**Sussex Local Nature Partnership**

**Project Overview, December 2020**

Project: Publicly owned green spaces: a methodology for understanding natural capital, social and health and wellbeing value

1. Aim and background

The aim of this project is to work with local authorities and town/parish councils in Sussex to develop a suite of methodologies for developing the potential of green and open spaces in public ownership to deliver benefits for nature and people - thus increasing their relevance across a range of public sector objectives including climate change, health and wellbeing, biodiversity and environmental quality.

The project evolved from a vision for its parks articulated by Adur and Worthing Councils and has been developed further by the Sussex Local Nature Partnership and South Downs National Park Authority, Adur and Worthing Councils and Wealden District Council.

Funding has been contributed by East Sussex County Council (Public Health) and South Downs National Park Authority (Landscape and Biodiversity). Significant time in kind will be contributed by Adur and Worthing Councils, Wealden District Council and Sussex Local Nature Partnership. Sussex Wildlife Trust and the University of Sussex may also provide in-kind contributions of staff and student time to the project at key points.

1. Problem Statement

The local authorities, town and parish councils across Sussex, own and manage an extensive portfolio of green and open spaces. These spaces range from historic urban parks, gardens and playing fields in towns and villages - to lengths of beach and foreshore, areas of countryside and woodland. They are located within large urban conurbations, smaller towns and rural villages.

Management of these areas is often ‘traditional’ - based on a limited number of objectives, such as provision of ‘amenity’ space for recreation - and in many cases management and investment in improvements is not based on an analysis or understanding of the wider values of these spaces and what they provide for the environment, local economy, user groups and adjacent communities.

These spaces are thus underperforming against a range of wider ‘natural capital’, social and health factors. With greater understanding and targeted investment, they thus have the potential to be valuable natural assets, making a valuable contribution to both people and nature in the following sorts of ways:

* The recovery of nature both locally and at a wider scale as part of ‘nature recovery networks’ across Sussex
* Greater connection to nature and natural greenspaces within local communities - with spaces designed and targeted to local community health and well-being needs
* Carbon storage and improved air quality - through new habitat creation
* Support for pollinators through suitably created and managed habitats
* Where feasible, greater resilience to flooding in flood-prone areas

Current barriers to achieving this include:

* Little/no spatial mapping of the green spaces - and their wider connection to other habitats
* little/no biological survey information of species and habitats found in these spaces
* poor understanding of how spaces are used and valued by local people
* little information on local health needs/issues and how parks and greenspaces could play a role in addressing these
* limited skills and confidence within existing management staff and/or local communities to develop a wider and more ambitious approach to the management of each space
1. What will this project do?

This project will focus on two local authorities in Sussex (Adur & Worthing Councils in West Sussex and Wealden District Council in East Sussex).

It will work on four greenspaces within each local authority, selected from across different types of greenspace and community contexts. For each of these case studies it will gather a project team to assess the natural capital of the site and the benefits it provides, and will engage with local people to identify how it is used and the range of social, cultural and health related benefit it delivers.

The project team will then work with local people create broad, new visions for the future of each greenspace and identify a range of possible project ideas which can be taken forward by the local authorities in future work. These will focus on improving the benefits delivered by each greenspace at both the **site level** and the **broader strategic level** - whether that is as part of local strategies for nature, health, carbon storage or air quality (for example).

The case study experience across the eight sites will be used to develop a suite of methodologies and tools for use by other local authorities and town/parish councils for understanding and ‘re-visioning’ greenspaces in their care in order to deliver a wide range of benefits. These outputs can be ‘rolled out’ across Sussex and further afield in later phases of this work (note - this element is not within the parameters of this project).

The project will work with local authority parks/ranger staff, town/parish representatives and representatives of the local communities across the case study sites to both build skills/knowledge in this group - and to ‘co-develop’ the methodologies. This will enable the project team to identify any skills gaps within relevant local authority/council departments and propose approaches to training and development required in order to support the future management of publicly owned greenspaces.

Learning from the project will be shared widely as it progresses via a range of media/approaches and a final project event will present the final outputs to a range of interested stakeholders.

1. Project Objectives, outcomes and outputs

The project will deliver the following objectives, outcomes and outputs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective** | **Outcome** |
| Identify how the natural capital of public green spaces can be improved and better connected to broader strategic functioning ecosystems  | Public open space is valued for a range of ecosystem services and natural capital assets |
| Consider a range of site typologies to identify how to Increase biodiversity in public open space and it’s connectivity beyond the boundary. | Biodiversity is increased in publicly owned green spaces and connected to a wider urban network which is formed by a range of Green Infrastructure typologies such as verges, trees, gardens, sports fields, car park edges etc. |
| Understand how Health and wellbeing benefits in publicly owned greenspaces can be maximised through design and land management changes | Publicly owned greenspaces are valued for delivering health and wellbeing benefits and there is an increased understanding of how to improve this function and match it to local and strategic health needs.  |
| Understand how local people would like to be part of the organisational management and maintenance of publicly owned greenspaces going forward | Publicly owned greenspaces are managed and maintained in greater partnership between local people, the local authority and town/parish councils - with inclusion of other key stakeholders such as businesses, charities and health bodies where relevant.  |
| Use a detailed and engagement process to understand how local stakeholders perceive and use their greenspace and to build a collaborative approach between stakeholders.  | Local people feel empowered by the project to be custodians of publicly owned greenspace and understand the perspectives of other stakeholders. Local people have increased their understanding of nature, how it functions and how it contributes to a range of benefits, including climate change response and their own health and wellbeing. Publicly owned greenspaces are vibrant and are cherished as a vital part of the local environment as a result. |

The project aligns with, and helps to deliver, several strategic pieces of work already in place within Sussex:

* People and Nature Network (South Downs National Park Authority, 2020)[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex (Sussex Local Nature Partnership, 2019)[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Adur and Worthing Councils Public Health Strategy 2018-21[[3]](#footnote-3)
* SustainableAW Carbon Reduction; carbon neutral plan[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Worthing Local Plan[[5]](#footnote-5)

Its findings will provide information that will feed into the emerging Local Plan for Wealden District Council.

The project also provides opportunities to understand the role of greenspaces in delivering emerging national policy and legislation (Environment Bill - in particular in relation to Nature Recovery Strategies) policy responses to climate change and social/economic recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic).

Learning and examples from the project will provide an opportunity for communication messages on all relevant themes (nature, health and wellbeing, climate change and so on) which will link to core areas of work by all Steering Group members.

The project will develop the following products/outputs:

*For each case study site:*

* Baseline Ecological surveys identifying habitats and key species present and identifying opportunities for improving habitat connectivity both on the site and with areas beyond the site.
* A ‘natural capital profile’ for each site - setting out the various natural capital benefits and services it provides, such as carbon storage, pollination, air quality, water quality, flood risk management etc. This will include spatial mapping of natural capital assets in and around each site, drawing on data held by Sussex Biodiversity record Centre and information developed as part of the Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Early and continued engagement with local community groups and users - and collation of information on who the key users are, how the space is used and how it is valued
* Development of a new vision for each greenspace and a set of proposals for investments and improvements it can deliver for people and nature. This will be based on the site-based surveys and assessments and priorities/ideas generated through engagement with local communities, users and other stakeholders.
* A list of local people, users or other stakeholders who are interested in being involved in the future management or support of the greenspace and recommendations for the local authority/town or parish council on how to best engage this support going forward.
* A skills audit and identification of training needs for upskilling Local Authority / community workforce on nature based and conservation land management and design

*Wider spatial analysis:*

* Wider spatial mapping of the natural capital assets of each district and benefits and services this provides - drawing on available data held by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, South Downs National Park and information developed as part of the Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex[[7]](#footnote-7)

*Health Audit: additional ‘bolt on’ for Wealden.*

ESCC has additional funds available to trial the use of ‘health audit assessments’ for the greenspaces within the three town/parish councils interested in participating in the project. This will provide:

* A ‘health audit’ for each case study site - setting out the features and uses of the site that provide local health benefits[[8]](#footnote-8).
* Additional audits for all other greenspace sites within the town/parish councils involved
* An assessment of the strategic ‘health profile’ of each town/parish council - to provide insights into the prevalence and location of health issues within the population and how these relate to the location and characteristics of each case study site.

*Methodologies and toolkits*

* Technical methodology for assessing the biodiversity and natural capital value of parks and greenspaces; creation of tools to assist managers/local authorities with application of these methodologies in the field.
* Guidance for identifying suitable approaches for engaging with local communities, users and key stakeholders across a range of greenspace types and local contexts - on understanding the broad value of green spaces and developing a vision for their future use
* The above will be focused on two specific audiences:
	+ Local authority parks departments/ranger services - who own and manage a district portfolio of green spaces
	+ Parish/town council staff/officials responsible for planning/management of local greenspaces
* An understanding of the relevant skills and knowledge within parks/local authority staff and town/parish councils - and recommendations on how this can be supplemented/developed in order to provide the skills-base required to drive forward a broader vision for the future of publicly owned greenspaces
1. Project Partners and Project Structure

Key project partners will form a steering group for the project. These include:

* Sussex Local Nature Partnership
* South Downs National Park Authority\*
* East Sussex County Council\*
* West Sussex County Council
* Adur and Worthing Councils
* Wealden District Council

\*Funding the project

This Steering group will oversee the project direction.

Project management will be carried out by South Downs National Park Authority. Procurement of any consultant services (see below) will be managed by East Sussex County Council.

A project team will be gathered from across Steering Group organisations to contribute the technical expertise and knowledge of the case study sites and communities.

Expert consultants will be appointed to lead the two main areas of analysis of the case study sites :

* Assessment of the natural capital assets and potential of case study sites
* Community engagement/gathering of information on the social /health values

The learning and analysis from these two work streams will then be brought together to:

* Develop visions and recommendations for each case study site - and to produce a technical report for each site
* Identify lessons learned from across all sites
* Use the above to methodologies and tools for assessing and ‘re-visioning’ greenspaces across other sites/local authorities
1. Case studies - short list

Eight final case study sites will be chosen by the Steering Group (four from each local authority). The ‘short list’ of sites from each local authority is shown below. This list has been compiled to include a range of ‘types’ of park/greenspace, local community contexts and ownership types (local authority, town council, parish council).

The final list will be informed by an analysis of district health data - so that the local health context of each proposed greenspace can be included in the decision.

**Adur and Worthing** (all proposed sites are owned or managed by A&W Councils)

Buckingham Park (Shoreham/Adur). *Amenity Greenspace. Busy urban park with good mixed use of land*

Steyne Gardens (Worthing). *Victorian town park and garden. Busy event space.*

Kingston Beach (Shoreham/Adur). Area of foreshore (village green adjacent to shingle beach)

Cissbury Fields (Worthing). *Semi-natural greenspace on urban fringe*

Adur Recreation Ground (Shoreham/Adur). *Semi-natural greenspace/ amenity greenspace; SSSI*

Liverpool Gardens (Worthing). *Town centre park*

**Wealden** (sites have a range of ownership/management responsibility)

Crowborough Ghyll (Crowborough). *Natural greenspace/ woodland on urban fringe; local wildlife site*

Victoria Pleasure Ground (Uckfield). *Amenity Greenspace*

Boothland Wood (Uckfield). Ancient semi-natural woodland

Uckfield SANG (Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace) (Uckfield). *Amenity greenspace created adjacent to new development*

Crowborough SANG (Crowborough). *Amenity greenspace*

East Hoathly Recreation Ground and woodland (East Hoathly Parish). *Amenity greenspace and adjacent ancient woodland*

Western Road Recreation Ground (Hailsham). *Amenity greenspace - Recreation/sportsground.*

Hailsham Country Park (Hailsham). *Amenity greenspace/country park*

Maurice Thornton Playing Field (Hailsham east). *Amenity greenspace*

Ninfield Recreation Ground (Ninfield Parish). *Amenity greenspace*

1. Project Phases

This project will be run in a series of phases. These are shown below and a draft timetable is provided overleaf. This timetable will be confirmed by the Steering Group ahead of initiation of the project.

Phase 1: Project initiation and background data gathering

Phase 2: Desk-based preparation ahead of site visits

Phase 3: Site based work

Phase 4: Preparation of reports and development of methodologies

Phase 5: Dissemination of learning and outputs

1. Draft Project timetable(to be agreed by steering group)

**2021**

| **Action** |  | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **Jun** | **July** | **Aug** | **Sept** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Phase 1 - Project initiation and background data gathering** |
| Steering group meets to agree project timetable, costs and to approve brief for consultants |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Procurement process for consultancy services |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wider spatial analysis (natural capital mapping; health analysis) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Health audits: Wealden |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Collation and review of above background data |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Final case study selection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consultant (community engagement) scopes out detail of suitable community engagement approach for the range of sites chosen |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Project team /consultant (natural capital) identifies methodology for preparing ‘natural capital profiles’ for case study sites and scopes out required work |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Detailed consultant briefs for Phases 2-4 costed and agreed by Steering Group  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Phase 2: Desk based preparation ahead of site visits** |
| Desk based preparation for case study analysis |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preparation of site maps (habitats and features) using available data |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Phase 3. Site based work** |
| Initial community engagement across all case study sites |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Case study site visits for ecological surveys and natural capital assessments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Local community engagement across all sites |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cross-disciplinary site visits to identify visions and recommendations for each site |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Phase 4: Preparation of reports and development of methodologies** |
| Finalise reports for each case study |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Develop methodology and tools |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Phase 5: Dissemination of learning and outputs** |
| Develop a ‘learning programme’ for uplifting skills across other local authorities |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Prepare a ‘communications plan’ for dissemination of lessons and project outputs to key audiences (during and following the project duration) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Project event to disseminate lessons (and launch methodology/tools) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other events and initiatives to ‘roll out’ the outputs of the project will be beyond the duration of this project |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Project costs and funding

Note: 1 A&W site will be covered under a different A&W project (using different methodology) - but learning from this will be brought into this project - to contribute to learning and development of methodology.

| Activity | Responsibility | Cost/hours |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project Management and initiation | South Downs National Park | In kind |
| Steering Group attendance | WSCCESCCA&W CouncilsWealden DCSDNPASxLNPConsultants | 4 x meetings @ 2 hours = 8 hours each(in kind)(4 x ½ day @£400/day) = **£800** |
| Natural Capital Assessment: Methodology scoping | ConsultantSxLNP | 4 days@ £400/day = £16002 days @ £300/day = £400**Total: £2200** |
| Site assessment (natural capital), visioning and write up | Consultant*+ in-kind time from rangers, park staff and town/parish representatives across all sites* | 7 days per site @ £400 per day (£2800).7 sites (3 A&W + 4 WDC) = £19600**Total: £19600** |
| Social engagement: Methodology scoping  | ConsultantSxLNP | 4 days @£400 = £16002 days @£300 = £600**Total = £2200** |
| Social engagement (on site) - engagement, visioning and write up | Consultant*+ in-kind time from rangers, park staff and town/parish representatives across all sites* | 5 days per site @£400 per day - for **7 sites = £14000** |
| Methodology Development - (following completion of case studies) | Consultants (2)SxLNP*+ in-kind time from A&W/WDC staff* | 3 days each @£400/day = £24003 days @£300 = £900**Total= £3300** |
| Project Workshop event (2) | Consultants (2)SxLNPA&W Councils + WDC, SDNPA, ESCC and WSCC - in kind time for planning and hosting | 2 days each (1 prep + 1 delivery)@ £400/day = £16002 days@ £300/day = £600**Total: £2200** |
| Contingency (1 day extra consultancy time) | Consultants | 1 day /consultant @£400/day = **£800** |
| Expenses - travel costs etc to locations | Consultants | **£1600** |
| Design costs (Mastermaps x 7 sites) |  | **?** |
| **Subtotal (excl VAT)** |  | **£46700** |
| VAT (if charged by consultants) |  | **£9340** |
| Total |  | **£56060** |

Bolt-on Health Audit (Wealden)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Responsibility | Cost/hours |
| Health assessments - 3 town/parish areas | Consultants | **£16900** |

**Funding Split**

1. £24 000 (SDNPA): to cover site assessments for **3 A&W sites + 50% joint methodology development and final event costs**

Details below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Detail** | **Cost** |
| A&W site assessments | Consultant time (natural capital) | £8400 |
|  | Consultant time (social engagement) | £6000 |
| ½ methodology scoping/preparation | Natural capital | £1100 |
|  | Social Engagement | £1100 |
| ½ methodology development/ write up | Consultants time | £1650 |
| ½ Final workshop costs | Consultants time | £1100 |
| ½ contingency | Consultant time | £400 |
| 3/7 expenses  | Consultant travel costs (3 of 7 sites) etc | £700 (est) |
| ½ steering group costs | Consultant time | £400 |
| **Subtotal** |  | **£20850** |
| Vat |  | £ 4170 |
| Total |  | £25020 |

1. **ESCC:** (£31020) to cover site assessments for 4 WDC sites + 50% joint methodology development and final event costs

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Detail** | **Cost** |
| WDC site assessments x 4 | Consultant time (natural capital) | £11200 |
|  | Consultant time (social engagement) | £8000 |
| ½ methodology scoping/preparation | Natural capital | £1100 |
|  | Social Engagement | £1100 |
| ½ methodology development/ write up | Consultants time | £1650 |
| Final workshop costs | Consultants time | £1100 |
| ½ contingency | Consultant time | £400 |
| 4/7 expenses | Consultant travel costs etc | £900 (est) |
| ½ steering group costs | Consultant time | £400 |
| **Subtotal** |  | **£25850** |
| Vat |  | £ 5170 |
| Total |  | £31020 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Responsibility | Cost/hours |
| Health assessments - 3 town/parish areas | Consultants | £16900 |
| **Subtotal (excl VAT)** |  | **£16900** |

Total (ESCC)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total (excl VAT)** |  | **£42750 (excl VAT)** |

If A&W work costs £20850, then the difference (£24 000 - £20850 = £3150) could be used across the Wealden work to which would reduce the ESCC strand to **£39600).**

*Note - this is based on estimates of consultants costs. Precise costs will only be known once quotations have been received.*

1. https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/partnership-management/people-and-nature-network-pann/the-people-and-nature-network-pann/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://sussexlnp.org.uk/sussex-natural-capital-investment-strategy/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/community-wellbeing/public-health-strategy/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/sustainable-aw/carbon-reduction/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/worthing-local-plan/about/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sussex Local Nature Partnership 2019. <http://sussexlnp.org.uk/sussex-natural-capital-investment-strategy/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sussex Local Nature Partnership 2019. <http://sussexlnp.org.uk/sussex-natural-capital-investment-strategy/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.tisdallassociates.co.uk/about-health-parks> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)