



**Kent Nature Partnership
Strategic Priorities and Action Plan
2018-23**

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Introduction

The Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) 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.

The KNP was established in 2012 and, after four years, it was considered timely to review the effectiveness and achievements of the Partnership and consider these in order to shape what the future might be. The review showed that the Partnership was trying to do too much with its limited resources and recommended that the Partnership's remit be reviewed to develop a more a more streamlined set of priorities for work.

This document sets out these redefined priorities and an outline action plan for how they will be achieved. The priorities and actions have been developed by the KNP Management Working Group, with input from a wider stakeholder base via a workshop. The priorities and action plan were adopted by the KNP Board December 2017.

The outcomes for each priority are based on a long-term, 25 year vision. The objectives and actions that will deliver the outcome are based on a 5 year plan and are viewed as an incremental step towards achieving that long term outcome.

The KNP's strategic priorities are:

- **Priority 1 - Strengthening the consideration of biodiversity within local plans and the growth agenda**
- **Priority 2 - Embedding natural capital into planning and decision making**
- **Priority 3 - Taking forward the health and nature agenda**
- **Priority 4 - Improving the quality, extent and connectivity of our high value habitats**

The KNP is interested in building support for these priorities by extending the partnership. If you are involved in projects which relate to the associated objectives and could assist in the delivery of the action plan we would be pleased to hear from you. In this way we can aim to make the best use of our resources and achieve gains for Kent's biodiversity. The action plan is flexible and actions can be developed and added in throughout the five year period as long as they fit with the objectives.

This plan is closely linked to delivering the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, as well as many elements of the Kent Environment Strategy.

Priority 1 - Strengthening the consideration of biodiversity within local plans and the growth agenda

Lead Partner: Kent County Council

Outcomes:

- Biodiversity is provided for in local plans, so that local plans are making a coordinated, active and demonstrable contribution to the Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets with greater protection of Local Wildlife Sites.

Objectives:

- By 2019, the KNP has secured a way of resourcing input to local plans.
- By 2023, all of Kent's local authorities are seeking engagement of the KNP at appropriate points in their local plan process.
- Local plans are embedding policy that will deliver The Kent Biodiversity Strategy and, in particular, increased protection for Local Wildlife Sites.
- A change in the culture of Kent's local planning authorities, where the value of nature is embraced and recognised.

Context

It is recognised that Kent's local plans are at differing stages; hence the objective cannot be any more defined than aiming for engagement at "appropriate" points. This engagement will, ideally, be as early as possible to inform the evidence base and issues and options. Active contribution can be defined as policies and allocations that have considered biodiversity do not result in net loss and ideally deliver net gain; they will also not hinder the achievement of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets and, where appropriate, will contribute. It is recognised that not all Kent Biodiversity Strategy will be relevant to all local plans.

Associated actions

Objective	Action	Proposed timescale	Proposed lead
By 2019, the KNP has secured a way of resourcing input to local plans; and by 2023, all of Kent's local authorities are seeking engagement of the KNP at appropriate points in their local plan process.	KNP planning demonstration project to provide input to a pilot district authority's plan, to help shape future role for KNP in local plan development and develop a business case for LPA funding.	Short	KCC
	Revise existing KNP planning protocol and consider more effective ways of encouraging LPAs to utilise it	Short	KCC
	A review of the various KNP levers in the plan making process/various stages for sign off	Medium	KCC
Local plans are embedding policy that will deliver Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and, in particular, increased protection for Local Wildlife Sites.	Review, refine and publish the Kent Biodiversity Strategy to ensure it is current and fit for purpose, particularly in relation to being used within local plans and providing a framework of targets for net gain in the county (see also priority 4)	Short	KWT
	Provide guidance for recommended evidence base documents, identifying what layers are useful/critical and how to use the data.	Medium	TWBC
	Provision of an evidence base to support biodiversity policies and related decisions (links to Kent Landscape Information System).	Medium	KMBRC

	Investigate the best way to provide Local Wildlife Site and BOAs information to LPAs for constraint maps	Short	KWT & KMBRC
	Guidelines on how to contribute to Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets	Medium	KCC
	Provision of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets at the local district/borough/unitary level	Long	KWT
	The development of model planning policies (that have passed the examination stage) to deliver biodiversity protection and gain	Medium	KCC and KWT
	Appraise existing and proposed strategic approaches for biodiversity in Kent and identify additional requirements. In order to provide robust, strategic approaches to spatial planning (accompanied by mapping for biodiversity in Kent linked to Biodiversity 2020 targets and model policies)	Long	RSPB
A change in the culture of Kent's local planning authorities, where the value of nature is embraced and recognised.	Survey of how biodiversity is valued by LPAs and other stakeholders (to understand baseline, provide a measure for improvement and inform onward work to achieve this objective).	Short	University of Kent
	Develop training package utilising different media and formats for planners and councillors/elected members.	Medium	KCC & KWT
	Identify simple ways for LPAs to measure/monitor provision for the natural environment in local plans	Medium	TWBC/ SDC
	Development of indicators for success in regards to planning input (e.g. if policy is being implemented and whether it is having a difference), which provides a framework for monitoring	Medium	KCC
	Make links with government to lobby for the strengthening of the role for LNPs in plan making and improved drivers for the consideration of the natural environment; ensure the KNP is responding to any relevant consultations in this regard.	Short to medium	KCC

Priority 2 - Embedding natural capital into planning and decision making

Lead Partner: Natural England

Outcome:

- Natural capital accounting is better understood as a way of valuing the natural environment and is used as a part of a decision-making toolkit for a wide range of sectors.

Objectives:

- The natural capital of Kent is identified and exemplar projects, valuing specific areas, are used to demonstrate its value.
- Developing understanding of natural capital and how this can be used in strategic planning and investment strategies.

Context

The concept of natural capital is a powerful tool that can help us all understand what we get from the natural world through ecosystem services. It offers the potential to make environmental planning central to local and national decision-making: Local strategic plans can reflect investment in enhancing the natural capital of a place; investment that compromises natural capital may need to deliver suitable compensation, whilst investment that enhances it could benefit from different forms of incentive.

Accounting for natural capital is important as many of the most valuable services it provides are intangible so they're often overlooked; natural capital accounts provide one way of representing the environment in decision making. A natural capital assessment for the county will be a large undertaking and therefore work under this priority will first focus on improving understanding and providing demonstration projects.

Associated actions

Objective	Action	Proposed timescale	Proposed lead
The natural capital of Kent is identified and exemplar projects, valuing specific areas, are used to demonstrate its value.	Build on the work already commissioned by KNP on natural capital, by reviewing studies such as the asset check and "making the case for natural capital accounting".	Short	Natural England
	Review and map the functions (ecosystem services) of the county's green infrastructure assets to illustrate the benefits, quantitative value and opportunities/gaps.	Short	KCC
	Using a local plan as a pilot area, demonstrate the development and application of natural capital accounting. Experience from elsewhere should be incorporated, including work focused on the South Downs National Park.	Long	Natural England
	Develop a pilot project that demonstrates the multiple natural capital benefits that can be derived from Kent's woodlands, including research on the role of coppiced woodlands in terms of ecosystem services. The project will encompass goods and services and involve both the industry workforce and environmental organisations.	Medium	University of Greenwich

	Pilot project that demonstrates multiple natural capital benefits (ecosystem services) that can be derived from catchment management and how this can be used in decision making to the benefit of communities.	Medium	The Medway Flood Partnership
Developing understanding of natural capital and how this can be used in strategic planning and investment strategies.	Survey of understanding of natural capital/ecosystem services by stakeholders (to understand baseline, provide a measure for improvement and inform onward work to achieve this objective).	Short	University of Kent
	Communicate the benefits of natural capital across both the public and private sector. Deliver a range of communications actions aimed at sharing best practice and demonstrating how natural capital can be utilised across strategic planning and investment strategies.	Long	Natural England & KCC

Priority 3 - Taking forward the health and nature agenda

Lead Partner: Kent Public Health and Medway Public Health

Outcome:

- Kent’s residents have improved opportunities to have contact with nature with accessible semi-natural, greenspace in the right place (near people); and these areas are being used to generate significant benefits to the physical and mental health of the population.

Objectives:

- By 2023, local plan development, green infrastructure projects and big new developments will have addressed deficiencies identified in the KNP green space needs assessment.
- GI development will not only deliver more accessible green space where it is needed, but also measureable benefits to biodiversity.
- By 2023, contact with nature will be promoted by local healthcare providers (and other health and wellbeing agencies), with demonstration projects being run by each of the 8 Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Context

In addition to ensuring the provision of opportunities to access green space and have contact nature, this priority must also focus on people actually having that contact.

Associated actions

Objective	Action	Proposed timescale	Proposed lead
By 2023, local plan development, green infrastructure projects and big new developments will have addressed deficiencies identified in the KNP green space needs assessment.	Examine green space needs assessment to see how it can be incorporated into local plans to deliver both health and wellbeing and biodiversity benefits: - An “accessible natural green space for health” workshop will bring together key partners to explore the evidence base provided by the assessment and how it can be taken forward as a decision making tool. Potential for a “green space needs toolkit” to be commissioned based upon the findings of the workshop, aimed at planners and developers.	Short	KCC
	Assessment of value of natural environment green space to health and wellbeing of Kent and business case for investment. This action will consider how the difficulty in confirming causality and attribution of health outcomes to a lack of green space can be addressed. Consideration of the total cost of green space in terms of prevention and the return on investment for green space will assist in making the business case for investment.	Long	Kent & Medway Public Health
GI development will not only deliver more accessible green space where it is needed, but also measureable benefits	Strategic GI plan(integrating BOAs) for the county or address ways to strategically deliver on county scale in addition to biodiversity gain, coordinated with Local Authorities GI plans	Long	KCC

to biodiversity			
By 2023, contact with nature will be promoted by local healthcare providers (and other health and wellbeing agencies), with demonstration projects being run by each of the 8 Clinical Commissioning Groups.	Review of social prescribing pilots which have utilised volunteering projects run by Countryside Management Partnerships (CMPs). Review to include consideration of improvements required for these schemes, resources and potential roll out to other parts of the county.	Short	CMP's (TBC)
	Working with health and social care professionals identify and promote where the natural environment can support healthy lifestyles.	Long	Kent & Medway Public Health

Priority 4 - Improving the quality, extent and connectivity of our high value habitats

Lead Partner: Kent Wildlife Trust

Outcome:

- The network of Kent's high value natural and semi-natural habitats, made up of locally and nationally recognised sites, is well managed and connectivity between these sites is delivered through a range of initiatives.

Objectives:

- By 2023, increase the proportion of Kent's semi-natural habitat in positive management, from 14% to 20%.
- Secure no net loss of semi-natural habitat; work towards net gain in the county, by 2023, with an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats of 10k ha¹.
- Demonstrably increase the connectivity of five of Kent's highest value natural and semi-natural habitats.

Context

20% of the county is semi-natural with only two thirds of this in management that benefits its biodiversity; this means just 14% of the county is well-managed high value, semi-natural habitat. In order to deliver net gain, we need to not only increase the extent of semi-natural habitat but also increase the proportion of existing habitat in good management and improve connectivity. A recent Kent Wildlife Trust review concluded that in order to provide the necessary ecological connectivity, the county should be aiming for a target of 30% semi-natural habitat - it is this long term (25 year) target that the KNP is aspiring towards.

Well managed/positive management in respect of this priority refers to a conservation management plan being in place; the site being under an agri-environment/land management scheme; and/or the site is receiving management guidance/advice.

The partnership has set this as its benchmark in the general absence of consistent (and easily accessed) evidence that demonstrates the management and/or condition of a site (where such evidence does exist, this will be reverted to).

Although the objective specifically aims to increase the proportion of Kent's semi-natural habitat in positive management, there is an overall aim of generally increasing the amount of land well-managed for nature (in part, by encouraging best environmental practice in agriculture and land management in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders). However in the absence of data to measure this more general aim, the KNP are focussing on semi-natural habitat for the sake of the objectives.

The statistics for this priority are based on best available evidence and the KNP recognises that this may not be the complete picture. In taking forward this priority, the KNP is looking at other information recorded and held by partners, to better inform the evidence on semi-natural habitat in the county and what constitutes good management for biodiversity.

¹ Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2015) target for 2025

Associated actions

Objective	Action	Proposed timescale	Proposed lead
By 2023, increase the proportion of Kent's semi-natural habitat in positive management, from 14% to 20%	Engage in environmental stewardship/agri-environment/agricultural reforms in order to ensure the best outcomes for the environment. Develop a lead/influencing role for the KNP in future delivery	Short	KCC & NE
	Bring together expertise within the county on key habitats and their management in order to develop a better understanding of what evidence of condition/extent/management exists and identify where better information is needed and how this may be collated.	Medium	KMBRC, RSPB, KWT & KCC
	Develop consistent standards for condition and management (basic statements of quality for specific habitats)	Medium	RSPB
	Develop a consistent approach to quality/quantity data collection for the county.	Medium	KMBRC & RSPB
	Increase proportion of Local Wildlife Sites in management and good condition	Medium	KWT
Secure no net loss of semi-natural habitat; work towards net gain in the county, by 2023, with an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats of 10k ha	BOA's to provide spatial framework for the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, for stronger use in planning and decision making - design for biodiversity' tailored to each area.	Short	KCC & KWT
	Consider how BOAs might be used as SMART targets/reported on.	Short	KCC& KWT
	Review, refine and republish the Kent Biodiversity Strategy to ensure it is current and fit for purpose, particularly in relation to providing a framework of targets for net gain in the county ²	Short	KCC & KWT
	Review and identify opportunities for large scale priority habitat creation	Ongoing	KCC
Demonstrably increase the connectivity of five of Kent's highest value natural and semi-natural habitats	Landscape scale projects that directly deliver Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets to be developed across the county.	Ongoing	KCC (and all partners)
	Celebrate success around projects (such as Old Chalk New Downs and The Fifth Continent) and share best practice on increasing connectivity	Long	KCC & KWT

² Once complete this may lead to further actions required under this and other priorities; the action plan will be reviewed following completion of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy refresh

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