

27th May 2020

Dear LEP Chair/Chief Executive

## **Clean Growth: Principles for embedding a zero carbon, nature based approach in economic recovery**

I hope you and yours are keeping well during these challenging times.

There are 4 Local Nature Partnerships covering Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey, part of a national network of 48 LNPs nationally with a remit to consider sustainable land management, development of a low carbon, green economy and quality of life and health & well-being. Each one has developed high level, strong, cross-sectoral collaborations to strategically facilitate long term investment in nature. We work as a South East group to provide scale and promote solutions across the region.

On behalf of the South East Local Nature Partnerships (SE LNPs) we thought that now would be an opportune moment to highlight both the risks of a traditional approach to economic recovery but more importantly the opportunities to embed a zero carbon, nature based solutions (*a restoration economy*) approach within economic recovery decision making. Such an approach will not only increase our resilience to future economic and environmental shocks but will also provide productive opportunities, space for innovation and new jobs and skills. We have not specifically included other beneficial aspects such as an increased focus on renewable energy and sustainable transport recognising that others will be providing advice and information on these. We also recognise the opportunity presented by the cohesive approach being taken by the Southern LEPs which supports the ability to scale up this approach effectively.

### **Clean Growth Principles**

The following statements describe the principles which we would like to see as part of an integrated approach to recovery:

- **Place making:** a sustainable land use, spatial approach, embedding Nature Recovery Networks, creating resilient landscapes and ensuring the restoration of a healthy natural environment,
- **Health & wellbeing:** developing cohesive, productive communities, residents and workforces supported by quality, accessible, well managed greenspace, actively reconnecting all age groups with nature,
- **Restoration economy:** ensuring a zero carbon, nature based solutions approach delivering resilient businesses, jobs and sustainable environmental and economic outcomes
- **BuildBackBetter:** ensuring opportunities for technology, innovation and creativity in driving a sustainable approach; the opportunity to 'build back better'
- **Leadership:** recognising the leading role the South East can play in the 'knowledge economy' around delivering zero carbon and nature based solutions.

**We are currently working on a more detailed evidence document to support these principles which we hope will be of assistance as your plans for economic recovery develop. We would be delighted to attend a suitable meeting over the next few weeks to present these principles and associated evidence to you.**

### **Context**

There is increasing recognition that as we look to regional, national and global economic recovery it is essential we do not revert to business as usual but '**build back better**'. The Covid 19 crisis has highlighted how inextricably linked economic and societal success is with a healthy natural environment. As central and local government, businesses and the third sector all look to the future improving our resilience is a key consideration.

The World Economic Forum's most recent Global Risks Report (World Economic Forum, 2020) ranked biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse in the top five risks. For the first time, all the top five global risks, in terms of likelihood and severity of impact, were environmental.

Since the Ecosystems Market Task Force report, published in 2013 and chaired by Sir Ian Cheshire, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of investing in our natural assets and the opportunity associated with a nature based economy. Subsequently this thinking has informed the 25 Year Plan for the Environment, the Clean Growth Strategy and the Industrial Strategy. All of these documents acknowledge the need to consider our natural assets but progress has been slow. Now is the time to recognise their value in rebuilding the nation and providing future resilience. The Interim report of the Dasgupta Review<sup>1</sup> (commissioned by HM Treasury) is a valuable reminder of why this integrated approach needs to happen now.

These risks and opportunities have already been recognised within the business community (including many located within our SE area such as Unilever, Lego, Nestle). A recent article from the BBC highlighted the increasing number of UK business leaders

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interim-report-the-dasgupta-review-independent-review-on-the-economics-of-biodiversity>

calling for a 'green' economic recovery plan with a focus on supporting companies actively pursuing improved sustainability approaches, recognising the role of infrastructure, technology, new jobs and skills in supporting this sustainable, low carbon approach.

<sup>2</sup> 'As the UK eases restrictions and tries to repair damage to the economy from the crisis, the chief executives of more than 60 British organisations called on the government to:

- Invest in infrastructure, technology and skills to create jobs that help sustainability
- Exclude companies in "polluting industries" that do not have a proper climate plan
- Restore ecosystems on land and in our oceans by incentivising walking and cycling
- Support sustainable food, farming and fishing
- Swiftly pass environmental laws and bring in targets in law to restore ecosystems
- Bring global leaders together to plan for a sustainable economic recovery'

### Clean Growth: a Restoration Economy (Zero carbon, nature based solutions)

Nature-based solutions are actions that protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems to address societal challenges. They can provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits and are indispensable for both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The development of a zero carbon, nature based economy will not only provide multiple benefits from more thoughtful land use but also improved health and well-being benefits for residents and workers. This will support productivity as well as the opportunity to create new jobs and businesses within this sector and to ensure skills are developed as needed. It will deliver the beautiful, resilient landscapes which are such an important, but often under-appreciated, feature of the South East of England.

There are already practical examples of how these solutions can be delivered ranging from catchment based, natural flood management to supporting improved soil health as part of sustainable farming to supporting the tourism industry. You will see examples of these within the evidence document we are preparing.

We know what we need to do and how to do it and have expertise and experience in delivering these outcomes – now we need to ensure that our inward investment programmes systemically recognise and deliver these multi-beneficial, nature based investments.

We also know that the connection of people with nature has become even more important and will be essential as part of the recovery from Covid 19 that many people will need.

We would be delighted to share our expertise and discuss these opportunities further, illustrating how a more integrated, nature based economy can be implemented. We would be happy to present to one of the joint meetings of the southern LEPs if convenient or alternatively to individual LEP Board meetings.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



Hampshire & IoW LNP

LNP Chairs Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and IoW

<sup>2</sup> <https://www-bbc-co-uk.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/business-52580291>