Accounting for Natural Capital

Recommendations of the Growth Corridor NCIP project

Recommendation #1:
A strategic plan & parity

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- A strategic natural capital and environmental plan should be developed for the Growth Corridor:
  - Active engagement of LNPs;
  - Setting overall 'net gain' targets across the Corridor;
  - Developing natural capital asset & risk registers, plus natural capital maintenance costs;
  - Prioritising natural capital investment opportunities;
  - Improving understanding of full range of benefits from existing natural capital;
  - Explicit recommitment to existing environmental protections.
- Must be given parity with industrial, housing and transport strategies.

Recommendation #2: Governance & accountability

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- Someone should be accountable for championing the environmental and natural capital aspects at all levels of governance within the Growth Corridor arrangements.

- These individuals should be provided with the necessary resources to carry out their roles.

Recommendation #3: Establish key mechanisms

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- Key mechanisms needed to protect and enhance the environment and natural capital across the growth corridor:
  - All local councils should fully implement NPPF requirements on natural capital, habitats and biodiversity;
  - Development should be required to deliver net environmental gains, notwithstanding viability;
  - Highways England, Network Rail & Homes England should commit to net environmental gain;
  - Mechanisms needed for landscape-scale & cross-boundary approach;

Recommendation #3:
Establish key mechanisms

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- Key mechanisms needed to protect and enhance the environment and natural capital across the growth corridor:
  - NIC's "net environmental gain" proposal requires clear, measurable and Corridor-wide targets;
  - Targets must be linked to needs of existing natural capital, with mechanisms for aggregating and securing long-term maintenance funding;
  - Clarity needed on use of NPPF "unless" statements and exception tests so impact on designated habitats is truly unavoidable and exceptional;
  - Closer co-operation between health & wellbeing and net environmental gain action plans.

Recommendation #4:
Improved access to data

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- A baseline set of data and maps should be made available for use across the Corridor.
- This should include a natural capital asset register, an associated risk register, and identified natural capital investment opportunities.
- Considerable savings could be achieved if Network Rail, Highways England, Homes England, EA, NE and FC were to agree a common approach to determining baseline natural capital conditions and net environmental gain methodologies within the Corridor.

Recommendation #5
A single approach

Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership

- An agreed approach to assessing net environmental gain should be developed for use across the Corridor (by all);
- Factors to be taken into account include:
  - Need to deliver both net biodiversity gain and net natural capital gains;
  - Clear presentation of any specific environmental damage, regardless of overall net impact;
  - Location of gains & losses including proximity to beneficiaries;
  - Time lag & uncertainties between development and establishment of new natural capital assets;
  - Distinctiveness of existing habitats – species richness, diversity, rarity;
  - Certainty & sustainability of funding to maintain natural capital.

Summary of recommendations

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1. A strategic plan & parity
2. Governance & accountability
3. Establish key mechanisms
4. Improved access to data
5. A single approach

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