of their capacity to deliver ecosystem services.

#### *Making a case for Natural Capital Accounting in Kent*

The asset account of the aforementioned report provides a baseline of the extent and condition of Kent's natural assets; links these to the ecosystem services they provide; and looks at trends over time. This report provides an overview of this assessment and some of the opportunities Natural Capital Accounting could have in Kent. The report is a call for interested parties to come forward and help shape the project and its application going forward in developing the next stage of work; a Natural Capital Flow Account. This will quantify the goods and services flowing from these natural assets, identify beneficiaries and assign a valuation (either monetary or physical). This can also be presented spatially to show variations across the county. By developing a County-wide Natural Capital Account, Kent is leading the way in developing more sophisticated approaches to environmental management. The intention is to finally develop a natural capital valuation and toolkit for Kent and Medway, to inform strategy policy across the county and create natural capital investment plans which deliver green growth.

#### *LEADER and other links*

Through this group, links with the LEADER funding programme have been established. This has led to a KNP representative being invited to sit on the LEADER steering group, with the opportunity to shape work taken forward with LEADER funding. LEADER may also potentially support the next stages of the natural capital accounting work.

In addition to LEADER the Rural and Green Economy Working Group has enabled other links to be made which are unlikely to have been made otherwise, for instance with the Low Carbon Plus initiative.

## **4. Strategic planning role for Kent Nature Partnership**

The priorities for Kent's natural environment are laid out in the KNP document *Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond – a strategy for the natural environment 2015-2025*. This is supported by the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (updated in 2015), which indicate where the delivery of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks of wildlife habitats. As such, BOAs are useful to local planning authorities in the development and delivery of Green Infrastructure and resilient ecological networks.

Recognising the limited resources that the Partnership has to service all districts in the development of their Local Plans, the KNP developed a consultation protocol and guidance note. This was designed to support local planning authorities in assessing their Local Plans to ensure that relevant nature considerations are included at any stage of policy planning or review.

Training sessions have been delivered to planning staff from Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells, on the integration of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in spatial plans and how to use the KNP planning protocol checklist.

As outlined in section 1.3, the Partnership has a number of levers (Local Planning Regulations, Duty to Cooperate and NPPF) that can be used to secure a role in assisting local planning authorities' strategic planning and thereby deliver a strategic approach to encouraging biodiversity. The KNP has not used these as proactively as it might, owing to resource restrictions and therefore direct engagement in Local Plan development has been limited.

A review has been commissioned to examine the uptake of the BOAs in local plans and the application of the KNP consultation protocol. This will be vital in helping the Partnership determine to what extent it needs to further develop its role in local plans. Once this evidence is collated, it is recommended that this is discussed with Kent's Planning Officers (via the Kent Planning Officers Group) to determine what further input they would welcome and develop a more tailored role for KNP that meets the specific needs of the local planning authorities and helps them to demonstrate, in part, their duty to cooperate and meet other requirements. This may also include providing access to data and information/advice to assist in strategic planning and more local planning decisions. It is unlikely that without additional resources the KNP would be able to further extend its role and therefore any discussion will also have to look at what extent they would be



willing to help resource this; to secure any sort of funding it will be vital for the KNP to demonstrate the added value it can bring to the local plan.

A further potential strategic planning role is for the KNP to lead in shaping a biodiversity offsetting strategy for the county (including habitat banking; biodiversity project pipeline) or some other such approach, if possible in coordination with neighbouring LNPs, to addressing biodiversity impacts in development. There is a decision to be made here on whether we want to be proactive and use this a way of opening a dialogue with the SE Local Enterprise Partnership and/or Kent & Medway Economic Partnership; by taking the lead we could ensure it is delivering real benefits for biodiversity and not seen as a shortcut for development (notwithstanding the concerns regarding the effectiveness of offsetting and the need for a better understanding of where this agenda might be going nationally). However any work in developing this would require notable resource and could not be progressed within existing capacity.

## 5. Analysis of Kent Nature Partnership's strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities and challenges

This section summarises some of the key conclusions of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT). The full SWOT analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

### 5.1 Strengths

The KNP has a broad **range of partners**, including those not previously worked together or those that might not normally come together. As such the KNP provides an excellent networking opportunity.

It has delivered **partnership working**, enabling collaboration between sectors on shared problems and addressing the issues of sectors working in silos despite common issues.

The Partnership has provided **one voice for the natural environment** and a coordinated, clear message that provides more impact. Notably it is the only organisation providing a forum and strategic overview of biodiversity in county.

The Partnership is **strongly governed**, with excellent Co-Chairs and wide ranging Board comprising high calibre of membership that have the necessary influence

The **hosting by Kent County Council** is positive and provides an unbiased, without agenda, neutral platform for the KNP to operate in. It is considered that this hosting resulted in the engagement of a broad range of partners, some of whom may have been deterred by other hosts associated with a specific sector. Hosting by KCC infers a political and strategic importance of the Partnership to the county.

As detailed in section 3, the KNP has **delivered some notable and positive outcomes**; in fact the achievements are quite impressive considering the limited resources available. Items particularly noted included:

- successful engagement of the health agenda
- BOAs training and outreach with local planning authorities
- development of a strong evidence base
- conference
- cross-sector learning, sharing and understanding
- interesting and valuable meetings, with the opportunity to network with knowledgeable and influential people

Despite the achievements, as the weaknesses demonstrate (section 5.2), these are possibly not promoted sufficiently or widely enough.

The ready-made, well established cross-sector representation means that projects can demonstrate a cohesive group of partners that makes it **easier to secure funding**.



## 5.2 Weaknesses

Despite the KNP having a vision and set of objectives, it would appear that the **purpose and added value of the Partnership are not clear and certainly not well understood**. Furthermore it is **not clear what change the KNP has delivered**. As such, it can be **seen as a luxury rather than a necessity**, which may explain the difficulties found in engaging beyond the “usual suspects”.

Owing to the nature of its establishment, as discussed in section 2, the remit is now thought to be **too broad** considering the limited resources of the Partnership. As such, it sometimes **strays** into wider environmental issues that others are already addressing; it also means the resources are too, and sometimes unnecessarily, stretched.

The **lack of resources** means that KNP is **not as proactive** as it might be in engaging where it could actually have an impact, for instance planning, and the **degree of action is limited**.

Whilst the KNP does boast a broad range of partners, it has still **not engaged with some key stakeholders and agendas**, including **Kent Medway Economic Partnership (Local Enterprise Partnership), rural/green economy, farming and development**. Given the State of Nature report 2016 indicates that farming and development have the biggest impact on the health of our biodiversity, this is a notable weakness.

As vehicle for conversation between local level and Defra, LNPs have perhaps **not been used as Defra envisaged** and communication between the local level and central government has been limited. Linked to this is a **lack of influence**, particularly in respect of **decision making** within the county. Outside of our partners, the KNP is **not widely known** which then further limits this engagement and influence.

It is considered that the **structure provides some obstacles** to engagement and operations. The **structure is a little unwieldy**, with four layers of bureaucracy, and **resource intensive** for those involved at all levels of across the Partnership. And whilst the **working groups** provided an excellent impetus in the initial stages in developing action plans and taking forward work, they are **now creating the silos** that the KNP was trying to avoid. The existence of **two LNPs in Kent** (Kent and Thames Gateway) provides an unhelpful boundary for work.

The Partnership is also at risk of **too much conversation and not enough doing**; there is a need to ensure that strategy delivers action and outcomes.

## 5.3 Opportunities

With **Brexit** and the development of a new **25 Year Strategy for the natural environment**, there are a number of future changes which present the Partnership with opportunities. For the latter, there is the opportunity to **develop greater weight and levers for LNPs** to enhance their work and influence. LNPs should also **provide an important local voice** in the development of new environmental policy and any required legislation following the UK's exit from the EU.

In discussions concerning **rural policy** in light of Brexit, there is general recognition that this will need to focus on improving environmental condition. It is considered that the current **institutional arrangements** are not working and that there these will need to be at a more local level. LNPs would therefore be well placed to bring all the partners together and this presents a huge opportunity for KNP.

Housing and growth will continue to be significant issues for the county and the KNP must take the opportunity that the “duty to consult” presents to influence decisions at county and district council level and **build the natural environment better into planning policies**. Good planning can be the foundation of achieving a lot of the KNP vision. An **advisory role** could help define and secure a role for the Partnership with KMEP. The environment has little voice amongst the complicated system; the KNP (as a cross-sector partnership) has the opportunity to **provide that voice and an independent governance structure**. The recent **State of Nature report** provides an opportunity to use its findings as a wake-up call that we're losing the battle and radical change is needed across the board.

The Partnership has built some good foundations for work, particularly in respect of the **health agenda**. As the natural environment's links with health agenda are becoming more apparent and better understood, there is further opportunity to **build on this work**. The KNP should also **make the most of its links with KES**, which already has buy-in and support across county.



The Board presents a wide and representative base that should attract funding and could be better harnessed. With limited public funding, many sectors are now **realising that collaboration is the way forward** – both within and between sectors – and this can be used to galvanise commitment to the Partnership. **The range of partners also increases access to funding** for action.

The biggest pot of money for stewarding of the natural environment is **CAP** and it is likely that its **successor** will need to be more than payments to farmers. Resources may therefore be available for partnerships such as the KNP, if it can use the money more intelligently and provide a new way of doing things.

If unable to secure funding for action, KNP **could solely focus on acting as a forum** for information sharing, collaboration and resource sharing.

The new **Defra groupings** provide a framework for **collaborative work with other LNPs**, enabling a more strategic, joined up approach to better engage in national/regional matters, using various strengths within the collective and sharing resources.

#### 5.4 Challenges and threats

Whilst Brexit provides an opportunity to shape our natural environment policy anew, there are also a lot of unknowns. Of particular concern is how the hole left by **EU funding** will be filled (not just CPA but also ERDF, LIFE etc) and the increased competition for national funding pots, such as HLF, in their absence. The **25 Year Strategy** is also an unknown; it has the potential for more work for LNPs without resources. The **political importance** of the natural environment is also a risk, with **political acceptance** lacking that these environmental services are important enough to warrant properly resourced institutional arrangements.

Locally, the **environment is still largely viewed as a barrier to growth**, a perception which the KNP must address. There are **County Council elections** in May 2017, which could see a **change in priorities** and the loss of KNP seen as a consideration for the authority. A lack of **political will** runs the risk of **losing the budget**.

If the weaknesses are not sufficiently addressed, there is the risk of **apathy** from partners and **drift**. Alternatively, a focus on tighter, more specific priorities could leave some partners out or make them feel they no longer have role in the Partnership. This could result in an **inability to secure new partners and a loss of existing**.

Funding is a key priority for the Partnership. But there is a risk in **chasing funding** and having to provide something in return for that. The need for return could further stretch our resources; it could also result in mistrust, misconceptions and/or loss of credibility over the KNP's role.

There is an assumption that KCC could continue to take a coordinating role even if the KNP doesn't exist. However there is the risk that without the mandate provided by the KNP status, it may be difficult to protect the resource and role within the authority.

A final challenge is that the **limited resources** will continue to **restrict the Partnership's ability** to realise the identified opportunities and address weaknesses.

## 6. Recommendations

There was a majority consensus amongst partners that the Partnership should continue but maintaining the status quo is not an option. Whilst the KNP has delivered a number of notable items of work and provides a valued network and forum, there are some fundamental issues which need to be addressed if it is to recognise its true potential and really deliver a difference for the county's biodiversity and the services that rely on it.

The following are recommendations for how the Partnership should be developed going forward, largely informed by the SWOT analysis.



## 6.1 Immediate areas for attention

The following recommendations are areas for immediate attention to be addressed over the coming year.

### Restructure the Partnership

From the review it would seem the working groups have served their purpose in kick starting some excellent work on the ground. It is now suggested that the Partnership be re-structured so that the Management Working Group's (MWG) membership is expanded and more fully takes on a steering role for all aspects of KNP work, removing need for working groups. The MWG will set task and finish groups as required to take forward specific items of work that address the KNP's redefined priorities (see below). This restructure will include a review of the Board and MWG terms of reference, to ensure they are more rigid, with clearer responsibilities.

It is also suggested that a call is put out for nominations for the MWG (and potentially Board) so all that wish to partake have the opportunity to do so.

In respect of the Board, assuming a Vice-Chair is agreed (as opposed to another Co-Chair), it is suggested that the individual should ideally come from the private sector (or have private sector credentials) to maintain the benefits from the previous appointment.

### Review and redefine Partnership's remit and priorities

The review has shown that the Partnership is trying to do too much with its limited resources. After four years, we now have experience to suggest where our efforts may be best placed and/or most needed. It is therefore suggested that a more streamlined set of priorities for work should be identified, in consultation with partners (existing and those we wish to engage), to enable resources to be better targeted. The list of priorities should be short whilst resources are still constrained.

It would be the task of the Management Working Group to take the priorities and develop a (suggested) three year action plan. The MWG would then be responsible for the delivery of this action plan, establishing task and finish (or project) groups as required to drive the work forward. A KNP wide action plan, rather than sector specific as has been developed by the working groups, would ensure the full benefits of collaborative working are realised.

From the review it is suggested that broad priorities for further development could include (but are not limited to):

- Improving the consideration of biodiversity within local plans and the growth agenda
- Taking forward the health and nature agenda
- Natural capital

Rural economy, land management and agriculture has not been included in this list as the review has suggested that more work needs to be done to define what the role is for the KNP within this agenda, that isn't already duplicating work being taken forward by other forums. One possible role is to consider working with other, already established groups within rural/green economy sector rather than trying to establish new work in this area, focussing on opportunities to influence rather than lead (e.g. Kent Rural Board). It is therefore suggested that the KNP's role within this sector this is further considered within work to redefine the Partnership.

The agreed priorities should:

- Have county-wide benefits.
- Contribute to the KNP Biodiversity Strategy.
- Be selected on the basis of where KNP can demonstrably add value.
- Not already be addressed elsewhere.
- Have defined, SMART<sup>4</sup> objectives and have specific intended outcomes/products.
- Appeal across a wide sector; requiring, and benefiting from, input of a wide range of partners.

<sup>4</sup> Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound

- Contribute to partner's own priorities.
- Be achievable in terms of resources to deliver them and resourcing plan should be developed for each.

In developing priorities and specific actions, attention should be paid to the studies already conducted by the three working groups to ensure that this work is continued and does lead to action and outcomes. Likewise, the working group action plans, which in part have become more like project wish lists, should be consulted and used to inform discussions with partners. The KNP Biodiversity Strategy mapping work should also be used to inform priorities, as this will show where action is needed to deliver the 2020 targets and help to identify opportunities where this could be delivered indirectly.

A more streamlined approach to the KNP's work could assist in taking stronger action that is bolder, more ambitious and challenging.

A final point for consideration in respect of our remit is, given no government resources, does the KNP need to follow government or can we decide entirely what our future priorities should be?

### **Develop KNP role in local plans**

The review has made clear that one area where the Partnership has missed an opportunity is making better use of the various levers to influence local plans. This has not been down to apathy but lack of resources however if we are able to demonstrate a value for involvement of the KNP in local plan development, there may be the opportunity to secure funds to deliver this role.

It is suggested that once the future of Partnership and its role is decided and refined, the KNP utilises the Board links to the Kent Chief Executives Group with an agenda item at a suitable meeting. The aim of this would be to get a mandate from the districts' Chief Executives to work with them to better develop a planning role for the KNP. This will not only involve working with the local planning authorities to determine what districts actually need from KNP but initially defining ourselves what we want to see as an outcome of our work with them (net gain; ecological networks; etc). It is envisaged that this work could be taken forward in collaboration with the Kent Planning Officers Group and, as such, it would be beneficial to get a senior planner and member of that group on the Management Working Group.

### **Improve the KNP's influence**

The review has suggested that the Partnership possibly does not have the influence it should. However securing this influence could be demanding on resources.

It is therefore suggested that the Partnership should identify agendas and forums we would like to influence (in line with the newly defined priorities) and dedicate resources to this. This should also use resources already available, via Board and MWG members already sitting on these groups.

A priority is securing cross-partnership working between KNP and Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

### **Tackle the resourcing issue**

Securing additional resource for the Partnership is a given; a Business Plan has already been developed to take this forward and work is in progress. In doing so, the Partnership needs to better exploit opportunities for funding that the partnership approach presents and work should be reviewed to ensure we have identified all funding sources open to the Partnership.

As a point of principle, it is noted that the Partnership will need a wide mix of funders that demonstrates that resourcing is not coming from one particular sector. This will enable neutrality and avoid the risk of any misconceptions of bias.

The Board (and other partners) has a role to play in helping to sell the Partnership to new partners and funders.

In order to reduce the costs of the Partnership, it is suggested that opportunities for contributions in kind are identified and possibly formalised through agreements.

## **Improve the KNP brand and value**

The review has shown that the value of KNP is not clearly understood. Redefining priorities and action will help to address this to some extent but it would appear the Partnership also needs to better promote what it has done, as some of the achievements were not widely known. Some actions that could assist in this include:

- Review the communications strategy and look at ways to better promote the achievements of the Partnership and the value it is providing to the county. This should also consider a regular conference (every 1.5 to 2 years).
- Ensure benefit of breadth of partners is used to “sell” Partnership to new partners; better promote how the Partnership has enabled collaboration between sectors on shared problems.
- Identify opportunities for the Board and Management Working Group members to advocate and promote the Partnership to increase its visibility and credibility.
- Board to encourage KCC Senior Executives and Members to continue hosting and increase KCC Senior Executives and Members’ understanding of value of the KNP to the county.
- The Partnership needs to resonate better with politicians and secure a strong, political mandate; look to engage with MPs and Cllrs during redevelopment.
- Potentially a re-launch of the Partnership, once the Partnership’s remit and priorities have been redefined.
- Use clever marketing and available evidence to make some “noise” in an effective manner.

## **Engagement with the 25 year strategy(s)**

There would appear to be opportunities for the Partnership arising from the 25 year Strategy and Brexit.

The Strategy needs to provide a clear steer from Government that there is a role for LNPs in providing a local institutional framework (and ideally this should also be accompanied by some willingness to help resource). As a Partnership, the KNP needs to define what it needs from Government bodies and policy to help it move forward.

Likewise we need to engage in the development of rural policy and need to consider how we position ourselves to take advantage of funding opportunities that may be presented by the CAP successor.

It is suggested that this engagement (and lobbying) could be undertaken in collaboration with our LNP partners in the relevant Defra grouping<sup>5</sup>.

It is recommended the KNP avoids the previous mistake of trying to shape the Partnership so it may have access to government funding that might not be forthcoming.

## **Collaborative work with other LNPs**

With limited resources as an issue for all LNPs, it is suggested we work more collaboratively on matters common to LNPs and/or the region. The new Defra Groupings provide a framework for this.

It is also suggested that some analysis of other LNPs is completed so that lessons can be learnt (time did not allow for this to be conducted within this review). This can utilise the analysis undertaken for the South East Cluster on fundraising opportunities, the 2105 Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into LNPs and the Defra commissioned Local Nature Partnership Evaluation, published in 2015.

## **Embed overarching principles of working within the Partnership**

The review has highlighted some principles of working that would assist in making for a more efficient and effective Partnership. These include:

- Meetings must have purpose and lead to intended outcomes.
- Any evidence gathering, reports and studies need to lead to outcomes and these intended outcomes should be defined (what will be done with the information gathered and what it will achieve) before the work commences.

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<sup>5</sup> For the KNP, this grouping includes Kent, South London and East Sussex and includes some of Surrey

- All actions and/or work must be developed with a resourcing plan that confirms where funding and capacity for taking it forward will come from.
- There needs to be more regular checks that the partners are getting what they need/value and more regular checks that the KNP is delivering against its priorities (once redefined). It is suggested that another review is undertaken in 18 months' time to see if the weaknesses have been addressed and that the KNP is better recognised/held in better regard.

## 6.2 Other areas for future consideration

The following are further areas for improvement that could be picked up, once the above has been tackled.

- Look for opportunities where one voice will benefit, assist and add value. Could this help with bureaucracy of planning and consultations?
- Better exploit the value of cross-sector learning and professional development.
- Identify gaps in the evidence base to strengthen this further.
- Look at whether KNP could now include Medway.
- Develop role as an environmental advisor/independent voice for government and investment in Kent & Medway.
- Biodiversity offsetting.
- Consider south west LNP approach, where each Wildlife Trust has put in some money to resource an LNP post. This has enabled joined up policy development that affects shared elements of natural environment e.g. water courses.

## 6.3 Final questions

The review has raised a few questions that need to be brought to the Board's attention for discussion; these are:

- Consider, with limited resources, whether the KNP Coordinator should focus on a networking role rather than a commissioning role.
- Consider whether the Board (or even the KNP) is the right forum for sign off of proposed local wildlife sites. It has been queried whether the Board provide sufficient scrutiny? If staying with KNP, would MWG be better place for scrutiny and sign off?
- The development of an "away day" for Board members to get to know each other better and consider/develop opportunities for the Partnership.

## 7. References

Natural Choice: securing the value of nature

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/228842/8082.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228842/8082.pdf)

State of Nature 2016 <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/stateofnature16>

An overview of the Local Nature Partnership role

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/192580/local-nature-partnerships-overview120402.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192580/local-nature-partnerships-overview120402.pdf)

KNP Strategic Management Plan <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Resources/Strategic-management-plan-update-June-2016.pdf>

Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond – a strategy for the natural environment 2015-2025

<http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Nat-Env/Kent-Biodiversity-Strategy-final.pdf>

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/kent-boas/>

Local plan self-assessment checklist <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/About-Us/Consultation-protocol-checklist-FINAL-Fen-2016.pdf>



Local plan guidance note <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/About-Us/Consultation-protocol-guidance-FINAL-May-2016.pdf>

Using the natural environment to deliver better health in Kent  
<http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Health/UNEDBH-in-Kent-Final-Report.pdf>

A needs assessment relating to the provision of natural greenspace in areas with low levels of physical activity  
<http://www.kentnature.org.uk/needs-assessment.html>

Business innovation in the land-based sector <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Green-Economy/KNP-Business-Innov-28-03-14.pdf>

A natural capital asset check for Kent <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Green-Economy/Final-Kent-Natural-Capital-Checklist-Report.pdf>

Making the case for natural capital accounting in Kent <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/assets/files/Green-Economy/Final-Making-the-case-for-NCA-in-Kent.pdf>



## APPENDIX ONE – DETAILED SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Suggested response
<i>Breadth of Partnership</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of partners, including those not previously worked together or those that might not normally come together</li> <li>• Some very good members</li> <li>• KNP has brought together good people with good intent</li> <li>• Working groups enabled good engagement (note also comments under weakness for working groups – now time to revisit their application)</li> <li>• Excellent networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use breadth of Partnership to sell its value</li> <li>• Utilise these partners to secure engagement of others as required</li> <li>• Ask partners to advocate and promote Partnership to increase its visibility and credibility</li> <li>• Consider role of Partnership as just providing a platform for networking in event of no funding</li> </ul>
<i>Good partnership working</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration between sectors on shared problems – collaborative action</li> <li>• Addressed silo working – provides mechanism for cross sector working</li> <li>• Enhanced partnership working outside of KNP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promote how Partnership has enabled this</li> <li>• Consider how this benefit can be used to sell Partnership to new (and potentially reluctant) partners - where might access to this collaboration benefit others?</li> </ul>
<i>Provision of one voice for the natural environment</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated, clear message provides more impact</li> <li>• Shared, county vision – only organisation providing a forum and strategic overview of biodiversity in county.</li> <li>• Bringing together of separate agendas and relevant partners enables a strong voice for the environment (which is needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promotion of the KNP vision, Biodiversity Strategy – improve understanding that this is owned by wide and varied partner-base</li> <li>• Look for opportunities where one voice will benefit/assist/add value – could it help with bureaucracy of planning and consultations? Promote instances of when it has done so</li> </ul>
<i>Strong governance</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent Co-Chairs – private and public backgrounds worked well; independent and not usual faces</li> <li>• Good governance structure and wide ranging Board with high calibre of membership – gives KNP real strength</li> <li>• Board provides a good and broad range of members that have the necessary influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board, and the influence individuals have, has perhaps not been sufficiently utilised – make better use of the Board as champions for the KNP and securing influence/credibility</li> <li>• Consider need for private sector background for vice-chair</li> </ul>
<i>Hosted by Kent County Council</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive that it is hosted by County Council – created no barriers to potential partners that other hosts might have resulting in the engagement of a broad range of partners. Provides an unbiased, without agenda, neutral platform for the KNP to operate in</li> <li>• Despite hosting by KCC, maintains independence from authority</li> <li>• Hosting by KCC infers a political and strategic importance of Partnership to County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KCC to continue to host KNP</li> <li>• Board to encourage KCC Senior Executives and Members to continue hosting</li> <li>• Board to increase KCC Senior Executives and Members’ understanding of value of KNP to county</li> </ul>

<i>Delivery of some notable and positive outcomes</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement of the health agenda (strong links with NHS and public health) and successes this has had in establishing more collaborative work and delivering mutual benefits.</li> <li>• Working Group has provided a good balance between health and environment partners, and there are few other opportunities for that kind of dialogue</li> <li>• Conference – gave platform for presentation and discussion of issues; not delivered elsewhere</li> <li>• BOAs training and outreach with local planning authorities</li> <li>• Strong evidence base</li> <li>• Good forum for professional development – cross-sector learning, sharing and understanding.</li> <li>• Meetings are really interesting and valuable, with opportunity to network with knowledgeable and influential Kent people operating in the general ‘environment’ area.</li> <li>• Should not underplay the good progress we’ve made – has actually been impressive considering the limited resources available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to build on communications work</li> <li>• Regular conference (every 1.5-2 years?)</li> <li>• Need to better utilise the strong evidence base to take forward work and secure buy-in/participation</li> <li>• Identify gaps in evidence base to strengthen this further</li> <li>• Better exploit the value of cross-sector learning and professional development</li> <li>• Look at ways to better promote the achievements of the Partnership and the value it is providing to the county</li> </ul>
<i>Increases funding opportunities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to secure funding when a cohesive group of partners</li> <li>• Provides ready-made, well established cross-sector representation for projects that funders are looking for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to better exploit opportunities for funding that Partnership approach presents</li> <li>• Identification of funding sources open to the Partnership</li> </ul>

Weaknesses	Suggested response
<i>Purpose, value and outcomes of Partnership are not clear</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional value of KNP not clearly understood/defined</li> <li>• Not clear what change/action on ground KNP has delivered</li> <li>• Difficult to demonstrate what the direct benefits/outcomes of KNP are, which can be problematic for securing funding</li> <li>• Seen as a luxury rather than a necessity; therefore we get engagement of enthusiasts and the core of partners are the already persuaded. How much penetration beyond “usual suspects”?</li> <li>• Purpose of Partnership is not entirely clear; not clear what it does or achieves</li> <li>• Hasn’t found its niche; specific role; “unique selling point”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need some reinvention/redefinition and strengthening, specifically in relation to role.</li> <li>• Review and redefine Partnership objectives so that they are SMART and we are able to demonstrate delivery and value against these. Should be developed in consultation with partners (and those not yet engaged) to ensure we are delivering something required</li> <li>• Need clear objectives to secure buy-in</li> <li>• Better promote achievements</li> <li>• Re-launch?</li> </ul>
<i>Remit too broad</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remit too broad – trying to be all things to all people.</li> <li>• Sometimes KNP strays into wider environmental issues that others are already addressing.</li> <li>• Priorities of habitat improvement, health and rural/green economy were too broad.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priorities for work – more streamlined – to enable resources to be better targeted.</li> <li>• Priorities should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ be selected on basis of where KNP can demonstrably add value.</li> <li>○ have defined actions - SMART (especially specific) – and have specific intended outcomes/products.</li> <li>○ be cross-sector – this is how KNP can add value. Must require and benefit from input of wide range of partners.</li> <li>○ be ones which partners want to engage in and actually contribute to – must contribute to partner’s own priorities.</li> <li>○ be achievable in terms of resources to deliver them; resourcing plan should be developed for each</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Need to define criteria on which to select priorities – e.g. county-wide, overarching, focussed, requires cross sector collaboration, not already being addressed, KNP to add value</li> <li>• Should focus on issues not being addressed elsewhere.</li> </ul>

*Not engaged with some key stakeholders and agendas*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to engage with local and national government, including Local Enterprise Partnership</li><li>• Defra's vision for LNP to be environmental equivalent of LEP and for strong links to be formed has not been realised.</li><li>• As vehicle for conversation between local level and Defra, LNPs have perhaps not been used as Defra envisaged. Communication between local level and central government has been limited.</li><li>• Haven't made traction with economic drivers/partners.</li><li>• Struggled to fully engage with the rural/green economy (at working group level)</li><li>• Not enough input from/engagement with farming and development – State of Nature report shows these two areas are the biggest impacts/influences on natural environment</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must secure cross-partnership working between KNP and Kent &amp; Medway Economic Partnership (see also opportunities – KMEP)</li><li>• Develop role as an environmental advisor/independent voice for government and investment in Kent &amp; Medway</li><li>• Need to engage with decision makers in agriculture and development</li><li>• Need to resonate better with politicians and secure a strong, political mandate - look to engage with MPs and Cllrs during redevelopment/re-launch</li><li>• Make better use of duty to cooperate/consult levers to secure engagement from local authorities</li><li>• Increase resources in developing rural/green economy engagement</li><li>• More clearly define remit for work within rural/green economy sector (developed with this sector), being sure to avoid duplication and only take on actions where the KNP can add value</li><li>• Consider working with other, already established groups within rural/green economy sector rather than trying to establish new forum for this work. Focus on opportunities to influence rather than lead (e.g. Kent Rural Board)</li><li>• Identify agendas/forums we would like to influence and dedicate resources to this. And/or use resources already available – e.g. Board and MWG members already sitting on these groups</li><li>• Look to 25 year Strategy for how links with Defra can be addressed</li></ul> |
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*Lack of influence*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LNPs don't have a proper voice</li><li>• Lack of influence in decision making within the county</li><li>• Under-realising our potential: largely due to a lack of resources, weak remit, too much reliance on goodwill and not enough political support</li><li>• Not bold/brave enough – collectively, we're failing on natural environment (ref State of Nature Report)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritise areas we want to influence and use the Board members to help achieve this</li><li>• Need to make more of levers we have and identify additional ones we require to be really effective.</li><li>• Need sufficient resources in order to exploit the levers we do have – e.g. duty to consult.</li><li>• Strengthen terms of reference – make more rigid, with clearer responsibilities. This will make a better case for resourcing.</li><li>• Need to take stronger action and have wider engagement; be much bolder and more ambitious</li><li>• Challenge and ruffle feathers</li><li>• Apply some effective marketing – make noise in an effective manner</li></ul> |
|---|--|

<i>Not widely known outside of partners</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visibility</li> <li>KNP is not widely known outside of those actively engaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better promote achievements</li> <li>Make sure existence of Partnership is known to as many people as possible at district level. Utilise Board links to Kent Chief Executives Group and take presentation to Group once future of Partnership and its role is decided. From this, get mandate from districts to work with them to better develop planning role for KNP.</li> <li>Need to aim for equivalent recognition as KMEP</li> </ul>
<i>Structure provides some obstacles to engagement</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kent being divided between two LNPs (Kent and Thames Gateway)</li> <li>Structure is a little unwieldy – four layers of bureaucracy means don't always get the right people</li> <li>Resource intensive – big draw on time for those involved at all levels of across KNP plus other networks/forums also in existence</li> <li>Board requiring members to be Directors or equivalent has precluded some partners from contributing as Directors cover region (SE) and are therefore not able to sit on every LNP board in region</li> <li>Management working group has narrow partner base. Needs to be wider ranging to ensure ambitions are realised.</li> <li>The development of action plans by the working groups has provided good detailed input but has resulted in the work being sporadic in nature and not sufficiently joined up. Has created the silos that the KNP was trying to avoid.</li> <li>Meetings are not always useful (in particular, in reference to working groups). This can be because people don't always turn up – is it seen as a priority? Have sometimes had a meeting for meeting's sake.</li> <li>Diverse nature of partners can mean some are left behind (alienated?) if dealing with a field that they are not familiar with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at whether KNP could now include Medway</li> <li>Reduce levels in management structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revisit rationale for working groups – have they now served their purpose? Are reasons for their existence still valid?</li> <li>MWG to more fully take on steering role for all aspects of KNP work, removing need for working groups.</li> <li>MWG to set task and finish groups to take forward specific items of work that address the KNP's redefined priorities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do not preclude Board members on basis of not a Director, when representation from that sector is lacking</li> <li>Meetings must have purpose – need to have intended outcomes</li> <li>Need to ensure there is clarity of communication and understanding across working groups to ensure cross-sector working isn't inhibited/stalled.</li> </ul>
<i>Too much strategizing and not enough doing</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too much conversation and not enough doing (“sometimes feels like we're having same conversation from 5 years ago; still relevant but doesn't feel like we're moving forward”).</li> <li>KNP has a number of studies etc now – but what is being doing with them? Must lead to change.</li> <li>Outcomes from delivery (working) groups are slow</li> <li>Strategy not underpinned by delivery mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports/studies need to lead to outcomes – these intended outcomes should be defined before the studies commence (need to address what we do with information gathered and what it will achieve).</li> </ul>

*Under resourced*

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of resources means that KNP is not as proactive as it might be in engaging where it could actually have an impact (e.g. planning)</li><li>• Lack of resources limits degree of action</li><li>• Too dependent on good will and willingness of people to contribute their time.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Once KNP priorities are redefined and streamlined, review funding opportunities to support these (will not be achievable if funding cannot be secured)</li><li>• Consider, with limited resources, whether KNP Coordinator should focus on networking role rather than a commissioning role</li><li>• Contributions in kind to reduce costs – such as meeting hosting, support with admin of Partnerships etc</li><li>• Look for opportunities for contributions in kind and secure/formalise that contribution through agreements</li></ul> |
|---|--|

Opportunities	Suggested response
<i>Collaborative work with other LNPs</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise links with SE LNPs – give greater voice to partnership</li> <li>More strategic, joined up approach to better engage in national/regional matters, using various strengths within the collective and share resources</li> <li>Use Defra groupings to frame collaboration</li> <li>Learn from other LNPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to find balance so as not to lose local focus on action</li> <li>Provide a focus for regional work but do not just take regional approach.</li> <li>Discuss with other LNPs within the region on how we work better together on joint matters.</li> <li>Consider SW LNP approach</li> <li>Review successes and achievements of other LNPs</li> </ul>
<i>National policy development</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brexit</li> <li>25 year Strategy – potential for greater weight and levers for LNPs</li> <li>Rural policy in light of Brexit – general recognition that this will need to focus on improving environmental condition and institutional arrangements set up to deliver this will be very important. Considered that current approaches are not working and that these institutions need to be at more local level – county seems a good level to start and LNPs would therefore be well placed to bring all the partners together; huge opportunity for KNP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KNP can be asset in the Brexit debate</li> <li>Define what KNP needs from Government bodies to help it move forward?</li> <li>Engagement in development of rural policy. Potentially work at regional (Defra grouping) scale to lobby for role for LNPs <u>and</u> resources for this role.</li> </ul>
<i>Develop strategic planning role</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better engagement with areas that could really make a difference (for example planning liaison and direct with large developments like Ebbsfleet) – planning is foundation of achieving a lot of the KNP vision</li> <li>There are things happening in Kent – housing/growth – that are threatening the natural environment; must take opportunity “duty to consult” presents to influence decisions at county and district council level and build the environment better into planning policies</li> <li>Helping developers (and others) respond to the future</li> <li>Biodiversity offsetting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify where KNP could make a difference and secure resources in order to do so.</li> <li>Work with LPAs to determine what districts actually need from KNP; and decide ourselves, what we want to see as an outcome of our work with them (net gain; ecological networks; etc). Meet with Kent Planning Officers Group</li> <li>Need senior planner on MWG</li> <li>Proactive approach to planning</li> <li>KNP to determine local model/calculation for biodiversity offsetting and direct funding to where it is needed, strategically and spatially</li> </ul>
<i>Develop advisory role</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define and secure role for KNP with KMEP</li> <li>Ensuring environmental legislation and policy is being delivered well at the local level</li> <li>Develop advisory role (building on BOAs work with districts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental/biodiversity advisor to KMEP</li> <li>Make better use of duty to cooperate/consult levers</li> <li>Act as catalyst for positive engagement – need to develop authority and credibility to fulfil this role; especially across local government.</li> <li>Advice on implementing Biodiversity Strategy; access to green space (use of assessment findings) etc</li> </ul>

<i>Funding</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board presents a wide and representative base that should attract funding</li> <li>• Range of partners increases access to funding for action</li> <li>• Agri-environment and other rural investment</li> <li>• With limited public funding, many sectors now realising that collaboration is way forward – both within and between sectors</li> <li>• Biggest pot of money for stewarding of the natural environment is CAP; it is likely that its successor will need to be more than payments to farmers. Resources may therefore be available for partnerships such as ours if we can use money more intelligently and provide a new way of doing things.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make better use of Board, influence and credibility this brings to secure funding</li> <li>• Make better use of partners’ access to funding streams</li> <li>• Make better use of LEADER panel to realise biodiversity gains within projects using this funding</li> <li>• Need to consider how we position ourselves to take advantage of funding opportunities that may be presented by CAP successor. Begin by engaging in the development of 25 year Strategy.</li> <li>• Avoid previous mistake of trying to shape KNP so it may have access to funding that might not be forthcoming.</li> </ul>
<i>Strengthening influencing role and building on existing work, linking in with national and local agendas</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make most of links with KES, which already has buy-in and support across county</li> <li>• Environment has little voice amongst the complicated system – KNP (as a cross-sector partnership) has the opportunity to provide that voice and an independent governance structure. Plus a forum for lobbying</li> <li>• State of Nature report – opportunity to use as a wakeup call that we’re losing the battle and radical change is needed across the board</li> <li>• Net gain</li> <li>• The natural environment’s links with health agenda are becoming more apparent and better understood</li> <li>• More on natural capital, utilising this to bring partners together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use KES to focus efforts and demonstrate local mandate</li> <li>• Also use State of Nature report to inform some of decisions and priorities for the Partnership</li> <li>• KNP needs to be driving and influencing this within local plan policy</li> <li>• Continue to develop and grow work with health agenda</li> <li>• Greater accounting for natural capital in decision making will assist with driving this forward – but government needs to assist through 25 year Strategy.</li> </ul>
<i>Redefine role to build on strengths</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If unable to secure funding for action, KNP should focus on acting as a forum for information sharing, collaboration and resource sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge sharing, capacity building, skills development and enabling role as basis.</li> </ul>

Threats	Suggested response
<i>National agenda</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vagueness of Government brief</li> <li>• 25 year Strategy – potential for more work for LNPs without resources. Will responding to national priorities divert resources from local priorities</li> <li>• Brexit – a lot of unknowns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a clear steer from Government in 25 Year Strategy that there is a role for LNPs in providing local institutional framework (this should also be accompanied by some willingness to help resource)</li> <li>• Engagement with development of national strategy so that we can recognise the needs of the county, amongst the priorities for England.</li> <li>• Does KNP need to decide on its position? Given no government resources, does KNP need to follow Government or can we decide entirely what our future priorities should be?</li> <li>• Engagement in work going forward</li> </ul>
<i>Local agenda</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment is still largely viewed as a barrier to growth</li> <li>• County Council elections in May 2017 - change in priorities and loss of KNP seen as a consideration</li> <li>• Loss of budget</li> <li>• Lack of political will</li> <li>• Assumption that KCC will continue to take this coordinating role even if KNP doesn't exist.</li> <li>• No political acceptance that these environmental services are important enough to warrant properly resourced institutional arrangements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to be better at getting message across that KNP are not anti-growth. Working with LEP to help enable (better, well-planned wrt natural environment) growth would help to demonstrate this.</li> <li>• Does KCC need the mandate provided by the KNP status to protect the resources and role within the authority? KNP provides driver for KCC's strategic role in biodiversity.</li> </ul>
<i>Unable to secure new partners and loss of existing</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible risk of not getting full engagement with Local Enterprise Partnership</li> <li>• Apathy of partners from lack of real change/outcomes</li> <li>• Lack of interest</li> <li>• A focus on tighter, more specific priorities could leave some partners out/make them feel they don't have role in Partnership</li> <li>• Inability of some key partners going forward to engage – private land owners, farmers etc – that don't "earn" when attending meetings/engaging in actions</li> <li>• Complex plethora of parties across county that are interested/involved in natural environment – risk that KNP is seen as just another</li> <li>• If considering working on regional scale, there is no regional government to engage with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promote achievements</li> <li>• More regular checks that the partners are getting what they need/value</li> <li>• More regular checks that the KNP is delivering against priorities.</li> <li>• Undertake another review in 18 months' time to see if KNP is better recognised/held in better regard</li> <li>• Consider a wider Partnership meeting</li> <li>• Call out for nominations for MWG and potentially Board so all that wish to partake have the opportunity to do so</li> <li>• NE/EA/Defra – have a role in helping this and incentivising that engagement</li> <li>• Need to demonstrate personal benefit to attending</li> <li>• Need to define niche for KNP</li> <li>• Must retain links with county council; suggested that work on SE scale should be collaboration on regional-scale matters, rather than SE LNP.</li> <li>• Need to focus and sharpen priorities otherwise risk losing engagement</li> </ul>

### Funding

- Chasing funding and having to provide something in return for that. The risk is this could further stretch our resources; or result in mistrust, misconceptions and/or loss of credibility over KNP's role
- If Government (national, county or local) does not recognize the market failure surrounding land management and if they are only inclined to make a token contribution to arrange the delivery of public environmental goods in the countryside, then certainly the private sector is not going to any more than this.
- Need wide mix of funders that demonstrates that resourcing is not coming from one particular sector. This will enable neutrality and avoid the risk of any misconceptions of bias.