

Why greening our towns and cities is essential if we are to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it

Mel Hughes, Director Sustainable Development, Natural England



- **Why is greening important?**
- **What are the drivers?**
- **What is Natural England is doing to help?**

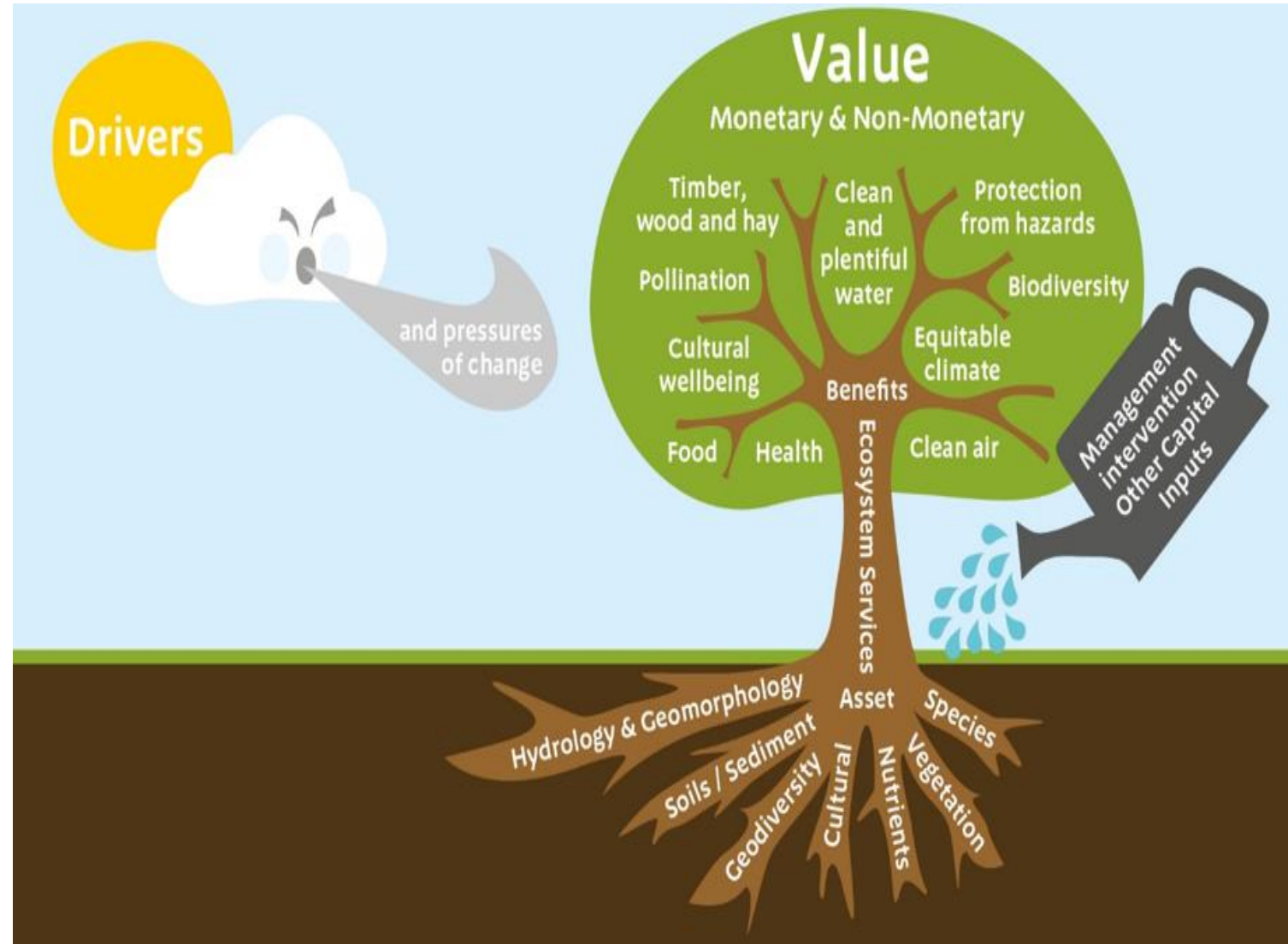
80% people live in towns and cities

Most people's experience of the natural world is within towns and cities

Why is greening important



- Resilience to future health
- Resilience to climate threats
- Nature on the doorstep
- Clean air & water
- Economic prosperity
- Physical and mental health
- Social cohesion and communities
- Safe places to live –free from floods



What's the current context

1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history UN *IPBES report 2019*

Inactivity costs UK £7.4bn /year

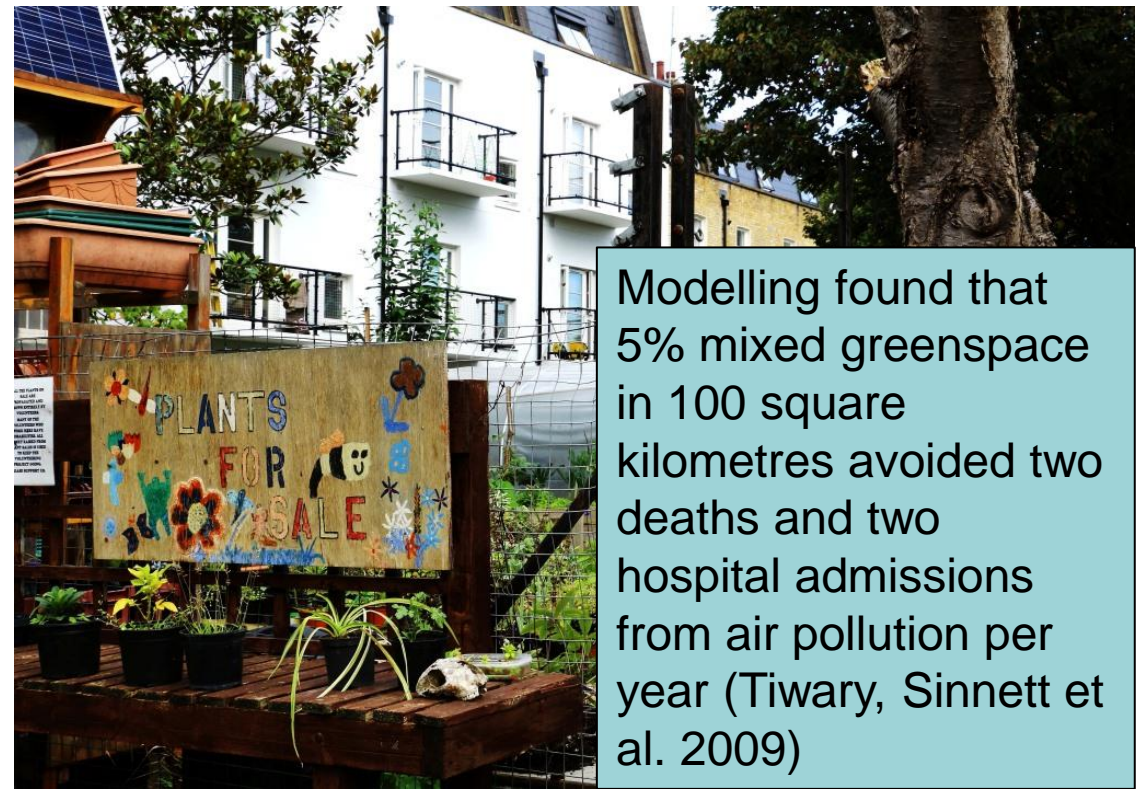
Mental illness costs £105bn /year

Even though there has been a reduction in the overall concentrations of air pollutants the rate of decline has slowed, 2017 clean air compliance still shows only 6 /43 zones met the annual mean limit. *NCC 2019 report*

8% of surface water bodies and 28% of groundwater bodies are being abstracted unsustainably and a further 10% identified as being subject to potentially unsustainable abstractions. *Water abstraction tables for England (2018)*

Health and wellbeing inequalities

- Strong evidence on links between nature, health and wellbeing.
- Three quarters of all ‘visits’ to the natural environment are within two miles of home, two thirds are on foot ([MENE](#)).
- **But access to gardens and green space unequal**

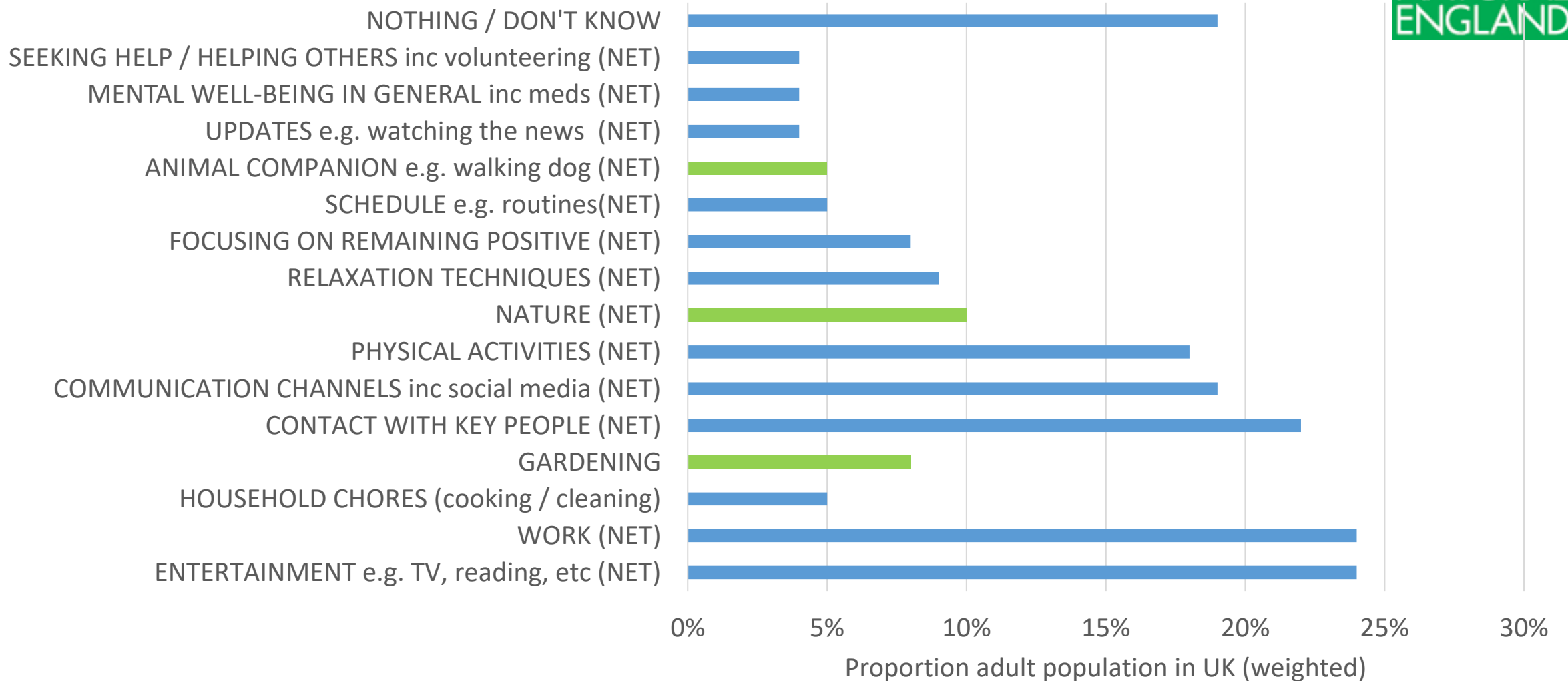


Modelling found that 5% mixed greenspace in 100 square kilometres avoided two deaths and two hospital admissions from air pollution per year (Tiwary, Sinnett et al. 2009)

	White	BAME	Most deprived	Most affluent
% Adults spending time outside at least once a week (MENE)	63%	46%	51%	72%
% Children spending time outside at least once a week (MENE)	73%	57%	65%	75%

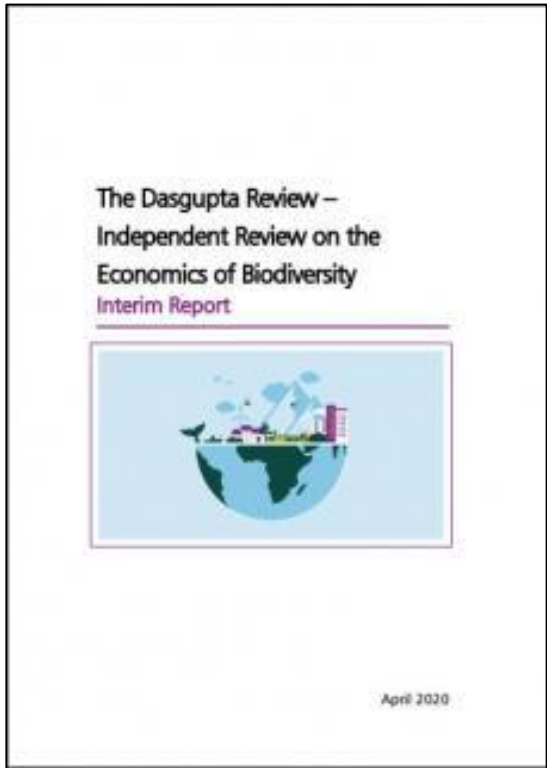
During CV-19

Q2. What, if anything, has been helping your mental wellbeing at this time?



Building nature into the economy

- “human economy is embedded within – not external to – Nature”
- Healthy economies are based on healthy environments.
- Short term recovery at the expense of the environment will lead to long term costs for the economy, wellbeing and prosperity as well as environment.

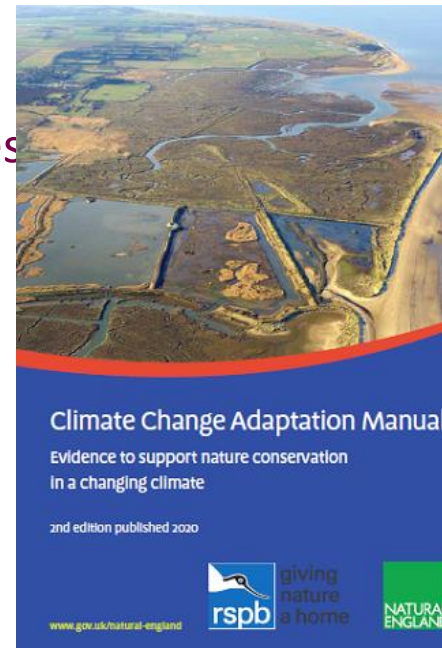


What are the policy drivers?

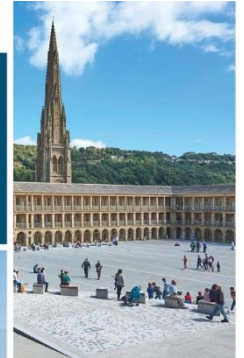
- Government's 25 Year Environment Plan – Environment Bill
- Local nature recovery strategies
- Mandatory biodiversity net gain
- Climate emergency – net zero targets
- Prevention green paper and Marmot report – inequalities in health
- Industrial Strategy, clean growth strategy
- Building Better Building Beautiful Commission
- Forthcoming Planning White Paper



A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment



Living with Beauty
Promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth



The report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission

JANUARY 2020



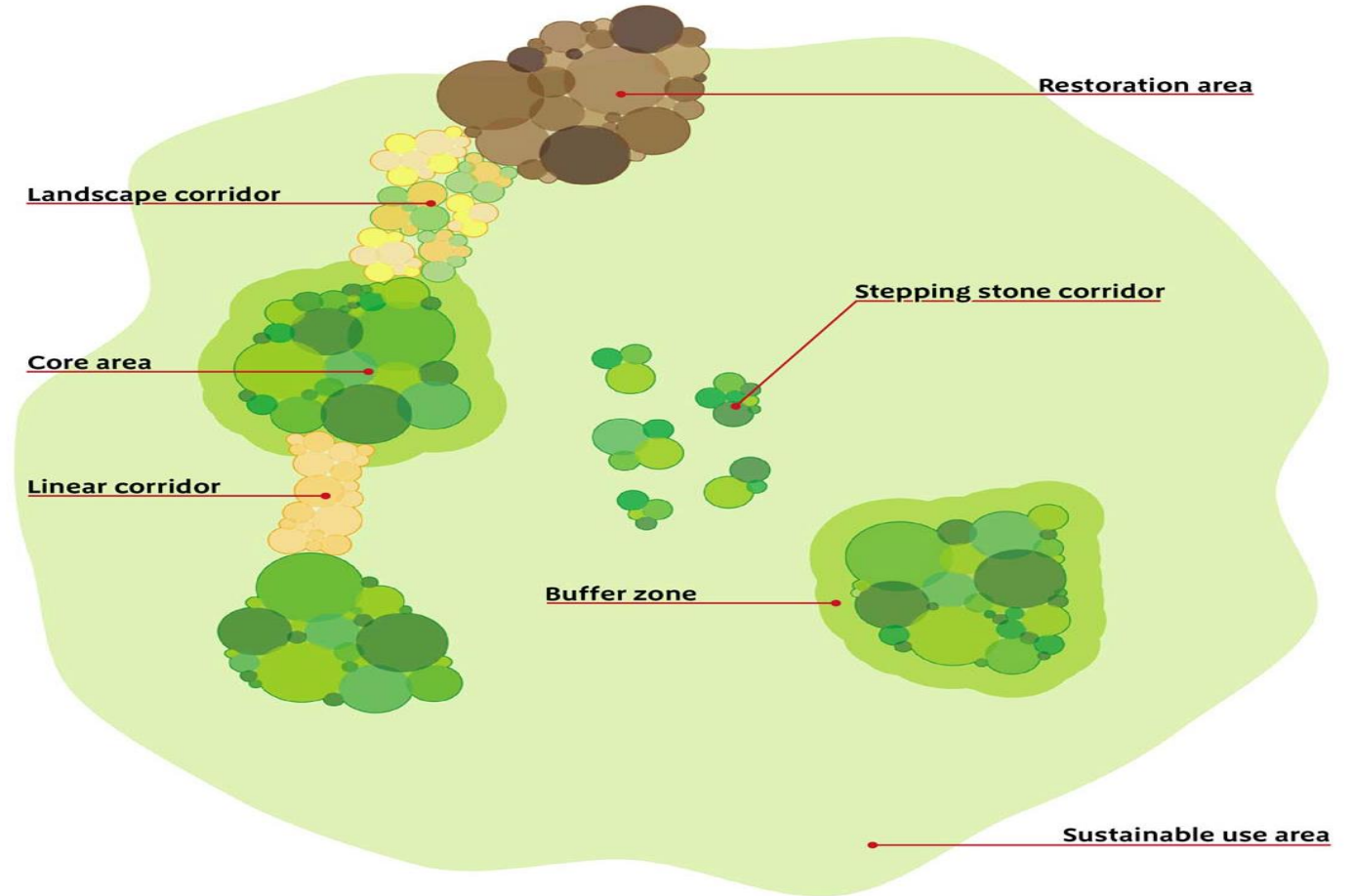
Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s

Published July 2019

Local nature recovery strategies

New system of spatial strategies for nature, covering the whole of England. Each strategy will, for the area that it covers:

- Map the most valuable existing habitat for nature;
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environment goals;
- Agree priorities for nature's recovery.



Green Infrastructure Standards

A practical framework of Green Infrastructure (GI) standards

- green recovery by ensuring good quality green infrastructure is available to all
- easy to use by GI planners, designers, local planning authorities and communities
- delivers more good quality, interconnected GI, at a local and landscape scale as part of wider nature recovery network
- provides the multiple benefits communities need and want
- address needs of disadvantaged urban populations.
- consistent across England



Principles of Green Infrastructure – quantity, quality and distribution



Themes	National Principles of Good Green Infrastructure...	
Purpose of good green infrastructure	Benefits and Value	<p>NP01 Green infrastructure is multi-functional, delivering a range of benefits for people, places and nature including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Health and wellbeing benefits b. Thriving nature and biodiversity gains c. Making places more resilient to climate change and helping to meet zero carbon targets d. Adding value and supporting prosperous communities
Involving people and developing policy	Partnership	<p>NP02 Partnership working, collaboration and stakeholder engagement (including local authorities, developers, communities, green space managers and others) are critical for planning and delivering green infrastructure that meets local needs.</p>
	Policy	<p>NP03 Local strategy and policy secures green infrastructure as essential infrastructure that delivers a range of environmental, social, health and economic policy objectives as part of place-making and place-keeping.</p>
Planning, designing and stewarding	Evidence	<p>NP04 Green infrastructure is planned to meet different people’s needs and address inequalities in provision underpinned by evidence of quantity, quality and distribution of GI assets and data on environmental and health challenges</p>
	Planning and design	<p>NP05 Green infrastructure is strategically planned and designed to function and connect as a living network at a local and landscape scale, responding to and enhancing local character</p>
	Stewardship, governance and funding	<p>NP06 Governance, management, monitoring, evaluation and funding of green infrastructure are planned from the outset and secured for the long term.</p>

Biodiversity net gain

- $\geq 10\%$ Measurable increase in biodiversity post development than pre development
- Applied to developments under Town & Country Planning Act using Biodiversity metric 2.0
- Provision of net gain plan with planning application.
- Includes all typical GI typologies e.g. green walls, roofs, SUDs
- Can be used in conjunction with other emerging tools such the Urban Greenspace Factor
- Delivers into Local Nature Recovery strategies and GI strategies
- Future optional use of Eco metric tool – to support decisions around ecosystem service changes



Kidbrook Village -Berkeley Homes

OxCam Growth Arc: the opportunity

We can ensure that the environment is considered as an integral part of OxCam, working with Defra and other partners to **deliver environmental schemes and improvements** in line with the Natural Capital approach and the 25 Year Environment Plan.



We can promote opportunities to reduce greenhouse emissions through regulated industry and sustainable growth



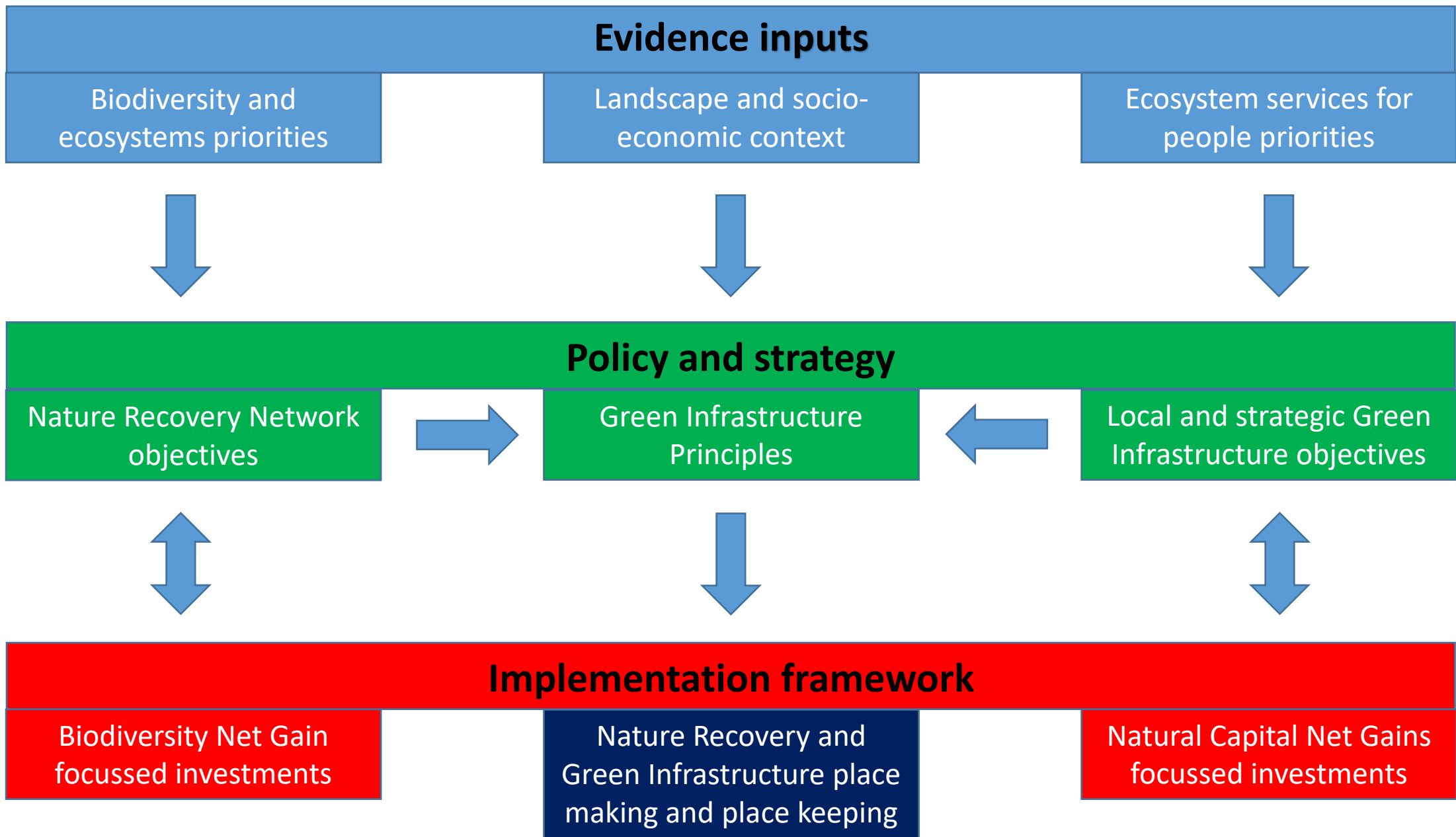
We can ensure development is safe from flooding and does not increase flood risk elsewhere



We can protect water quality and supply; achieve a resilient network of land and water that is richer in plants and wildlife; deliver WFD



We can use wider place making agenda to deliver environmental infrastructure schemes, such as Thames Catchment Storage Areas



A potential framework for developing the GM NRN.

#Better with Nature

- information about the natural world to help the public connect with nature during lockdown

People and Nature Survey for England

- Builds on and replaces MENE.
- Online interviews started first week April, then weekly.
- Experiences, attitudes and behaviours of nature.
- Rapid assessment of CV-19 impact on behaviours and the role of nature in nation's health and wellbeing – released start May 2020.
- First full quarterly data release scheduled Sept 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/people-and-nature-survey-for-england>

The logo for Natural England, featuring the words "NATURAL ENGLAND" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, set against a solid green square background.

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