

# What is an ecosystems approach and how can it benefit you?

## In this Issue

Welcome to the Ecosystems Knowledge Network

An Ecosystems Approach and Local Planning

Dartmoor Farming Futures

Grow With Wyre

Holnicote Multi-objective Flood Project

## Contact

**Bruce Howard**, Network Co-ordinator

Web: [www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/ekn](http://www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/ekn)

Email: [ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk](mailto:ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk)

Phone: **+44 (0) 333 240 6990**

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## Contents

<b>Welcome to the Ecosystems Knowledge Network</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Viewpoint: Ecosystem services and the ecosystems approach.</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>UK National Ecosystem Assessment follow-on phase</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Welsh Government Green Paper: exploring a new approach to natural resource management</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Best Practice Guide for Payments for Ecosystem Services - Workshop</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Project Profile: Grow With Wyre</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Project Profile: Holnicote Multi-objective Flood Project</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Ecosystems Knowledge and Learning Forum</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>An Ecosystems Approach and Local Planning</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Dartmoor Farming Futures</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>▶</b>
<b>Next steps for the Ecosystems Knowledge Network</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>▶</b>

# Welcome to the Ecosystems Knowledge Network

By the Network Facilitators



View west from above Mickleton to Lune Moor Durham. © Natural England/Peter Wakely.

Welcome to this first issue of the Ecosystems Knowledge Network newsletter. The new Network is a resource for anyone wanting to share knowledge or learn about the practical use of an ecosystems approach. Over the next two years we hope that you will join us in developing a long-term network that delivers benefits to all of its members. The Network already includes a healthy mix of those working both 'behind the scenes' as well as 'hands-on' in safeguarding and restoring our environment for the benefit of all. By the end of these first two years, we are keen that there is a Network that serves its members well into the future.

## Background to the Ecosystems Knowledge Network

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network is part of Defra's work to champion an ecosystems approach, including its **Ecosystem Approach Action Plan**, which was last updated in 2010.

The Network builds on a number of existing initiatives designed to help demonstrate the benefits of applying an ecosystems approach in practice. This includes, for example, the **EMBED Project**, which was led by PD Dr. Marion Potschin, a member of the Ecosystems Knowledge Network Facilitation Team. EMBED identified and measured the added value to decision makers of taking an ecosystems approach.

The formation of the Network was a commitment in the 2011 HM Government **Natural Environment White Paper**, which described it as follows:

*"Run by an independent organisation, this network will involve our environmental bodies and include local projects, drawing on practical experience to share learning and good practice."*

Formation of the Network reflects the many examples around the UK of the application of an ecosystems approach to particular areas of land or marine habitat. Some of these have been running for more than a decade.

The idea of an ecosystems approach is nothing fundamentally new. Back in 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity brought together various ideas in environmental management into the 12 principles for this approach. Current attention on an ecosystems approach around the UK – including the formation of this new Network – is not about setting up new schemes or projects that use this term. Rather, it is about informing the way people go about tackling environment-related challenges. These challenges may be rooted in particular policies – such as spatial planning – or they may be focused on particular things that nature does for people (food, water or amenity). It is about ensuring that specific agendas, policies and initiatives respect the ‘bigger picture’ of how people and nature inter-relate.

The Facilitators of this new Network will support those delivering practical change ‘on the ground’ (or in the sea) at the local and regional level in how nature is managed for the benefit of all. To achieve this, the team is keen to identify opportunities to learn from past experience. Additionally, we are seeking to involve people and groups that have not yet had the opportunity to consider what an ecosystems approach might mean for them, or how to get involved in projects that are delivering change in particular places.

Recently there has been a flurry of international and national studies that provide the impetus needed to change the way we think about the state of the natural environment and our relationship with it. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment is one particularly noteworthy example (see news item on Page 8). The challenge now is to work out what the information available to us means for particular places, (behind places) and the individual circumstances of landscape areas and local communities.

### **The aims of the Ecosystems Knowledge Network are to:**

- Develop an active membership of people and organisations interested in benefiting from an ecosystems approach;
- Encourage the sharing of information and experience between projects and between experts and newcomers to the approach; and
- Engage with and involve people who might not otherwise be aware of how an ecosystems approach can benefit them.

We envisage that the Network will play a vital role in helping people to find the knowledge and skills needed to manage land, nature and marine habitats according to an ecosystems approach. This might include how to work with people who hold diverse values for how nature underpins our society and prosperity. The Network may also share learning on how to engage those parts of communities that still take nature for granted.



The Cheddar Complex Site of Special Scientific Interest Somerset. © Natural England/Peter Wakely.

Since we announced the Network in January 2012, we have been talking to over 40 individual projects around the country that are reflecting an ecosystems approach in one way or another. We have been reviewing all the ideas and feedback of those who have registered their interest in participating in the Network. There has also been an Ecosystems Knowledge and Learning Forum for projects (see Page 13). All this will inform a programme of activities that we hope will serve the members and others with a role in embedding an ecosystems approach more widely.

We will produce a newsletter like this every four months, which will provide a snapshot of what is going on within the Network. Over the next few months we will develop a website that will feature individual projects, provide links to tools and tell you what is going on around the Network.

The Network is reliant on your ideas and input. You are welcome to get involved via the web or by email ([ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk](mailto:ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk)). We are looking forward to your participation.

Daija Angeli, Rob Fish, Rosie Hails, Bruce Howard, Paul Mahony, Jonathan Porter, Marion Potschin and Roy Haines-Young

(The organisations represented by the Facilitation Team are listed on Page 1)

## Viewpoint: Ecosystem services and an ecosystems approach

By Robert Fish, University of Exeter



Marram grass and sand dunes Duddon Estuary, Cumbria. © Natural England/Paul Glendell.

As one of the Network's co-ordinating team, I am often asked, "What is an ecosystems approach and why is it important?" My immediate answer to this question is very simple. "An ecosystems approach", I say, "is a framework for managing the natural environment in a holistic and integrated way", to which it is not unusual to be met by the response, "why, isn't that what sustainable resource management has always been about? What's new?!" There's some truth to this reaction, of course. Holistic and integrated decision making is hardly a novel aspiration for those involved in environmental policy development or managing environmental projects; at least it shouldn't be! But it seems to me that an ecosystems approach distinguishes itself in a number of important ways.

First, it is no coincidence that the idea of an ecosystems approach is often used in conjunction with the concept of ecosystem services. Through this concept an ecosystems approach is provided with its own, very special, vocabulary, and indeed, it is quite common for this area of policy innovation to be described as the ecosystem services approach. Importantly, by putting the concept of ecosystem services to work, an ecosystems approach is not simply employing a new label to describe an enduring and pre-occupying concern; it is actually changing the way we make the case for nature in decision making. For me, the focus on ecosystem services is less about thinking of the natural environment as a thing (a strip of hedgerow here; a river running its course over there) but rather as a system providing different flows of social and economic benefit. The focus, in other words, is to make more explicit the many and diverse ways in which nature underpins human well-being.

Second, it is the breadth and range of the services considered in decision making that marks out the particular challenges of taking an ecosystems approach. The reasoning is that the natural environment is not only generative of fundamental benefits to human welfare – such as providing sustenance, securing livelihoods and supporting mental and physical health – but also underpins more qualitatively complex aspects of society and culture, from the spiritual and mystical functions of landscape to the building of cohesive communities. As such, a fundamental attraction of an ecosystems approach is that, through the concept of ecosystem services, it conveys human dependency on nature without being purely about managing natural resources. It is about understanding human prosperity in the wider sense of the term. And it is precisely because the framework of ecosystem services combines this idea of human prosperity with practical utility that an ecosystems approach is such a powerful starting point for environmental decision making; the framework's promise lies in the way it allows decision makers to explore these diverse benefits of nature in a standardised and systematic way.

If an ecosystems approach cannot be easily separated from the concept of ecosystem services it remains the case that many use the concept of ecosystem services without doing an ecosystems approach at all. This is because an ecosystems approach is all about the methods and mindsets decision makers and project managers adopt to incorporate ecosystem services into their work. This, then, is my third observation: an ecosystems approach is distinguished by its principles. Many have sought to define these principles, though I would emphasise three that appear particularly salient.

The first principle is understanding and revealing the different (sometimes conflicting), values people hold about these services within decision making. That is to say, an ecosystems approach is about grounding our understanding of ecosystem services in societal perspectives and preferences. The second is a concern to cultivate multiple and synergistic patterns of service delivery. An ecosystems approach is about exploring ways in which the natural environment can be harnessed and adapted for diverse, rather than singular, ends. The third and final principle is about ensuring decisions maintain nature's functions and a resilient natural environment. An ecosystems approach is, for instance, about exploring the limits and thresholds within which our choices and preferences for ecosystem services reside. Respecting these sorts of principles in decision making, and using them in concert, is what turns the mere concept of 'ecosystems services' into the altogether more complex 'ecosystems approach'. Now, I would be the first to acknowledge that all of these principles raise as many questions as they answer! But that, of course, is what this Ecosystems Knowledge Network is all about; exploring, and doing so, in practical and meaningful ways. I therefore look forward to meeting you all and learning about your experiences and insights in this area.

**Robert Fish** is a social scientist in the Department of Politics at the University of Exeter. His research focuses on understanding the emerging contours of land use policy, including applications of the ecosystem approach in rural environments. Contact: [R.D.Fish@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:R.D.Fish@exeter.ac.uk)



## UK National Ecosystem Assessment follow-on phase

### Background

Two key themes embodied in an ecosystems approach are the need to maintain ecosystem services and to ensure that their value is taken into account in decision making. If practical approaches are to be developed, however, we need clear base-line information and a better understanding of what needs to be done. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) went some way to providing the kinds of information we require. It found that of the range of services provided by the eight broad aquatic and terrestrial habitat types in the UK, over 30% were found to be declining. Many causes for these losses were identified but the most important were long-term declines in the area of these habitats and their condition. The UK NEA also provided an estimate of the value of some of these services to the UK and how these values might change in the future.

The influence and importance of the UK NEA can be seen in the England Environment White Paper and the recent Welsh Government Green Paper on the environment (see this issue). It has also been a stimulus for a major research initiative funded by Scottish Government on ecosystem services. For England and Wales, further work to follow-up and apply the lessons of the UK NEA is now also underway. The article by WCMC, below, describes the aims of this work and the opportunities for getting involved.

In 2011 the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) delivered a wealth of information on the state, value and possible future of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems across the UK. A follow-on phase will commence in early 2012 and will build on that ground-breaking work to develop and promote the arguments that the UK NEA put forward, and make them highly applicable to decision and policy making at a range of spatial scales across the UK. The research component of the follow-on phase will focus on four areas of analysis: economics, cultural ecosystem services, scenarios, and tools and resources development.

During March, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre is inviting suitably experienced individuals or teams to register an expression of interest for involvement in the research component of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment follow-on phase.

Further details on this opportunity to become part of UK NEA follow-on phase, including the research work packages, are on the UK NEA website at <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org>

Any queries should be directed to the UK NEA Secretariat at [nea@unep-wcmc.org](mailto:nea@unep-wcmc.org).

## Welsh Government Green Paper: exploring a new approach to natural resource management



Ancient Woodland, Pembrokeshire © Geraint Rowland.

The Welsh Government aims to ensure that Wales has increasingly resilient and diverse ecosystems that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits. It is seeking your views on proposed changes to the governance and delivery of the management and regulation of the environment in Wales, based on the ecosystems approach. This work will inform future Welsh Bills. At the same time, this is a challenge that will require new thinking. The Welsh Government wants to know whether there is an appetite for radical change and whether the suggested building blocks they propose are the right ones.

The consultation is open until 31 May 2012.

For more information visit:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/sustainingwales/>

## Best Practice Guide for Payments for Ecosystem Services - Workshop

**Tuesday 1st May, 10.00 - 16.00, London**

In the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper, the Government committed to publish an action plan in 2012 to expand schemes in which the provider of nature's services is paid by the beneficiaries, and to publish a best practice guide for designing such schemes. A team commissioned by Defra is now developing a Best Practice Guide for Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and a set of supporting PES case studies.

The ambition of the Guide is to facilitate and support a step change in the uptake of PES schemes in England and to capitalise on the potential that PES holds for generating additional and innovative revenue streams.

As the Best Practice Guide for PES develops, we invite input from interested parties and potential users of the guide. As such, we are holding a free workshop in London on 1st May at which delegates are invited to learn more about the developing guide and to help shape the Guide's content.

If you would like to attend the workshop, please email Heather Rogers at the Best Practice Guide for PES project team on [heather.rogers@urs.com](mailto:heather.rogers@urs.com)

## Project Profile: Grow With Wyre



A coppice workshop in Wyre Forest. © Louise Sutherland.

### **Tell us about your project and what it aims to achieve.**

The 'Grow With Wyre Landscape Partnership Scheme', along with the local community and visitors, is restoring around 72 square kilometres of unique landscape through the delivery of 18 projects. These projects encompass historic restoration of water-powered mills in the forest, improving access to the forest through new trails, improving wildlife habitats through woodland management, training local people in a wide range of traditional skills and supporting local businesses.

### **Tell us about your project area.**

The Wyre Forest's 6,500 acres is all that survives of a wood that once stretched along the Severn Valley from Worcester to Bridgnorth. The landscape consists of rolling hills, woodland, orchards and open water with picturesque valleys and is one of the largest areas of ancient semi-natural oak woodland in Britain.

### **How do you use an ecosystems approach in your work?**

We use an ecosystems approach to integrate the diverse range of individual projects that are involved in Grow With Wyre, all of which are cross-cutting in their approach. These include biodiversity projects, which involve training and supporting local businesses; historic projects, which involve working with volunteers; and access projects that integrate biodiversity needs.

### **Describe one lesson you've learned that other projects might benefit from.**

Successful integration of diverse projects to achieve an ecosystems approach requires careful and thoughtful planning, time, honest and skilful communication and willingness on the part of all partners.

For more information about Grow With Wyre visit [www.growwithwyre.org](http://www.growwithwyre.org) or email Louise Sutherland at [growwithwyre@forestry.gsi.org.uk](mailto:growwithwyre@forestry.gsi.org.uk)

## Project Profile: Holnicote Multi-objective Flood Project



Hill Road to the Holnicote Estate. © Steve Daniels <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2425606>

### **Tell us about your project and what it aims to achieve.**

The Holnicote Project is one of three national Defra Multi-objective Flood Management Demonstration Schemes. The project aims to produce firm evidence of the way in which land management can reduce flood risk at the same time as improving the wider environment. It is managed by the National Trust in partnership with the Environment Agency, Exeter University, Wessex Water and the technical consultants Penny Anderson Associates and Maslen Environmental. The project started in 2009 and will continue until 2015.

### **Tell us about your project area.**

The project is based at the National Trust's Holnicote Estate (5,042ha) within Exmoor National Park and covers the complete catchment of the Rivers Horner and Aller, from source to sea. Land management measures are being undertaken on four key areas: the upland areas at the headwaters, steep transitional valleys feeding down from the high moor, the lowland meadows and the associated agricultural landscapes. These measures aim at holding rainfall runoff in the landscape at strategic sites so that it is released more naturally into the river systems.

### **How do you use an ecosystems approach in your work?**

In addition to providing sustainable, cost-effective support to flood management, it is recognised that land management change provides the opportunity to enhance other ecosystem services such as landscape quality, biodiversity, carbon storage, soil conservation, water quality, amenity and recreation. The identification of existing ecosystem goods and services was evaluated partly through an MSc thesis (Chris Taylor, Cranfield University, 2010). Further evaluation and an exploration of future ecosystem services and benefits is being undertaken throughout the project lifespan with a final report in 2015.

### **Describe one lesson you've learned that other projects might benefit from.**

Since its inception, the project team were determined to implement a robust and sophisticated monitoring regime that would provide us with the fullest understanding of the existing catchment and, following land management changes, the ability to understand the effects of those changes over a long period. The project lifespan was originally 3 years but this would not have provided enough time to undertake the full monitoring programme and to provide adequate land use change to reduce flood risk and provide other ecosystem benefits. Further funding has been required to extend the project sufficiently in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

For more information email Nigel Hester at [nigel.hester@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:nigel.hester@nationaltrust.org.uk)

## Ecosystems Knowledge and Learning Forum

The 'buzz' of diverse projects sharing and learning together.



Learning Forum © Countryside.

On Monday, 13th February 2012 over 40 representatives of projects from all over the UK assembled in Birmingham for the first event of the Ecosystems Knowledge Network. The purpose of this Ecosystems Knowledge and Learning Forum was to help inform the activities of the Network as well as provide opportunities for projects to build connections with each other and exchange ideas.

While the projects represented at the event are working in diverse settings – urban and rural, marine and terrestrial, upland and lowland – the common factor is that they are reflecting an ecosystems approach in their work 'on the ground'. They are all working in partnership with others and leading the way in taking a holistic approach to managing the places they are operating in and bringing together diverse agendas. There was a real 'buzz' among participants, eager to share their experience with others.

The morning started with an introduction to the aims and objectives of the Ecosystems Knowledge Network. Elements of building a network for knowledge exchange and learning about an ecosystems approach were outlined so that all participants started from a common understanding of what the Network will do and how.



Learning Forum. © Countryside.

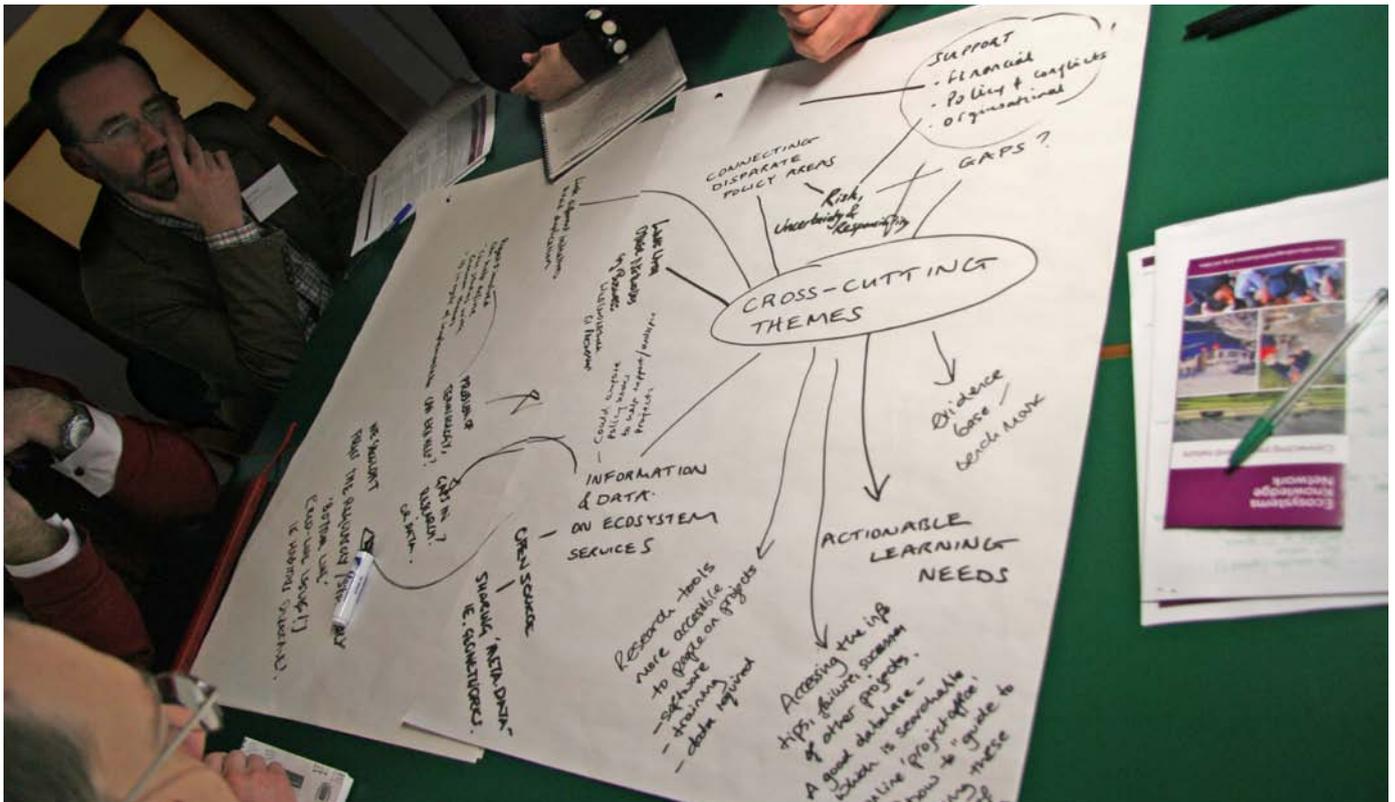
In preparation for the event, the Network project team had spoken individually to all participants. This helped to identify the following general Network themes, which were believed to be important by the projects themselves:

- Developing a holistic understanding of ecosystems and their benefits.
- Recognising diverse values for ecosystem services in decision making.
- Building partnerships for change.

Additionally there were a number of cross-cutting themes, including the understanding of connection between different policy areas and an ecosystems approach.

In the first discussion session at the Forum, participants moved in groups from table to table to discuss all four themes and elaborate on them. They explored what issues and research questions the Network should consider in order to encourage learning, sharing and innovation within these themes, and how to form these areas of learning in a meaningful way to develop activities. Mind-maps were used to keep track of suggestions, questions and ideas.

The outcome was a summary of refined themes and new topics that people would like to know more about. Participants then voted using hand-held voting devices on what they felt were the most important learning areas within each of the four general Network themes. They identified “Community based approaches to ecosystem services mapping”, “Conflict management around diverse values”, “Incentivising behavioural change: markets and payments for ecosystem services” and “Exploring how an ecosystems approach can link different policy areas”.



Learning Forum participants record ideas using mind maps. © Countryside.

Participants were then encouraged to turn their attention to brainstorming specific activities that the Network will undertake in the coming year. Ideas included:

- Themed papers, for example on the barriers to using an ecosystems approach, drawing on experience from projects involved in the Network.
- Briefing papers on specific policy themes or areas.
- A searchable, web-based database of projects and their expertise around learning areas.
- Mentoring and partnering between projects to share ideas and discuss burning issues like conflict management.

It was suggested that the Network has a role in making information available on different levels – from introductory to expert – and that information should be made available in a variety of formats, including not just written materials but also videos and podcasts.

The Network project team is now reviewing all of the points made by participants during the Forum, with a view to initiating the Network's first set of activities. Many new and unanticipated ideas were generated by the Forum. A report on the event will be posted on the Network's website.

The projects represented at the Forum are working alongside many others that are exploring new ways of managing land, coastline and marine habitat in accordance with an ecosystems approach. The Network is keen to talk to all projects so that activities can be designed for the benefit of all. If you have ideas on specific activities that will be of benefit to projects that are reflecting an ecosystems approach, or would involve new people and types of organisations, please get in touch with the project team. E-mail: [ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk](mailto:ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk) EKN Direct line: **0333 240 6990**

## An Ecosystems Approach and Local Planning

Mark Fessey of URS tells Ecosystems News about a study that aimed to develop ecosystems services communication tools to engage local people in land use planning.



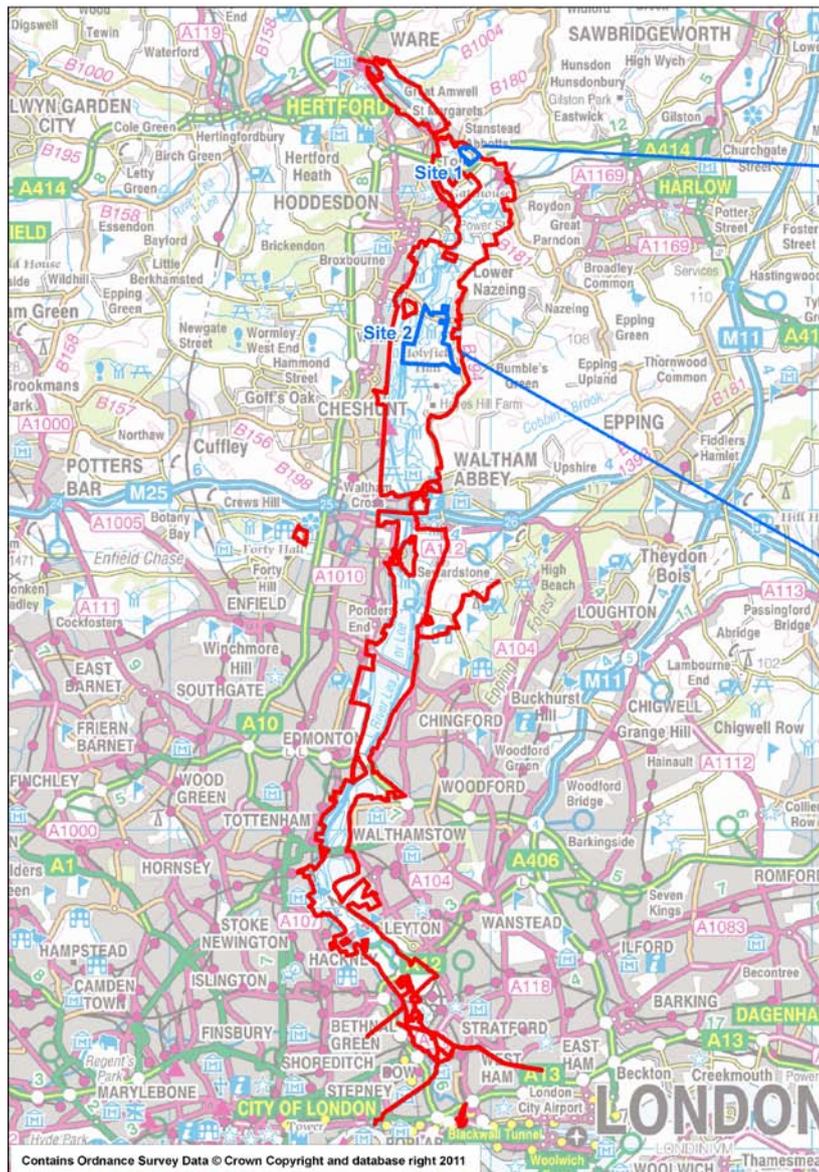
Waltham Abbey Gardens at Waltham Abbey, Essex, part of the 10,000 acre Lee Valley Regional Park. © Lee Valley Regional Park.

A study undertaken between October 2010 and May 2011 sought to test how an ecosystems approach can facilitate public dialogue on land use and the natural environment. The intention was to ensure that non-specialists are better able to contribute to effective spatial planning in their local area.

A three step methodological approach was followed:

1. Desk-based drafting of an initial list of key ecosystem services specific to the Lee Valley Regional Park, which extends from Hertfordshire, through Essex, to the Thames in London;
2. Refining the list of key services at a workshop attended by local environmental specialists;
3. Encouraging / supporting non-specialist participants at focus groups to use the lists as a methodological framework for appraising alternative land use options for local areas of open space.

Focus group participants were recruited that were either associated with a local interest group (e.g. Parish Councillors) or were local residents that would probably know of, and have views on, the sites.



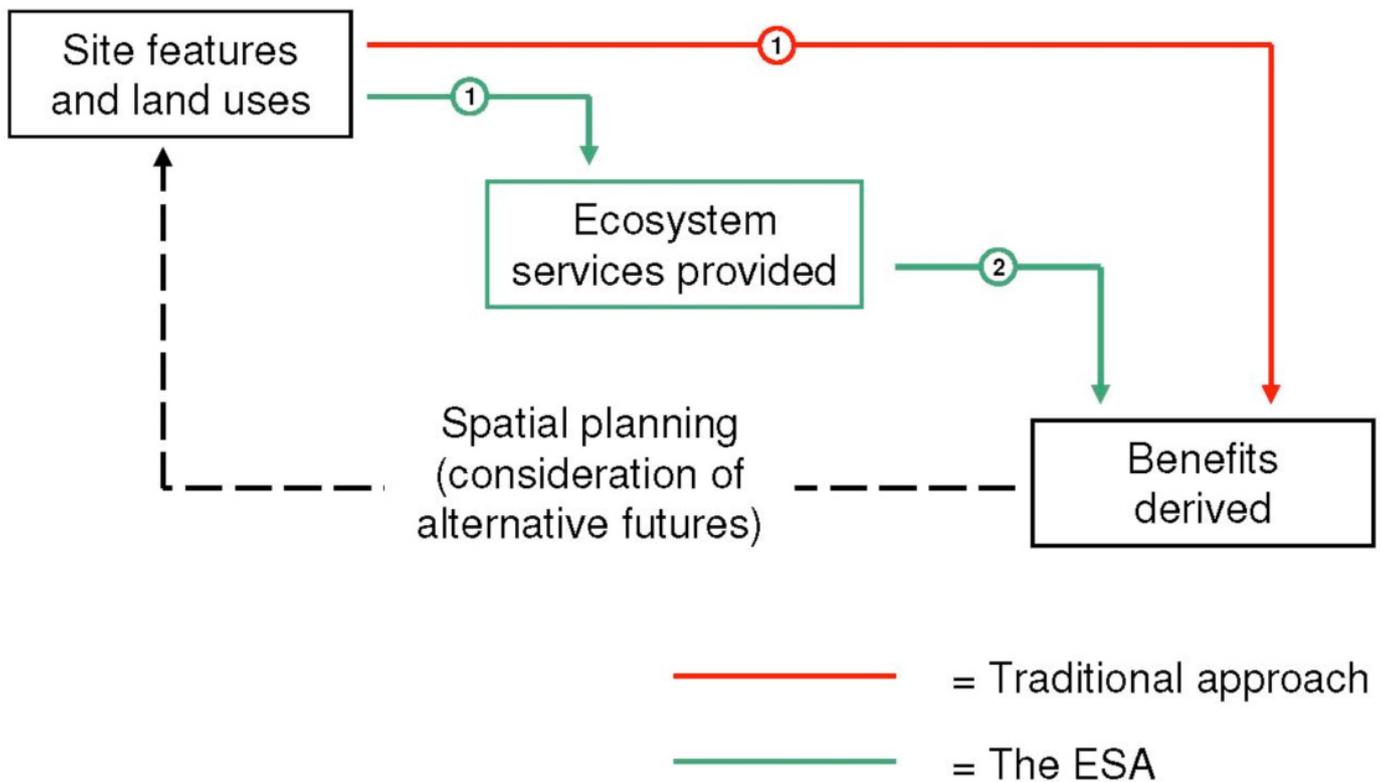
Northern case-study area.  
© 'URS Infrastructure and Environment'



Southern case-study area.  
© 'URS Infrastructure and Environment'

Case study sites within the Lee Valley Regional Park. © URS Infrastructure and Environment.

Participants were firstly asked to think about the sites not just in terms of 'features and uses', but also in terms of the 'benefits' that are derived – and could potentially be derived – from the site. It was then explained that, in order to facilitate 'making the links' between 'features and uses' on the one hand, and 'benefits derived' on the other, participants would be taking an the 'intermediate step' of considering the 'ecosystem services provided'. It was explained that such an approach was increasingly encouraged by Government under the banner of an ecosystems approach.



Simple conceptual view of an ecosystems approach (ESA) presented to the focus groups.

Stakeholders were first asked to think about the ecosystem services baseline by sorting 29 flashcards (one for each ecosystem service in the specialist derived list) into piles according to whether they felt each was 1) currently provided 2) not currently provided or 3) unsure. Specialist input was limited to points of clarification.

Feeding-back on the exercise, it was disclosed that there are four broader categories of ecosystem services and that the flashcards were colour-coded as such. The participant findings were examined to explore any bias towards particular broad categories. It was explained, briefly, why certain categories tend to be overlooked or under-valued (e.g. regulating services). After this point, no further specialist input was given.



Example ecosystem service flashcards. © URS Infrastructure and Environment.

The final exercise involved participants exploring the merits of two alternative land use scenarios in terms of ecosystem services. A proforma was provided to structure thought and discussion, but no specialist input was given by the facilitators, i.e. we sought to ensure that we did not impose our understanding of what particular services might mean (in terms of benefits) in the context of the scenarios.

An exit questionnaire showed strong agreement with the following statements:

- The approach made me think differently about the site.
- This process has helped me to think about the best future use of the site.
- The approach could help me to communicate my views and get involved in land use planning.
- The approach could help to ensure that the true value of different land uses to local communities is more fully reflected in planning decisions.
- The approach could help to ensure that land use planning decisions reflect environmental concerns and longer term sustainability issues (e.g. climate change).
- The Lee Valley Regional Park should integrate an ecosystems approach into its land use planning.
- A more in-depth training session would be required before being able to apply the approach to a real life land use planning situation.

The following statement received a mixed response:

- It is possible to understand the language and the concept relatively quickly.

The key conclusion was that the methodology – i.e. providing non-specialist stakeholders with a relatively simple ecosystem services ‘framework’, and very little further specialist support – allowed for a broader consideration of the value of ecosystem services than might have been expected otherwise, but not necessarily a deeper consideration. In particular, it was not possible to conclude that enhanced consideration was given to the value of ecosystem services to less obvious beneficiaries, i.e. themselves in the future, communities of interest of which they are less directly a part or future generations. The key recommendation was that there is a need to ‘go further’ in terms of the provision of specialist inputs to local level planning, but not go ‘too far’ (i.e. don’t turn up and tell people what’s important about their local green space and what its worth).

### **Research commissioned by Sustainability East as part of their work on valuing ecosystem services in the East of England.**

For further information, contact Mark Fessey [mark.fessey@urs.com](mailto:mark.fessey@urs.com)

[http://www.sustainabilityeast.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=112&Itemid=57](http://www.sustainabilityeast.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112&Itemid=57)

## Dartmoor Farming Futures

John Walden of Dartmoor Farming Futures tells Ecosystems News about an initiative to improve agri-environment delivery on common land and to reflect a wider range of ecosystem services.



Haytor Rocks part of Haytor Common. © John Walden.

With its origins in the Dartmoor Vision, Dartmoor Farming Futures was proposed by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council. In 2010, having gained Natural England's consent, two groups were encouraged to design a new scheme suitable for common land; land of a quality that made it eligible for a higher level scheme. That quality, in practice, meant it contained an array of public goods and ecosystem services, such as carbon stored in the peat, high quantity and quality water, internationally important archaeology, biodiversity and public access.

The scheme designed by the two groups shared a number of basic principles and soon evolved into one proposal. The new design is predicated on a set of agreed outcomes and the removal of land management prescriptions. The outcomes reflect the range of public goods and services that are present on the common and especially those that can be enhanced or protected by land management. Guided by the Dartmoor Vision, the commoners identified the relevant assets and then offered a set of outcomes which they will endeavour to deliver in return for funding.



Extensive blanket bog on Forest Common. © John Waldon.

Towards the end of 2011, Natural England provided sufficient encouragement and funding for two pilot projects to start. In 2012 one of the pilot commons has agreed a set of outcomes with Dartmoor National Park Authority and Natural England and is reviewing its land management regimes (stocking and swaling in particular) to ensure that these will deliver the outcomes. This process encourages the farmers to use their experience and knowledge to provide a grazing regime suitable to local conditions and traditions, whilst still delivering requirements arising from designations and other ecosystem services.

The second pilot project is due to start in April 2012. In advance of that date the commoners have created a working group to compile a list of draft outcomes and intend to enter a consultation with Natural England and other agencies to refine this draft. The final outcomes should be available prior to the start date. A monitoring schedule will then be produced.

For more information about this project email John Waldon at [john.waldon@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:john.waldon@eclipse.co.uk) or visit <http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-landmanagement/dartmoor-farming-futures>

## Next steps for the Ecosystems Knowledge Network

Over the coming months you will be hearing more from us as we begin the process of initiating activities for shared learning about the many dimensions of taking an ecosystems approach. These opportunities will be a mix of face to face activities, such as workshops and field visits and electronic activities, such as webinars, through a dedicated Network website.

### Network activities - we welcome your suggestions

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network facilitators can provide practical and financial assistance for activities on taking ecosystems approach at a practical, place-based level. We encourage you to contact us with your ideas. Our recent Ecosystems Knowledge and Learning Forum allowed us to draw many important conclusions about the types of activities members would like the Network to explore. We invite suggestions on the following themes in particular:

- **Demystifying concepts and terminologies** - understanding better the different concepts and terminologies that relate to an ecosystems approach.
- **Linking policy areas through an ecosystems approach** - exploring how an ecosystems approach can underpin work in related areas of policy and practice
- **Classifying ecosystem services** - investigating ways of categorising ecosystem services within decision making.
- **Building a data infrastructure** - exploring data sets available to inform an ecosystems approach to decision making.
- **Working with uncertain data** - considering problems of extrapolation, generalisation and inference from data sets relating to an ecosystems approach.
- **Partnership working** - Exploring and consolidating principles of good partnership working when taking an ecosystems approach to decision making.
- **Measuring and mapping ecosystem services** - examining techniques to map stocks and flows of ecosystem services and represent the values and visions of different actors/groups.
- **Valuing ecosystem services** - experimenting with techniques for conducting monetary and non monetary valuation of ecosystem services within decision making and ways of communicating this information.
- **Distributional impacts** - understanding better how different groups benefit/lose from decisions that impact on ecosystem services.

### Nominate a 'Sector Champion'

As the Ecosystems Knowledge Network grows we will also be developing activities to engage sectors and professional groups that have not yet readily engaged with an ecosystems approach but whose work impacts, or is relevant to, the way the approach is embedded in decision making. We are looking to recruit Sector Champions who will be able to foster and stimulate discussions among these wider

organisations and groups. Examples might be the planning, transport and construction sectors. We believe that this ambassadorial role is best achieved by recruiting people from the relevant sectors so that they can communicate more effectively with their peers.

Becoming a sector champion would involve speaking at relevant local and national meetings, assisting in the preparation of articles and other briefing materials designed to address issues relevant to particular sectors, and providing advice about how new partnerships can be built and become strengthened. If you interested in finding out more about being a Sector Champion please contact us.

All enquiries and suggestions should be made in the first instance to Daija Angeli on 0333 240 6990 or at [ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk](mailto:ekn@naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk)