

**North Yorkshire County Council**

**Transport, Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**23 January 2018**

**Update on the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership**

**Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services**

<p><b>1.0 Purpose of Report</b></p> <p>1.1 To update on the activities of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership.</p>
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**2.0 Background**

2.1 The North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is one of 48 partnerships in England that obtained approved LNP status by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in July 2012. LNPs are a Government initiative to change how we work on the natural environment and were one of the key proposals made in the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper.

2.2 The LNP's vision is to see the natural environment of North Yorkshire and York conserved, enhanced and connected across the whole LNP area for the benefit of wildlife, people and the economy. The LNP covers the county of North Yorkshire and the City of York, excluding the Yorkshire Dales National Park Nidderdale AONB, which are both part of the neighbouring Northern Upland Chain LNP.

2.3 The LNP has published a strategy outlining how it will deliver the above vision. This includes:

- Creating a single voice for nature across the LNP area
- Encouraging groups to work together at landscape scale
- Ensuring more coordinated and resource efficient delivery
- Sharing best practice between projects
- Striving towards better cross-sector integration
- Providing stronger proposals to potential funders
- Providing stronger engagement on strategic planning matters

This work will be done under four key inter-connected themes: Nature; Economy; People and Communities; Climate Change.

2.4 More information regarding the strategy can be found at [www.nypartnerships.org.uk/lnp](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/lnp).

2.5 The LNP has made strong links with the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership (YNYER LEP) and the Health and Wellbeing Board, recognising shared priorities and the value the natural environment can bring to economic growth and healthier communities. Senior officers from both these partnerships sit on the LNP Board. Other Board members represent rural business and community sectors and other local planning authorities.

### **3.0 Current and Upcoming Policies Relevant to the Natural Environment**

- 3.1 The Government has published two important documents on the future direction of economic growth, the Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy. Both of these include references to considering and investing in the natural environment as part of this proposed economic activity, via the natural capital approach. The LNP provided comments on these two strategies and is in the process of developing a natural capital investment framework (see 5.3.1 below).
- 3.2 In early 2018 Defra will publish the 25 Year Environment Plan, a cross departmental document. The plan will cover food and farming as well as bio diversity within it and will be the government's key strategy document tackling anticipated environmental challenges and influencing investment decisions. This also has the concept of natural capital embedded throughout the document. The LNP is already involved in discussions with Defra in shaping this plan via the national LNP network, and understand its impact on the local rural economy.
- 3.3 In response to the Government's new strategies, LEPs are in the process of developing local Industrial Strategies and Energy Strategies. The LNP is already in conversations with the YNYER LEP on how it can support the industrial strategy and build concepts like natural capital in at an early stage.
- 3.4 Last year the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board published their Mental Health Strategy and their Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy. The LNP has been invited to join a Healthy Weight Healthy Lives steering group, and is working to determine how it can support mental health priorities via the Public Health representative on the LNP Board.

### **4.0 Current Resource for the Partnership**

- 4.1 Since September 2016 the North Yorkshire and York LNP combined resources with the neighbouring Hull and East Yorkshire LNP to create a joint LNP Development Officer. Both LNPs had been without a dedicated officer and appreciated the need for such a post to help deliver the aspirations of the two LNPs. The Officer is employed by East Riding of Yorkshire Council, but his time is split evenly between the two LNPs, and is based at County Hall, Northallerton when working on the North Yorkshire and York LNP.
- 4.2 Funding for the two year contract has come from North Yorkshire County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North York Moors National Park Authority and the Howardian Hills AONB Team. Financial contributions towards a further two years of LNP officer support has been agreed by all the YNYER LEP area Directors of Development to develop a natural capital framework for the region.

### **5.0 Partnership Highlights of the Last Year**

- 5.1 Since September 2016, the LNP has demonstrated its effectiveness via a range of activities from strategic planning and policy development to project development and successful funding bids, including:
- Successful application to a Defra LNP Grant, one of only 8 LNPs and the only one in Yorkshire. This was foster better working relationships with the LEP and identify environmental projects that support economic growth.
  - Successful application to Natural England's Innovation Fund to explore the use of vegetation from road verges and other semi-natural habitats in the local renewable energy sector.

- Delivered two successful workshops with the LEP and other partners mapping how current and future environmental activities support economic resilience and productivity across North Yorkshire.
- HLF Funding Opportunities Mapping to assist external funding applications.
- Environmental representative for the YNYER LEP ESIF committee.
- Support from the Directors of Development and LEP for a natural capital investment Framework
- Involvement in the Pathways to Health Project on the Scarborough and Selby Trails.
- Co-hosting of three Dales to Vales River Network workshops to develop river catchment management plans for the Swale, Ure, Ouse and Foss.
- Running of environment workshop at the North Yorkshire Partnerships Conference.

5.2 More information on some of the above activities can be seen below in Item 6.

## **6.0 Current Partnership Activities**

6.1 North Yorkshire has a very complex environmental partnership landscape, with three LNPs, six catchment partnerships, a waterways partnership, a coastal partnership, as well as biodiversity partnerships, landscape partnerships and other local environmental partnerships. In 2017 the LNP successfully bid for Defra funding with the neighbouring Hull and East Yorkshire LNP to address how these partnerships can create better communications to maximise activity and reduce competition, and explore with the YNYER LEP how environmental projects can support economic growth. A report from this workshop was presented to the LEP Board in September and was very positively received. The report focused on four key opportunities, with examples included under each area:

### 6.2 Enhancing the economic value of our natural assets and supporting tourism

Natural capital is the environmental assets from which we derive a wide range of benefits. Some businesses are underpinned by the environment and can invest in natural capital to strengthen their business e.g. Yorkshire Water reducing water cleaning costs via upstream land management.

6.2.1 The North Yorkshire & York LNP and Hull & East Yorkshire LNP are working together on a natural capital investment framework across the 13 local authorities of North and East Yorkshire, including East Riding and Hull, to identify where natural assets need to be considered or enhanced in order to strengthen economic growth priorities. This approach has strong support from the Directors of Development across North and East Yorkshire and we are now moving forward the development of this framework and the supporting data evidence.

6.2.2 A recent workshop explored the benefits such a framework could provide in relation to planning, economic development and land management, and will help form the business case. We are also keen to develop a strategic approach with the LEP to biodiversity compensation in planning to produce 'no net loss' to biodiversity for local authorities to adopt across the LEP area. This would facilitate development and improve ecological 'infrastructure'.

6.2.3 Nature Tourism is a sector that can develop to bring in tens of millions of pounds of income to the area. The Yorkshire brand draws strongly on nature as a tourist draw but provides limited information on what to see and do. The Yorkshire Nature Triangle is a strong foundation for the area, but only covers East Yorkshire, and more could be done on the ground for businesses and wildlife in North Yorkshire. There are numerous wildlife hotspots that can be promoted with additional investment linking to lesser known sites and businesses in the wider landscapes to make the wider areas a destination and extend the tourist season. There are links to the health agenda by linking with outdoor sports and enhancing existing footpaths and cycling networks.

### 6.3 Improving Farm Profitability & Supply Chains

The long-term sustainability of upland and lowland farms is vital for our rural economy and the environment. The LNPs and catchment partnerships are keen to work with the supply chains of global businesses in the region to support the farms supplying goods, to help identify environmental measures that increase farm efficiency and soil health, reduce pollution issues and reduce costs, e.g. catchment sensitive farming, natural flood management.

6.3.1 After a workshop on natural capital organised by North Yorkshire and York LNP and Hull and East Yorkshire LNP, the YNYER LEP and the LNPs have been liaising with Nestlé and 3Keel Consultancy to explore expanding a project called “Landscape Enterprise Networks” into North and East Yorkshire. This approach allows large businesses such as Nestlé identify what local natural assets their business is reliant upon or impacts upon, and what investments within their local landscape are required to make their business more resilient and profitable.

### 6.4 Flood alleviation

Reduction in flood intensities and extent is critical to business confidence and productivity, as well as the health and wellbeing of the workforce. Natural flood measures (NFM and as seen for example in the ‘Slow the Flow’ project at Pickering are a key component of this, as they can provide multiple benefits beyond flood alleviation often at a much reduced cost to traditional flood schemes. The catchment partnerships are exploring these opportunities across the county; the LNP is keen to support this activity, link in with the LEP’s aspirations for the area and explore how businesses can get directly involved in reducing flood impacts on their business e.g. direct investment into NFM, retrofitting sustainable drainage systems on their sites.

6.4.1 The LNP is in early discussions with the YNYER LEP on developing e-guidance for businesses on flood resilience and how they can link in with local environmental activity that reduces the impact of flooding.

### 6.5 Diversification, Bio-economy & Innovation

North Yorkshire & York LNP and Hull & East Yorkshire LNP are looking at how the biomass economy could provide a sustainable market for grassland products that are at risk of losing their traditional markets (hay cropping and grazing). Creating a new market would lead to greater resilience across the pilot areas in the Yorkshire Wolds and Lower Derwent Valley landscapes. Anaerobic digestion (AD) is suited to use grass cuttings as a feedstock for energy generation and compost as an end product, but has not been considered in our area.

6.5.1 This work is building on the recent Lincolnshire road verge biomass project which demonstrated that a 6000 tonne capacity AD plant receiving 75% feedstock from verges within a 25 kilometre radius provided an estimated income of £350,000 per annum.

6.5.2 The LNPs are keen to develop an AD business-led project to demonstrate the financial benefit of road verge and meadow vegetation to local businesses. They have successfully bid for £10,000 for a Natural England Innovation Fund to progress a feasibility study for this project in 2018.

6.5.3 This work is supported by the YNYER LEP and will feed into their developing Energy Strategy.

#### 6.6 Nature and Health

Beyond the positive impacts for people that the above projects will deliver, the LNP is also working with Public Health colleagues on three projects directly linking the benefits of access to nature on health and wellbeing:

- Developing a workshop with Dementia Adventure on how to create more dementia-friendly outdoor environments with outdoor activity providers and green space managers;
- Enhance public footpaths around Selby and Scarborough for nature to increase the enjoyment and involvement of local communities, to increase the interest in walking and getting physically active. This is to support the recently launched Selby Trails and Scarborough Trails;
- Explore social horticulture with Next Steps, a mental health charity based in Norton, by Next Steps clients growing nationally rare cornfield flowers on their allotments and public spaces in Ryedale, and linking with farms in the district providing the seeds.

#### 6.7 Future Direction

It is planned to continue to develop further delivery in line with the LNP strategy, priorities given by the LNP Board and central government direction.

### **7.0 Recommendation**

7.1 That the Transport, Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the update on the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership and continue to support this partnership.

DAVID BOWE

Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

Authors of Report: Liz Small (Heritage Services Manager)  
Matt Millington (Local Nature Partnership Development Officer)

Background documents: None