



Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway

Developing the County's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

MS4N Data, Evidence and Mapping Technical Advisory Group meeting 13th December 2023, 10.00am-12.00pm, MS Teams MINUTES

1. Summary of actions and items agreed

1.1 Items agreed

- The current draft APIB met the requirements of the LNRS regulations.
- The nature recovery mapping tool prototype would enable the collation of the information needed by the project and, once queries and comments noted at the meeting had been addressed, sign off was appropriate.

1.2 Actions

Action	Who	Status
APIB to be updated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AWI and PAWS distinguished.• Spartina and Mediterranean saltmarsh.• Distinguish between overlapping layers.	KWT	
Seek clarification on rationale of including nominated local wildlife sites in APIB.	Natural England	
Revisit inclusion of nominated LWS at next TAG meeting.	MS4N	
Note to Defra concerns relating to the definition of irreplaceable habitats.	Natural England	
Build draft mapping layer of areas of local significance for biodiversity, based on discussion and subsequent input from delivery group and other stakeholders.	KWT	
Finalise the mapping tool as per TAG comments (and subsequent post meeting discussion).	KWT	

2. Attending and apologies

Attending:

Kathi Bauer, South East Rivers Trust
Neil Barnes, Kent County Council (PROW)
Joseph Beale, RSPB
Andrew Bishop, Environment Agency
Ashely Cooper, Canterbury City Council
Paul Cuming, Kent County Council (Heritage)
Zoe Davies, DICE, University of Kent

Katie Fisher, Kent Wildlife Trust
Holly Francis, Environment Agency
Bridget Fox, Woodland Trust
Euan McKenzie, Kent Wildlife Trust
Liz Milne, Kent County Council (MS4N)
Alexa Murray Mujtaba, Kent County Council (MS4N)
Karen Rigby Faux, Natural England
Sophie Page, Environment Agency
Bob Smith, DICE, University of Kent
Kirsty Speed, CLM
Andrew Smith, Kent County Council (Strategic Planning)
Robbie Still, Kent Wildlife Trust
Tony Witts, Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre

Apologies:

Will Maiden, Forestry Commission
Richard Moyse, Kent Field Club
Heather Richards, RSPB
Gerry Sherwin, High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2. Introduction to the Making Space for Nature project and the role of the Data, evidence and mapping technical advisory group

MS4N provided an introduction to the project and the role of the technical advisory group. A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes. Questions were invited from the TAG.

Clarification over the two mapping tools to be developed was requested. It was noted that whilst the mapping tools will look similar they are in fact different tools, with different objectives. The nature recovery action mapping tool's purpose is to collect data – and in time can be used as a reporting and monitoring tool for the LNRS. The spatial priorities tool is a time limited project engagement tool, to allow stakeholders to inform the project of their priorities for action. This second tool will need less input. It was suggested that it would be useful to view the data collected from the nature recovery action mapping tool on when identifying spatial priorities on the other tool.

3. Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity

3.1 Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity draft map

The draft Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) map was circulated to the TAG ahead of the meeting. It was noted that the features mapped were strictly dictated by the LNRS regulations and could only include:

- Nationally designated sites.
- Local nature reserves
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Irreplaceable habitats as identified by the biodiversity net gain definition.

The TAG were asked to advise on whether:

- a) The APIB meets LNRS requirements?
- b) The map is provided in a clear and understandable manner?
- c) There is a preference for presentation?
- d) If there are any comments or queries on the mapping presented.

The following comments were noted:

- Mapping appears to be clear and intelligible.
- The colours used in the mapping are intended to be colour-blind friendly.
- Condition and management not known for all sites – do we wish to distinguish between these sites?
- A revised map will distinguish between the ancient woodland sites and plantations on ancient woodland sites (both are currently mapped but under the same colour).
- It was noted that new mapping for the ancient woodland inventory was expected to be released shortly.
- The LNRS Senior Advisor noted that Defra wanted nominated local wildlife sites (LWS) included in the APIB. There were concerns from the TAG noted about this, as promotion of a LWS before it has gone through the selection process could undermine the mapping and also result in a private landowner objecting to the APIB. It was also suggested that including such land would blur the messaging the project is currently promoting, about collaboration and involvement if sites are to be added before due process has been followed. It was agreed that these sites would not be included for the time being until further rationale for their inclusion had been received from Defra and this considered alongside implications for the LWS selection process in Kent.
- It was noted that KHS has records of Spartina and Mediterranean saltmarsh (included under irreplaceable habitat) - map to be updated with this.
- It would be useful if the layers, where overlapping, could be defined.
- It was noted that linear features are difficult to view on a county wider view. And the same applies to the ancient tree inventory. It was noted that the final LNRS mapping will be on an online interactive map with the ability to zoom in.
- In respect of this interactive map, the TAG asked what attributes would be included. It was noted that the intention was to keep it simple. The TAG were invited to suggest other layer/information that could be included.
- It was noted that the Environment Agency had previously commissioned work for the mapping of pressures and influences – it was asked how this might be used as evidence in the mapping work. It was noted that this sort of evidence will come into play when developing the tools/processes to map opportunities/spatial priorities for the Areas that could become of importance for biodiversity (APIB).

DECISION: It was agreed that the current draft APIB met the requirements of the LNRS regulations.

ACTION: NE to seek clarification on rationale of including nominated local wildlife sites in APIB.
ACTION: KWT to update APIB as per discussion.

3.2 Other areas of local significance for biodiversity

It was acknowledged that the restrictive nature of the APIB mapping means that some areas of Kent considered locally as important for biodiversity would not be included and may appear overlooked. Consequently, an informal, additional map of areas of local significance

will be created. It was noted that the project does not want people to get hung up on the map that is required by regulations, which might not be seen as fully representative – it is hoped that this additional map will avoid this and can be used to inform the strategy area description and second stage of mapping. It was noted that, arguably, these areas are better being featured on the “could become of importance” map (opportunities map) as this is where action will be targeted.

Concern was noted over the definition of irreplaceable habitats for the purposes of the APIB. Old, established grasslands are irreplaceable on the government’s timescale and some would argue that they are entirely irreplaceable. Any habitat that cannot be replaced (i.e. that cannot be recreated in its entirety, including all species present in their original abundance) within a decade or two should be regarded as functionally irreplaceable as otherwise there is potential for decades of continuing biodiversity decline, which would be contrary to the government’s stated intent. It was requested that this comment be fed back to Defra. And noted that the later stages of the mapping process should aim to find methods to address this.

ACTION: Natural England to note to Defra concerns relating to the definition of irreplaceable habitats.

The TAG were asked to comment on areas of local significance that the APIB misses:

- Wet grasslands
- Priority habitats inventory.
- – include work that Tony has done on this.
- Lot of freshwater habitats missed – e.g. headwaters, chalk rivers. Noted that SERT has been working with Tony to develop a priority habitat rivers layer that should be used for this informal map.
- Chalk streams should be included.
- River habitats associated with species. It was noted that the LNRS species work would address this to some extent.
- Agricultural land classifications – helpful to understand the land we’re looking at. The LNRS Senior Advisor noted that the forthcoming Landuse Framework will likely steer classifications and therefore the project should wait on that detail to ensure any mapping is up to date.
- Iconic habitats need to be identified.
- The Environment Agency noted that the Great Stour is a national priority for the agency. Likewise, the Darent Valley, given the landscape recovery project. Need to identify these linear features.
- It was questioned how aquifers might be identified.
- It was noted that blue features are lost amongst green. KMBRC noted that there is a wetland and water layer withing the Kent Habitat Survey that may provide the opportunity to highlight blue features.

ACTION: KWT to build draft mapping layer of areas of local significance for biodiversity, based on discussion and subsequent input from delivery group and other stakeholders.

4. Review and comment on the nature recovery action mapping tool

Prior to the meeting the mapping tool prototype and a video demonstrating its use were circulated ([LNRS Actions for Nature app prototype](#) and [Video demonstrating LNRS actions for nature app](#))

KWT demonstrated the tool in the meeting, noting the following:

- Sign off from the TAG was needed today in order to make the go live date scheduled for the end of January.
- It was noted that there would be limited opportunity to change much next time the tool is viewed – testing will be focussed on functionality rather than the questions and structure.
- Users will be able to see what's already been added – to avoid duplication and promote action that's happening.
- Actions can be site based or on a broad areas e.g. across a district or parish that aligns to an administrative boundary or broad without any boundary noted.
- Action registered on the Kent conservation landscape tool for the State of Nature in Kent work will not need to be entered again – this information will be transferred over.
- UKHab level 3 has been chosen to define habitat types in order to align with biodiversity net gain and provide a definition level that hopefully most will be able to identify.

Comments and questions were invited from the TAG; the following was noted:

- Suggested to avoid use of "organisation" and use something else that's more recognisable by all, including farmers.
- Who does the inputting where there are multiple partners involved in one action? Suggested that we include advice that it is agreed who it the point of contact for the action, and that person is responsible for the inputting.
- Action location can be done via a GIS upload – instructions etc will be included; shape file will need to be zipped.
- Should be able to export shape file from Land App into the platform.
- It was suggested that there should be an online session to for walk through on how to use the app, aimed at not only those using it but also those who will be encouraging and assisting people with inputting.
- Suggested to also have an online video showing how it works, with a voice over.
- It was noted that the app has been designed for relatively informed person, on the assumption that someone involved in a nature recovery action would understand the majority if not all the questions asked. It was also noted that the more complicated questions are optional.
- It will be made clear that people should input whatever details they can, even if its just a broad location, action title and contact. The project team can then follow up where vital details are missing. But at least this way we will be capturing action we might not of otherwise know about.
- The questions was asked whether there was a way the catchment partnerships can provide attribute tables to add in, rather than directly inputting? It was considered that making any locally held attributes table suitable format for transferring to system would like be as much if not more work than inputting to the online system.

DECISION: The TAG agreed that the prototype would enable the collation of the information needed by the project and, once queries and comments noted at the meeting had been addressed, sign off was appropriate.

ACTION: KWT to finalise the mapping tool as per TAG comments (and subsequent post meeting discussion).

Following the meeting MS4N met with KWT to discuss specific amendments to be made to action mapping tool, based on feedback from the TAG. The following was discussed and agreed:

- Training will be provided to the Land Advice Network on the use of the tool, as this network of partners will be important in securing input from farmers and landowners.
- KCC's Graduate Biodiversity Officers can provide assistance with input.
- Champions and super-users will be identified, to help those having difficulties with input.
- Guidance notes to make clear that just very basic information can be uploaded – and if a contact email is included, the project can get in touch to offer support in building on detail with the assistance of the Graduate Biodiversity Officers.
- Guidance to include video and examples/case studies, including countryside stewardship.
- The January and February LNRS priorities workshops will include action mapping "surgeries" – to note that this will be available on the workshop confirmation, so that people will bring details.
- When attending any meetings, MS4N staff to take along laptops to register projects as needed.
- Ask all partners to help with encouraging and supporting inputting.
- Amendments to include:
 - shouldn't just be project – may simply be a parcel of land.
 - not just organisation – farm/business added in (or something along these lines).
 - add in "skip this question" option for all.

5. Discuss data, evidence and mapping needs of the work

Via email the following comment on future mapping needs was received and tabled at the meeting; particularly interested in the kind of mapping or data analysis methods which can be used to capture (i) sites of SSSI or LWS quality that have not been formally designated; (ii) other sites or areas of high species diversity or high species quality; (iii) those sites or areas offering the greatest opportunities for increasing connectivity between or resilience of adjacent sites/areas/habitats of biodiversity importance.

There was not sufficient time to fully discuss the data, evidence and mapping needs for the work. It was agreed an additional meeting to those planned would be held in late January or early February to cover this item.

6. Date of next meeting and ongoing data, mapping and evidence work

Date of Meeting in late January or early February to be confirmed – meeting to cover data, evidence and mapping needs. To also revisit suggested inclusion of nominated LWS.

Following meeting to be held 14th March 2024, 10am-12pm.