



KNP Board Meeting on “Data for Nature” - Minutes for 23rd September 2022

Meeting held on Microsoft Teams

Attendees	
Matthew Balfour	KNP Chair
Gary Walters	KNP Vice Chair
Evan Bowen-Jones	Kent Wildlife Trust
Susan Carey	Kent County Council
Ellen Schwartz	Kent Public Health
Liz Milne	Kent County Council (KNP MWG Chair)
Chris Drake	Kent County Council (KNP Co-ordinator)
Alan Jarrett	Medway Council
Nick Fenton	Kent Housing and Development Group
Gregor Mutch	Brett Aggregates
Jim Seymour	Natural England
Charles Tassell	Country Land & Business Association
Matthew Woodcock	Forestry Commission
Guests	
Andrew Jamieson	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Robbie Still	Kent Wildlife Trust
Teresa Bennett	Chair Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
Hannah Cook	CEO Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
Tony Witts	Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
Tim Owen	Kent Downs AONB Unit
Karen Faux	Natural England
Apologies	
Nick Johannsen	Kent Downs AONB Unit
Helen Shulver	Kent County Council – Kent Environment Strategy
Rob Jarman	Kent Planning Officers Group (Maidstone Borough Council)

Actions	Who
KNP to set up a facilitated meeting between KWT and KMBRC and Matthew/Gary are happy to provide that facilitation.	Liz/Chris
Down the line, CLA and Kent Housing and Development Group are willing to assist KNP in tailoring communications to landowners on access and surveying.	Liz/Chris
Understanding the overlap between high bird index and fertile soils on the mapping – question to be taken back to KWT for Charles Tassell.	Robbie
Susan offered to set up a general meeting between KNP and Kent Public Health at KCC including the relevant cabinet members.	Susan/Chris
Board BNG comments to be fed into the KNP BNG sub group.	Liz

Minutes

1. Introductions, apologies, and approval of May minutes (Paper 1)

The minutes were approved, and new Board members Nick Fenton and Ellen Schwartz welcomed along with guests and those standing in for other Board members.

Data for Nature

2. Introduction to “Data for Nature” theme, Chair (Paper 2)

Matthew outlined how we are all increasingly dependent on good data and that we need to consider how this might be available at a single point and how this might be supported. The context for today’s discussion had been provided in Paper 2.

3. Kent Wildlife Trust – introduction to monitoring and evidence delivery plan and the role of digital transformation in this – Paul Hadaway

Paul outlined how using the State of Nature in Kent report, KWT had been considering what they need to monitor, with an emphasis not just on certain species and habitats, but on general bioabundance. The aim is for maximum impact and delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.

The trust is working on a fit for purpose monitoring and evidence delivery plan that will capture this along with how to work at scale and what metrics to use. How data is applied to areas such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nutrient Neutrality will be key, along with identifying data gaps. The marine and aquatic agenda will be revived as part of all this.

The digital transformation strategy sits alongside this (and under the KWT revised business plan), this will look at the use of new technologies and will deal with spatial aspects, reporting and identifying nature-based solutions, it will be used in discussion making.

4. Draft Kent Local Nature Recovery Mapping – Robbie Still, Digital Transformation Officer, Kent Wildlife Trust – presentation not included as mapping draft – but bullet points below.

Robbie described how KWT is using data to drive decision making. In the absence of secondary legislation, KWT have been undertaking nature recovery mapping, working with the KNP Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Group, producing draft maps with a core zone (already protected) and a recovery zone (opportunities).

The idea is not just to map nature, but the opportunities on the ground to take nature recovery forward. Different land types have been looked at e.g., low grade agricultural land, where some of the greatest opportunities may be. Creation of corridors for pollinators will be one important aspect. Different connectivity models have been provided in the mapping, for different habitats. The challenge will be to make it into a real network on the ground.

Principles for LNRS mapping (from presentation):

- Easy to understand, from conservation professional to landowner.
- Use data from across conservation movement with a wide range of species/habitat focus.
- Integrates people and land-use as well as biodiversity potential.
- Tried and tested methodology from previous implementations
- Tailored to Kent’s specific biodiversity with input from key stakeholders.

- Consultative and iterative process.

Question from Charles Tassel.

Charles asked about the mapping overlap between high bird index and fertile soils, why was this?

ACTION: Robbie to take this question back to KWT in terms of the meaning behind this pattern.

Question from Alan Jarrett.

Alan asked if any data gaps might be as a result of concern over how organisations such as Natural England might be seen to use the data, around the precautionary principle.

Robbie said that it was mainly open data used, although some data from KMBRC they may not be able to share. Robbie said one concern was a lack of new data, with the Kent Habitat Survey now 10 years old.

Paul Hadaway said that LNRS is a consultative process with stakeholders and having data to map the success of LNRS will not present a problem. Evan said the opportunity around land payments will be a benefit to this area of work.

5. Surrey Space4Nature satellite mapping project, overview from project manager, Andrew Jamieson – see presentation provided with these minutes.

This is a new three-year project funded by the Dream Fund (Peoples Postcode Lottery), with Surrey WLT, Surrey Uni, Buglife and another local partner.

Andrew described how the State of Nature in Surrey is a concern, with 1/3 species extinct or under threat. Surrey teams no longer have the resource to cover so much ground on foot, so they are looking to new technologies.

The project uses very high-resolution earth observation satellite data, which can identify objects down to the length of a hand (.3 M), so this means it is possible to look at two similar patches of habitats and suggest areas that could be better connected and joined up.

With the use of “ground-truthing” images and AI and Machine Learning, it should be possible to compare satellite images, to confidently identify similar eco-systems and make a reliable case for improving connectivity.

They are trying to establish where they set their Nature Recovery Network baseline, being aware of shifting baseline syndrome – so proper recovery rather than restabilising nature that the most recent generation can remember.

The project will take in six sites for testing on the ground, it will use citizen science and involve schools.

6. Questions and discussion

Question from Matthew Balfour.

Will there be plans to roll the findings and approach out elsewhere?

Yes, if successful it can be rolled out in adjoining counties using the same satellite data and methodologies.

The Chair invited Hannah Cook from Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre to outline the role they play in managing and providing data for the county.

They are a charity, with three staff and a Board of trustees, including those from the recording community. They are independent, whereas many other records centres are either hosted by wildlife trusts or local authorities. Independence means they are seen as unbiased.

Validating data is an important role, open data is seen as desirable, but if it is not validated, is it reliable? KMBRC charges for data, to generate income. Some funding comes from EA, other authorities have funded in the past. NE are pushing for open data, but records centres need funding.

Nick Fenton said that developers are waking up to the need for land for carbon offsets (and accompanying need for data). It might be possible to encourage them to part fund at some point.

Liz Milne said that its important to bear in mind what we need data for and the statutory need for monitoring on LNRS and BNG, which local authorities need to report on is an essential one for KCC/KNP. She said that we do need central data and to do it together.

Evan Bowen-Jones agreed that, yes, we need data in one central place. He said that there was a lot coming our way and that we need to consider how new payments around nature recovery/nature-based solutions might help pay towards data. We need to have more joined up and improved system he said. Robbie said that we could do some of our own bespoke mapping to get around the issue of the need for open data or a lack of certain data types, but need to agree this collaboratively.

Matthew concluded that consensus had been formed on one central data point and that KWT/KMBRC and KCC/KNP need to take this further.

ACTION: KNP to set up a facilitated meeting between KWT and KMBRC and Matthew/Gary are happy to provide that facilitation.

Tony Witts welcomed this approach.

Gregor suggested that BNG may provide some funding for data and that a “green bank” could be established. Jim Seymour said that a 20% BNG should be able to contribute to this approach.

Liz said that LPA’s will recoup money on BNG, which could go into data, but we are awaiting secondary legalisation on reporting requirements.

Evan added that KWT are already working on BNG projects, including working with landowners, this means we can work on examples on the ground, in the absence of that secondary legislation.

Nick Fenton wondered if agriculture and various schemes may have the answers, as per the Knepp Estate, but that the costs need estimating.

Gary Walters posed the question about who needs to come and ground truth, i.e., to do surveys on site and how prepared are landowners for this demand? Evan said that farmers may need payments but also said there could be legal issues relating to the Surrey approach. Liz said that communication and getting off on the right foot will be key with landowners.

ACTION: further down the line, both CLA and Kent Housing and Development Group are willing to assist KNP is tailoring communications to landowners on access and surveying.

Ellen Schwartz wondered how areas such as climate change were factored in. It was said that the LNRS will pick up on climate change adaptation and nature-based solutions opportunities mapping, this should also include health aspects. It was also noted that KNP is linked up to Kent Environment Strategy.

ACTION: Susan offered to set up a general meeting between KNP and Kent Public Health at KCC including the relevant cabinet members.

7. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) viability study key findings – Liz Milne (see accompanying presentation)

The study (for Kent and Medway) looked at the impact of 20% BNG in terms of impacts on viability of development. Based on high level typologies – so an indication only. It concluded that for both in and offsite the cost are comparatively small. Biggest cost is the initial 10% - moving to 20% negligible in terms of viability.

The most viable areas in the county were the north west green field sites, whereas the south east urbanised areas were less viable, here 20% more difficult, but still achievable.

For onsite BNG the impact on housing density and therefore land take is more significant, but this is not a reason to not move towards the enhanced target.

The study was taken to the districts and 6 out of 11 (not all have responded) are taking up 20% BNG policies or looking at this, but 3 are still concerned about the viability of 20%. Some feel they cannot be seen to prioritise BNG over affordable housing. Others have enough on their plate with nutrient neutrality. One authority does not have a position either way yet.

The next piece of work will be around the justification for BNG, adding in aspects from the State of Nature in Kent report and examining stacked benefits. Then there is the need to identify further evidence needed to meet inspections etc.

KCC are having to re- advertise for a BNG officer for the county, a role the districts are supporting. KCC will also help LPA with the dissolving tension between BNG and affordable housing. A supplementary planning document may be developed for certain development types.

Liz recommended the full study, which can be found here:
<https://kentnature.org.uk/nature-recovery/biodiversity-net-gain/>

8. Questions and discussion

Susan Carey pointed out that we do not have a 20% evidence base for minerals & waste sites for which KCC is a planning authority, but the legalisation says it will be up to the developer to do the maximum and in the case of quarries this could all be returned to nature.

Susan said waste sites are seeing have lots of biodiversity features being incorporated e.g., Allington. Gregor Mutch agreed that quarries can often provide 100% net gain and there are good examples in the county.

Wider environmental benefits of BNG were mentioned for example, sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) was mentioned by Susan, Liz recognised that these benefits would come, but that the schemes have to primarily focus on biodiversity and nature-based solutions cannot be a proxy for this. This regulation around SUDS is being looked into.

This is all about stacked benefits, which is an important accompanying piece of work. Jim Seymour mentioned that NE will be undertaking “additionality” work.

Gregor started a discussion over the benefits of putting a financial benefit figure on BNG and demonstrating how comparatively cheap it is. For example, the cost per hectare to get a 1% net gain. We need to avoid a year to year or piece meal approach to funding. It was recognised that a sustainable financial model is needed for BNG in the county.

Liz mentioned that with the 20% in some cases 10% or more might go into strategic offsite and help deliver Lawton principles. At the same time, the benefit of onsite and people having wildlife on their doorstep was recognised.

Evan highlighted the risks around LPA’s determining their own viability, in terms of the risk of a siloed approach, e.g., for Dover all the BNG staying in Dover District. We need to help them navigate this he said. By contrast, Jim added the risk of developers wanting to use the extra 10% nationally. Evan also warned we need to ensure affordable housing receives nature benefits and that there is a big health benefit to onsite BNG.

Liz said a strategic narrative around BNG for councillors is needed, Evan said he would be happy to work on this too.

Jim noted that calculation over the next 20 years of the money BNG would bring in, would be helpful, Liz agreed but said this would be a big job.

Nick said BNG needs selling to developers now, so they understand the benefits.

Robbie said we can “keep it in Kent” via the use of the open access tool, so that a market place is and match making system is created. On a final note, Liz said that BNG has the potential to really increase the appeal and saleability of new developments.

ACTION: Liz to feed all comments into the KNP BNG sub group.

9. Kent Plan Tree – update – Liz and Susan

Susan said that KCC will now be accepting the Kent Plan Tree Strategy following consultation. This will be for tree establishment, as well as looking after our existing tree stock.

KCC are hoping to commit £900, 000 to Plan Tree, but this is TBC. KCC are waiting for news on a £100, 000 Treescapes fund bid. For 16,000 trees on schools and NHS sites. THE CMPs will assist. Also, Urban Tree Challenge Fund bid put in – for street trees.

The Kent Plan Tree Partnership will have its first meeting in November, to look at delivery of the strategy. Need to look at hedgerows too and wider nature-based solutions.

NE now have their own regional Tree Strategy Officer and that this person will be able to work with KCC on targets and provide free consultation. Matthew Woodcock said that the Forestry Commission have a business development person in place who can also provide advice.

10. Avian Flu

Alan Jarrett highlighted how this had continued into the breeding season, but the situation is not currently too bad. The advice is not to pick up dead birds (mainly gulls and wildfowl effected).

11. AOB

Including reminder of Kent Environment Strategy Conference agenda “Greener and more resilient” featuring nature-based solutions, as Chaired by Matthew Balfour - 10th November Canterbury Cathedral Lodge. Spaces are limited, so please reserve your ticket using this [link](#).

Matthew mentioned SENP and how Caroline Jessel is setting this up as a Community Interest Company, a model we should observe in terms of it having any potential for KNP.

He thanked everyone for their contributions and was pleased that the data discussion have found a way forward and identified the next steps particularly for KWT, KMBRC and KNP/KCC coming together.

The date of the next meeting was noted as 2pm on the 9 Dec with a health and nature focus - connecting people with nature: <https://kentnature.org.uk/strategy/connecting-people/>