

North Yorkshire County Council

Transport, Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 July 2019

Update on the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership

Report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update on the activities of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership since January 2018.

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 and Forest of Bowland and Nidderdale AONBs, which are part of the neighbouring Northern Upland Chain LNP.
- 2.3 More information regarding the strategy can be found at www.nypartnerships.org.uk/lnp.
- 2.4 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, environment charities and other local planning authorities.

3.0 Current and Upcoming Policies Relevant to the Natural Environment

- 3.1 In January 2018 Defra published the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. The plan aims to deliver cleaner air and water in cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first. The plan has the concept of natural capital embedded throughout the document, which is described as a world first.
- 3.2 In response to the Government's 2018 LEP review, the YNYER LEP could merge with the Leeds City Region LEP to create a new LEP covering North and West Yorkshire. The LNP will support any emerging joint plans as the area develops its local industrial strategy, to determine how investment in the natural environment can support economic growth. The LNP has already worked with the YNYER LEP in

developing its energy strategy, and to support the development of their circular economy strategy, which has natural capital as a key element within it.

4.0 Current Partnership Activities

4.1 A report in January 2018 to the Committee outlined the range of projects and activities carried out by the LNP since 2016. In the last year the LNP has continued to develop a series of these, which are outlined below:

4.2 Enhancing the economic value of our natural assets

Natural capital refers to the environmental assets from which we derive a wide range of benefits, including food, energy, clean air, clean water, recreation and protection from hazards.

4.2.1 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 York, North Yorkshire, 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.

4.2.2 The LNPs listed above commissioned AECOM to carry out a natural capital data assessment for our region, which had three main aims:

- Evaluate the range of natural capital data sets, data products, tools and data sources linked that underpin the 10 goals in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, and understand the quality and availability of such data at a local level;
- Explore with a wide range of stakeholders across North and East Yorkshire how they currently use such data, whether having better access and interpretation of such data would make their work more efficient, and whether a natural capital data hub to access such a wide range of data would be beneficial;
- Explore a range of natural capital data hub models, to understand if a hub concept is feasible and would be useful to the range of sectors the LNPs have been working with, e.g. planning, economic development, environmental partnerships, public health teams.

4.2.3 The report was completed at the end of March, and was presented to the Directors of Development in May. The report highlighted issues with local data that will be a key next step in progressing any natural capital activity. The LNPs are also in discussion with Natural England and Defra nationally to determine how our proposed local activities may be impacted by national projects and policies, such as development of 25 Year Environment Plan metrics, and biodiversity net gain policy, and share our process with them.

4.2.3 The report recommended developing a natural capital asset register, to understand what our natural assets are, what benefits are being derived from them, what condition they are in, and what investment is required that would lead to further benefits to our health and economic growth. The YNYER LEP has agreed to pay for this register, as it will form a key evidence base for their Local Industrial Strategy.

4.3 Improving Farm Profitability, Supply Chains and Tourism

3Keel Consultancy was commissioned by the YNYER LEP, the North Yorkshire and York LNP, Hull and East Yorkshire LNP, Nestlé and the Woodland Trust to explore expanding a project called "Landscape Enterprise Networks" into North and East

Yorkshire. This approach allows large businesses such as Nestlé to 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.

4.3.1 3Keel explored the concept for this region via two pilots, one covering the supply chains reliant upon the agriculture of East Riding, and one focusing on the work of the National Trust and partners in the Skell Valley and Ripon. This second pilot builds upon an existing lottery funded project to reduce sedimentation issues that are costing the National Trust millions of pounds to manage Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, impacting on their resources to grow tourism in the area.

4.3.2 A workshop was organized by 3Keel in March 2019 to explore the opportunities in these two areas with economic and environmental representatives, to identify key issues to focus on and investment opportunities. A final report with recommendations has been completed, and the project partners are currently exploring next steps to developing business links.

4.4 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.

4.4.1 The LNPs commissioned Peakhill Associates to carry out a feasibility study exploring the potential of growing such a market in the Wolds and Lower Derwent Valley, which demonstrated that it was economically viable for farmers, landowners and AD companies to incorporate more locally available biomass as AD feedstocks. A workshop took place in May, which presented the findings of the study to a range of stakeholders and explore how to progress the findings locally. The report is available to share, and next steps are being explored by the LNP.

4.4.2 There is crossover with the previous item, as the LNP, YNYER LEP and Nestle are exploring whether this concept could be developed into a LEPs project. This work is supported will also feed into the LEP's Energy Strategy and their developing circular economy work.

4.5 Discoveries on your Doorstep

Beyond the positive impacts for people that the above projects will deliver, the LNP is also working with Public Health colleagues to continue the development of the successful Discoveries on Your Doorstep initiative into new market towns. Following development of the Selby and Scarborough Trails, the LNP and Public Health Team has created a new project officer post to deliver the initiative in Ripon. This project will explore how better use of the footpaths and green corridors through the town can improve people's health and wellbeing whilst reducing air pollution issues in the town.

4.5.1 This project will also revisit the Selby and Scarborough Trails to determine how to sustain the positive work carried out over the last few years.

4.6 Nature and Mental Health

The LNP and Next Steps, a mental health charity based in Norton, were successful in October 2018 in a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for £33,000. Next Steps will work with

its clients over the next three years to grow nationally rare cornfield flowers on their allotments and public spaces in Ryedale, and linking with farms in the district providing the seeds.

5.0 Future Direction

- 5.1 The range of projects outlined in this report support the local delivery of the government's ambitions within the 25 Year Environment Plan. The LNP will continue to liaise with government agencies such as Defra to keep us in a strong position for any national pilots or opportunities.
- 5.2 The LNP will work closely with the YNYER LEP as it progresses merger proposals with Leeds City Region LEP to explore the role of the environment in their joint vision and priorities for the economies of North and West Yorkshire.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 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