



# 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

29<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 10.00am-12.00pm

### MINUTES

#### 1. Summary of actions and items agreed

##### 1.1 Items agreed

Other areas of local significance mapping to include:

- All priority habitat not just those identified by Kent Biodiversity Strategy.
- Wood pasture and parkland.
- Important plant areas (Plantlife).
- Important invertebrate areas (Buglife).
- Remove B-lines mapping.
- Split mapping into two maps –
  - habitats/species based.
  - land management based (e.g. charity nature reserves, sites in management, sites under stewardship etc).

##### 1.2 Actions

Action	Who	Status
Follow up queries with Natural England over application of Natural England's habitat network tool and if there is a recommended/standard approach to mapping tools, to enable consistency across the LNRs.	Liz Milne (KCC)	In progress
Follow up on availability of beach nesting data.	Joseph Beale (RSPB)	Complete
Ask Natural England about potential provision of mapping layer of land in stewardship.	Liz Milne (KCC)	In progress

#### 2. Attending, apologies and minutes of last meeting

##### 2.1 Attending

Paul Cuming, Kent County Council (Heritage)  
Neil Barnes, Kent County Council (PROW)

Joseph Beale, RSPB  
Andy Bishop, Environment Agency  
Katey Fisher, Kent Wildlife Trust  
Bridget Fox, Woodland Trust  
Holly Francis, Environment Agency  
Elizabeth Milne, Kent County Council (MS4N)  
Richard Moyse, Kent Field Club  
Gerry Sherwin, High Weald AONB Unit  
Andrew Smith, Kent County Council (Strategic Planning)  
Bob Smith, University of Kent (DICE)  
Robbie Still, Kent Wildlife Trust  
Anthony Weston, CLM  
Tony Witts, KMBRC

## 2.2 Apologies

Kathi Bauer, South East Rivers Trust  
Zoe Davies, University of Kent (DICE)  
Heather Richards, RSPB  
Karen Rigby Faux, Natural England  
Will Maiden, Forestry Commission

## 2.3 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the December meeting were agreed as an accurate record – there were no actions or matters outstanding.

## 3. **Data, evidence and mapping needs to inform “areas that could become of importance for biodiversity”**

Advice from Defra on mapping “areas that could become of importance for biodiversity” was shared in paper 2 and presented at the meeting, covering:

- Purpose of the maps.
- Size and location of areas.
- Things to consider when selecting locations.
- What the maps will be used for.

The following was noted in the discussion:

### 3.1 Connectivity

- KMBRC will undertake connectivity modelling – will be run on key habitats for Kent. Circuitscape has been used previously but noted that Rangeshifter is used by DICE and Condatis is pushed by NE.
- It was also asked what tools other responsible authorities are employing – is it right that different tools might be used across the country; how does this facilitate join up?
- A question was raised over whether Natural England’s habitat network tool could be applied to this work.

- Given the species focus, should mapping consider how easy species can move through landscape.
- Questioned if connectivity was over-rated? Suggested that this would be a way to select between sites - rather than identify individual sites.
- Noted that Essex LNRS is using something that is more focussed on buffering sites than connectivity.

**ACTION:** Liz Milne (KCC) to follow up queries with Natural England over application of Natural England's habitat network tool and if there is a recommended/standard approach to mapping tools, to enable consistency across the LNRSs.

### 3.2 Habitat and species

- Anything semi-natural/priority habitats – rich spots for LNRS.
- What to do in gaps – geology will play a role in determining.
- How do we get enough data in the map – species and habitat data.
- Will be using ARCH habitat survey data as baseline.
- Species habitat assemblages from species longlist work – useful layer.
- How much is already in designated spaces?
- Difficulty with some interventions – may make this more location specific e.g. wildflowers.

### 3.3 Other data to inform mapping

- Stakeholder input from the “actions for nature mapping” and the “spatial priorities mapping” tools will provide useful baseline information to develop areas.
- There is a long list of criteria to inform the mapping but not all of it can be mapped.
- It was questioned how the mapping weights between different influencing factors – is there, or should there be, a hierarchy of importance?
- Access – boundary around settlements – where investment should be made to benefit both wildlife and people. But how can access on private land be enabled?
- ACIB - what measures we want to see and where – will these be targeted to where pressure is most keenly felt?
- How much are we supposed to be delivering against national targets? Will this define our mapping and priorities?
- How likely is it for that action to take place?
- Consider feasibility and suitability separately, then bring it together?

### 3.4 Other questions/points raised

- What scale – broad enough to give options.
- Consent from landowners – if objecting land should be removed from map.
- Make sure process is documented – how we have arrived at priorities, mapping etc – and also why things are in and out.
- Where do we want to see measure for greatest gain.
- How important is the land for the LNRS – areas to be prioritised.

### 3.5 Risks/concerns over mapping

- Lack of information on ELMS and planning from government does create a void and challenges. See <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2024/01/statement-on-gov-elm-announcement/>

- Greatest gains/uplift for carbon and BNG is by focussing on low value – potentially won't align with LNRS priorities.
- Perverse incentives – devaluing land to demonstrate greatest uplifts.
- Potential for investment not to be seen where its most needed because it doesn't deliver the greatest financial gain.
- Should be driven by land-based priorities – but how do we make decisions on deliverability if we don't understand what finance/grants are available?

### 3.6 Potential mapping approach

The following mapping approach was suggested:

- Create a hierarchy of defining criteria:
  1. layer one, to choose prospective areas.
  2. layer two, to refine based on suitability...
  3. ...and potentially third layer, defined by deliverability.
- Need to add further defining criteria into process and then consider how important that criteria is to nature recovery – rate and then use this to determine where in process it sits.

## 4. Review data layers of other areas of local significance mapping

The group were reminded that the areas covered by the APIB is limited by the statutory guidance and therefore the project is developing an additional layer of "other areas of local significance" to represent existing areas in Kent that would be considered already of importance to biodiversity by many of our stakeholders. This will be used to inform the ACIB.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Include all priority habitats not just KBS priority habitats. Prioritisation and connectivity will help refine map – filter out and focus. But this "catch all" mapping layer should include all.
- Wood pasture and parkland – agree should be included. AWS and ATI and PAWS on APIB already.
- Important plant areas (Plantlife) and invertebrate areas (Buglife) to be included.
- This map will be informative for ACIB – baseline map. B-lines are more opportunity so perhaps should be removed and brought in at opportunity mapping stage.
- Ownership layer be expanded to include others. Would this layer inform feasibility and deliverability considerations? Agreed to have two maps – one that's habitat based and one that's reserves-based. Can there also be a map of land in stewardship and another indicating potential interest in environmental land management for further information for feasibility and deliverability.
- Low input grassland should be included, as this is an indicator of below ground biodiversity in soils.
- Questioned how headwaters have been distinguished from rivers.
- Is it worth showing axiophyte data as a standalone map so can see what areas were included and what weren't and cut off for these?

**DECISION:** other areas of local significance mapping to include:

- All priority habitat not just those identified by Kent Biodiversity Strategy.
- Wood pasture and parkland.
- Important plant areas (Plantlife).
- Important invertebrate areas (Buglife).

- Remove B-lines mapping.
- Split mapping into two maps –
  - habitats/species based.
  - land management based (e.g. charity nature reserves, sites in management, sites under stewardship etc).

**ACTION:** Joseph Beale (RSPB) to follow up on availability of beach nesting data.

**ACTION:** Liz Milne (KCC) to ask Natural England about potential provision of mapping layer of land in stewardship.

#### **4. Nature recovery action mapping tool**

Testing had been undertaken and was complete. KWT noted that there seems to be an issue with email verification – getting error message. Have updated email that says ignore error message – but looking to remove verification process or find another solution.

The tool will be soft launched at the MS4N workshops, with a full launch once verification issue is addressed.

#### **5. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 10am-12pm.