

# NATURE IMPROVEMENT AREA GREATER THAMES MARSHES

*Our vision for the Greater Thames Marshes is of “a living and vibrant marshland and estuary landscape where skilled and enthusiastic residents, visitors, businesses and technical experts are harnessed to work in partnership, delivering more wildlife, more public understanding and enjoyment of the environment and greater resilience by the natural world to the changes brought about by development and climate change.”*

## Advisory Group Meeting

Date: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013

Venue: Defra, Nobel House, Room 808, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR

### 1. Review of year 1 delivery and looking forward to year 2 - Jill Goddard, TEP Delivery on the ground and how you can engage

Jill gave a quick review of the GTM NIA Business Plan targets ([www.greaterthamesmarshes.com/our-work](http://www.greaterthamesmarshes.com/our-work)) and progress so far. She reminded all that Year 2 is a key year to get involved if partners had not done so already, to help us move forward.

### 2. Fundraising update - Kate Collins, Sheils Flynn Progress to date and review of next steps (see attached document)

All the projects that were discussed at the workshop in January were discussed at length. Due to various reasons only a certain amount of projects were taken forward for further discussion and development. Those that weren't taken forward included:

- Managed realignment – this project will be taken forward by the TE2100 project, but the NIA will maintain close links with this major programme of work
- Wetland Agriculture project – after further investigation, other areas of the country were identified as being more appropriate to take this work forward, rather than the Thames Estuary
- Seawalls – a scaled down version was looked at but work is already being carried out
- Recreational disturbance – again, work on this is already being carried out, so we weren't sure what we could actually add to this project
- With regards to community engagement work, we felt that we would be better integrating this into each of the funding bids rather than developing a specific bid for this

## Green → Blue Life+ Bids

### **Questions / Comments**

With regards to premium brand of beef sales, have you considered sheep? They do this in Wales and the Thames was famous for its sheep products such as cheese as well as meat in the past.

Work on the ComCoast EU Project which included wetland agriculture agreed with this but you need saltwater grazing.

There is a link here with the vulnerability map. If you're only doing coastal grazing in marshes in the SPAs in the NIA, we need to consider that it's a very small area. For the project to achieve greater potential you need to broaden out the area and include places such as Fobbing/Canvey/Crouch and Roach.

- These are critical points and a reason for why this bid might go through the biodiversity strand rather than the nature strand as we need to comply with the criteria of the bid. We can focus on areas outside the SPA designations but we'd need to make a good case if we were to focus our work on these sites.

If the only issue is due to funding then this needs to be challenged.

- Yes, this is possible but we need to show clear demonstration of the process that's going on.

## Mending the Marshes HLF Bid

### **Questions / Comments**

Thames Estuary Partnership is re-instating their Recreation Action Group. In preparation for the bid this forum could be of possible use? If you feel that this could be useful then please contact the TEP office.

The NIA have been advised that if we wanted to put the GTM NIA area in as a whole this would cover 3 regions; therefore it would have to be submitted on a national level and would end up competing with other projects such as Stonehenge. We have been advised to focus on case studies within specific areas.

Mucking landfill site has been designated as a nature area with a community centre. There are many community based activities held at the site (Essex Wildlife Trust) such as yoga. They have only been using the first designated 100 acres out of 800 acres. The rest is 'spare' as such so there could be some project work going on there on use of different substrates for example and the new path links? They are working alongside John Meehan (ECC) with the Maxigreen project.

## Open Mosaic Habitat Interreg V

### **Questions / Comments**

If there are two projects going in to the same funding source with EU, would they compete with

each other?

- This is a very good question and something that we've taken into consideration. At the moment there are 4 programmes so they are not in direct competition. However, they are looking at changing the programmes so this could be something that we are faced with in the future. We will make sure that we don't put our bids into the same programme. The programmes might not reopen until late 2014, so we have to make sure that we have our bids fully developed to fit with the criteria so as not to waste any time. This is a potential risk.

#### Perceptions of Post-Industrial Landscape Interreg V

##### **Questions / Comments**

Have you thought about CIRIA funding? As well as including other partners to consider?

- We shall check this.

AGREED: The Advisory Group supported the presentation and the overall approach taken by the PSG in developing this work.

### 3. Biodiversity Offsetting – Gemma Hallam, Environment Bank What it is and how it works within the NIA

See Gemma's presentation on the website

##### **Questions / Comments**

How long will you be in post given your comments on funding being limited?

- The post is funded until April 2014 but I am hoping to have that extended.

In the presentation it states that ECC are to produce a toolkit – what will it contain and what is the timescale?

- It's looking to be produced by the end of September 2013. It will contain how biodiversity offsetting works, ecology issues, list of protected species etc.

Will organisations have the opportunity to become involved / input?

- Yes

Does the offset site have to be within the same area?

- The feedback at the moment is that they try to keep the area within the same district / Local authority. If there is a strong case for it to be elsewhere then they will have a look at what is best. They make assessments on a case by case basis at the moment.

Can the process be applied to intertidal habitat? The EA have an Encroachment Policy which could support this as a WFD approach.

- Yes, the Crown Estate has produced a marine biodiversity offsetting report.

Countryside Partnerships work with community energy farms and they can provide an offset as

well as looking at saltmarshes.

- The Environment Bank ideally in the future will be looking at ecosystem services for the land and taking into consideration everything that the land does and not just the main factors.

If offsetting is taken forward, will more resources become available?

Using ecologists needs funding to provide good advice for offsetting potential?

- Not sure how local government will resource this. The Environment Bank was set up to work in a broker style system. They are looking at a 99year management plan.
- Maybe through the NIA we can combine voices. We could provide a list of ecologists to do the work and promote it. If the resource is not within the local authority we could suggest this?

If it's to work then disagreements with developers needs to be avoided. It needs to be a transparent process.

#### 4. Discussion on NIA and Planning - Leonie Gough, Essex County Council Draft NIA Planning Policy Advice Note

See presentation attached on the website

##### Questions / Comments

Firstly congratulations on producing a planning policy note. Have you thought about links to CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)? Do ECC classify to draw money from CIL?

- This is something that ECC will look into.

How have you created the species list, there are a number of species such as eels, butterflies and bees, etc. which aren't currently mentioned?

- The list of species shown here was taken from the initial NIA Business Plan, which stated the priority indicator species work will focus on. For the purposes of this guidance note there is definitely scope for further species to be included.

The wording on this planning document should be stronger – not just make public aware but to be more strongly involved.

There is a need to have buffer sites / habitat creation / brown roof sites, etc. to compliment this.

How strong will the document be in influencing local planning decisions?

Different local authorities have different planning interpretations / way of working.

What power will this document carry in terms of influencing local planning decisions?

- This statement is in a strong position as it is specifically mentioned in the NPPF and local partners have a duty to cooperate with an emphasis on NPPF. Natural England's internal local planning team are putting together guidance for application within the NIA which will

help this process.

With the government red tape challenge, reducing costs and impacts, how are you going to manage this? There are low cost options and temporary options which will be preferable to developers (who are not obliged to follow as it is only “guidance”). How are you going to sure this up?

- We are going to work with Local Planning Authorities to ensure they understand the value and importance of using this guidance – we can use the NPPF to facilitate this. We will look into how we can make any measures more permanent.

**ACTION: NIA to host a Planning Workshop for Local Planners to learn about this Guidance Note.**

The emphasis needs to be on public education. This is a good way of meeting international funding. For example brownfield sites – the public perception about these at the moment is negative as they appear untidy.

Green roofs are very interesting but it’s also brown roofs that we are interested in. we need a design for the alternative as it is cheaper to install.

Within the context of NIA would it be better to have a more generic plan to fit with different habitats? Give a bit more flexibility to apply with new NIAs?

- This is something that the Project Steering Group can take into consideration; however the specific purpose of this Guidance Note is to make the information relevant to the priorities of the GTM NIA. Other NIAs can take the template and adapt the specifics to suit (we have taken a template from the Dearne Valley NIA)

Other habitats should also be mentioned such as bat boxes.

You need to think outside the box. Maybe you can encourage planning by offering a trade off system? Developers might be more willing to do this if there is something in it for them.

- This is something that is outside the remit of this planning policy note but the PSG will definitely consider all these questions/comments.

You should have examples of powerful case studies where in planning they have also benefitted e.g. the saltmarsh around the millennium dome has been shown to be unwanted by developers at first but very successful once installed and enhancing the site for the public. Monitoring has been key to show the difference this habitat has made since it was installed.

- This is a really helpful point. We will take away an action to look into including a couple of case studies to support this Guidance Note – if members of the Advisory Group can recommend best practise that would be helpful. Hopefully with time we can add to this list.

## 5. Working Lunch and General Discussion / AOB

How fixed is the NIA boundary? There is a project being run by Essex BAP Partnership that is just outside the boundary on the River Crouch which would be good to be involved within the NIA project

- For the funding bid we had to submit a boundary around the project area. However, it is what we would term a 'fuzzy boundary' which we feel is good at working both ways in terms of benefit.
- Natural England has had similar discussions with other NIAs. All NIAs need to think beyond the 3year funding period and longevity and therefore projects that are outside the defined boundary.

Is there going to be a framework for match funding? Are you looking for match funding?

- Match funding is essential for successful bids. Please let us know if you have any projects that could fit within the GTM NIA funding bid proposals to help with the match funding requirement-usually 50%.
- outside the 4 bids we are currently looking at, if anyone is doing any other projects, as previously stated then please let us know and we can see if it benefits the NIA and build momentum

With regards to matching up projects e.g. WFD, what's the best way of feeding in information?

- WFD is very much in support. The mapping workshop is key to pick up this link. In addition to the mapping, tourism, planning workshops for the maps, please let us know if you have any further ideas. Mapping is there to advise all on the opportunities we are trying to promote.

Place Services (ECC) are completing a report on areas of Grazing Marsh on GIS, this data should be available shortly (Adrian Gascoyne / Richard Havers at ECC are the contacts for this).

WFD is developing very rapidly especially in the Essex Catchment Partnership fund. Where does it fit together? We need to keep each other informed.

- Yes we need to work together. TEP and Thames21 charities are currently leading on the catchment for Your Tidal Thames which runs from Teddington to Haven Point and Warden Point. Again this has fuzzy boundaries. More information on this catchment is on our TEP website. We are beginning to get Transitional (TraC) waters data and have a good opportunity here to combine WFD aspirations where they work with the GTM NIA aspirations.

With regards to the 'Core Areas/ Buffer Zones/ Sustainable uses Map', what is its intended use?

- This map needs further work – it is currently a think piece. It's to provide a good baseline on where we are currently and we also want it to show aspirations of where we could try and get to together. The mapping workshop would give us dedicated time to discuss this further.

What about other projects that will have a tangible impact on the NIA e.g. the airport

- TEP hosted a Lower Thames Crossing workshop recently for the Department of Transport and within that they stated that there wasn't enough detail about the airport so we just have to carry on as normal with our projects. We're not complacent and the airport has been on 'the agenda' many times but we cannot let this blight any other work.

The GTM NIA Project Steering Group sought and has received funding to make this NIA the best it can be ecologically, and we will continue to deliver on this. There is obviously a clear risk that major development proposals could derail this process, but with something like the Thames Estuary Airport where we are waiting a couple of years for a review of aviation strategy, let alone a planning application, the risk of doing nothing to support biodiversity is greater.

There was also the proposal to have a Marine Conservation Zone in the Thames Estuary for broad scale habitats-intertidal mixed sediments, sub tidal core sediment, sub tidal sand, sub tidal mud, plus features of importance which are sheltered muddy gravels and species Smelt, Eel and the Tentacle Lagoon Worm. Will these be considered in any way in the NIA?

- Defra have not recognised this in their first round of MCZ agreed areas. There isn't a timetable for further rounds which many who took part in the consultation report they are very disappointed about. The work has been done and is useful so we can discuss this as we move forward at the Project Steering Group.
- Nicola Davies (Natural England) will take any comments back to Natural England and pass them on to the relevant people

Jill asked everyone present to say why they felt the GTM NIA could be useful to them. For ease, their comments are noted in the attendee list below.

## 6. Date of next meeting / Location

The next meeting will be in September/October and we will check best dates and venue and get back to you.

*This project has been supported by Defra, DCLG, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Natural England.*

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## Attendee List

Name	Organisation
Jill Goddard	Thames Estuary Partnership
Angus Campbell	Ramsak A farming cooperative member and interested in being involved.
Dave Hedges	RSPB Interested in Essex Wildlife and Planning and the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
Nigel Brown	Essex Society for Archaeology and History The Essex Society of Arch Experts and experienced background in Essex historic environment.
Steve Gilbert	RSPB Involved in both GTM and South Downs NIAs and on the Project Steering Group for this NIA.
Adam Ingleby	Environment Agency Working as the lead on London Environment Team on infrastructure and interested in the flood risk management side of this project.
Alice Wilson	Environment Agency Interested in how the EA can help link this work with WFD targets.
Ian Froad	National Farmers Union A farmer managing some habitat mitigation for the London Gateway development and how it fits with the NIA.
Ben Thomas	London Borough of Bexley Interested in the potential for the Erith

	Marshes.
Louise Smith	North West Kent Countryside Management Partnership  Working in North West Kent on Dartford and Gravesham areas and how they can work with the NIA.
Sarah Henshall	Buglife  Interested in how the brownfield habitats and the invertebrates can be part of the NIA.
Stephen Mowat	Zoological Society of London  Leading the Thames Conservation Project for marine mammals and keen to see how their work on this and eels can be part of the NIA.
Joanna Barker	Zoological Society of London UK & Europe Coordinator for Conservation Programmes
Greg Hitchcock	Kent Wildlife Trust  Interested in the Thames Gateway offer and the vision of the NIA.
Emma Sheard	Greater Thames Marshes NIA  Part of the NIA as the Farm Advisor officer.
Stephanie Buell	Kent County Council  KCC keen to see what the planning links might be to work with the NIA.
Tony Witts	Kent Biological Record Centre  Keen to see records and data links with what the NIA does.
Steve Colclough	Colclough & Coates Aquatic Consultants  Experienced in fisheries, WFD and voluntary Thames agreements reached in the past with fishermen and fisheries protocols with EU.

	Representing the Institute of Fisheries Management to help engage where possible with the NIA.
Claire Cadman	Essex Wildlife Trust  Working at the Mucking site with volunteers and general work which could help the NIA.
Mark Iley	Essex BAP Partnership  This NIA aligns with the Living Landscapes project and keen to help connect the two.
Keith Moore	Environment Agency  Keen to link the work of the community, LEPs and the development proposals coming through into sustainable development.
Jo Sampson	RSPB  The RSPB Futurescape officer and part of the NIA project delivery. Keen to see the opportunities of the Business Plan realised.
Adam Guy	Thames Estuary Partnership  Keen to see the joined up opportunities of other large initiatives such as WFD, Planning and TE2100 and promote integrated water management.
Jo Roche	Thames Estuary Partnership  The GTM NIA project management officer and keen to link other biodiversity work up to Teddington with it.
Niche Jenkins	PLA  Keen to ensure the working river and commercial uses are part of the landscape in the opportunities considered.
Leonie Gough	Place Services Essex County Council  Ecologist working on the project with John

	Meehan
Gemma Hallam	Environment Bank Keen to see the opportunities for Biodiversity Offsetting piloted and good ecological recommendations taken forward.
Kate Collins	Sheils Flynn
Nicola Davies	Natural England Lead officer for NE with this NIA and the South Downs NIA.
Andrew Day	Countryside Properties Keen to bring supportive reality check for development and how it can help.
Sarah Poppy	English Heritage Keen to keep the historical environment part of the same landscape for biodiversity with mutual opportunities considered.