



## Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (NUCLNP)

### Where Next?

#### Summary

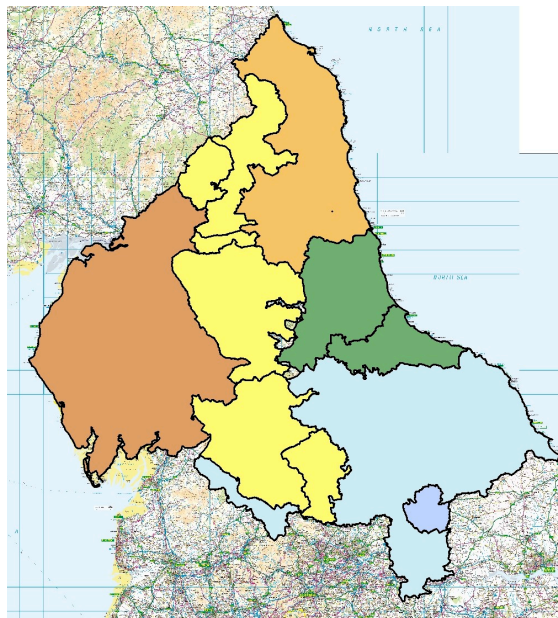
1. This paper assumes a certain amount of knowledge of the origin and purpose of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs). Further background to LNPs can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/>
2. The paper highlights the background to the development of the NUCLNP, confirms the proposed LNP area, identifies the partners' thinking on function, outlines possible structural options, encourages future partner involvement and highlights work still to do. The purpose of the paper is to develop the proposals for consideration by potential partners and wider stakeholders in preparation for the final LNP consultation event on April 24th at Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle.

#### Part 1 - Where we are, and how we got here

3. The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership proposal has now been in development since July 2011. The four lead partners are the management bodies representing:
  - Northumberland National Park
  - North Pennines AONB
  - Yorkshire Dales National Park
  - Nidderdale AONB.
4. Negotiations with those developing neighbouring LNP proposals have been taking place from the outset. A capacity building grant was awarded to the partners in December 2011 and this has supported a much wider engagement with a large range of potential stakeholders and continued dialogue with neighbours.
5. Two workshops were held in early March 2012 at Bolton Abbey and Hexham that were attended by over 70 delegates and the NUCLNP proposal received an overwhelmingly positive response. An LNP newsletter was produced as a result of the workshops and disseminated to all those who were invited to the events. This highlights the key findings and can be accessed at: <http://www.countrysidetraing.co.uk/consultations/NorthernUplandChain.html>
6. The ethos behind the proposal is that this area provides an outstanding opportunity to build on the principles of the Lawton Report, 'Making Space for Nature' (2010),

which heavily influenced the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper. The central tenet of Lawton's review is the need to link up our fragmented natural habitats into coherent and resilient ecological networks, with a desire for high quality natural areas which are bigger in scale, better managed, more numerous and more joined-up.

7. Our LNP area has a strong 'ecological logic' to its boundaries. In this large swathe of the northern uplands we find a common suite of species and habitats, a common portfolio of ecosystem goods and services, a similar set of upland agricultural and land management issues, similar economies and communities with much in common in terms of their access to facilities and services. We aim to create an LNP within this geographic area to better coordinate the work of those organisations that operate within it and to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.
  
8. The NUCLNP would be a genuinely ground-breaking partnership, covering the entire Protected Areas of the Northumberland National Park (including, west of the Park, the key the ecological assets of the extensive National Nature Reserves of Kielderhead and Whitelee Moor as well as Kielder Forest and Water), North Pennines AONB (encompassing the whole National Character Area), Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB. These nationally-designated upland areas form a contiguous chain, stretching from Yorkshire to the Scottish Border, broken only by the 'Tyne gap' linking the North Pennines to the Northumberland National Park and including the River Tyne into which drain the surrounding catchments; the LNP bridges this gap as indicated in the by the area coloured yellow in the map below.



9. This will be an LNP where the focus will be of continued relevance to all of the partners – including, critically, the farmers and land managers – because of its biogeographic, cultural and economic (rather than political) foundations.

10. From the stakeholder engagement to date, we now have a clear mandate for taking forward the NUCLNP as a strategic body, with some clear priorities for the kinds of things we will do, focused on securing practical benefits for nature and for the natural economy of the uplands:

- Developing joint projects at a large 'super-landscape-scale'
- Developing joint submissions for further resources, and sharing existing resources where appropriate to deliver common objectives
- Providing a louder, clearer and better co-ordinated voice for nature in the northern uplands
- Improving the gathering, sharing and wider dissemination of data and evidence to support better decision-making.

## Part 2 – What we aim to do

11. The four priority areas of activity identified in paragraph 10 show the main focus of our activity, but what might this look like in practice?

12. Opportunities for the LNP include supporting the development and delivery of large scale, cross boundary projects on issues including some relevant links to further current information as follows:

- Peatland restoration projects through jointly-funded collaborative programmes <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/Peatscapes.aspx> and <http://www.yppartnership.org.uk/>
- Carbon / biodiversity offsetting programmes <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/>
- Further developing the concept of High Nature Value farming across the whole area and seeking appropriate support for farmers managing a wealth of biodiversity for comparatively little reward <http://www.high-nature-value-farming.eu/>
- Upland hay meadow research, conservation and restoration <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/HayTime-NorthPennines.aspx> and <http://www.ydmt.org/hay-time>
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation projects
- Black grouse and other key species conservation <http://www.blackgrouse.info/recovery/northpenn.htm>
- Catchment-scale land management programmes [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urgp\\_case\\_study\\_019\\_Ripon\\_MOP.pdf/\\$FILE/urgp\\_case\\_study\\_019\\_Ripon\\_MOP.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urgp_case_study_019_Ripon_MOP.pdf/$FILE/urgp_case_study_019_Ripon_MOP.pdf)
- Species survey and monitoring <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/Pages/WildWatch.aspx>
- Wildfire management planning
- Influencing CAP reform
- Natural economy / heritage skills training <http://www.nidderdaleaonb.org.uk/nidderdale-460> and <http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/lookingafter/projects>
- Major nature-based tourism initiatives

13. Further opportunities identified by the partners and supported by the stakeholder engagement to date include: the aligning of objectives in statutory management plans for the four protected areas, influencing large-scale strategic planning by national, regional and sub-regional bodies, providing a vehicle for joining-up major existing initiatives, streamlining funding streams and reducing duplication of effort between the partners and stakeholders.
14. Essentially, this is an opportunity to do things, in the language of Lawton, which are 'bigger, better, 'more' and more joined-up', to think bigger and bolder, and to work with the grain of nature on natural boundaries to support the local environment, community and economy.
15. Our work for the natural environment of the area will be governed by the need to 'conserve, enhance, expand and connect' our natural heritage and the LNP will provide an unrivalled opportunity to do this.

### **Our draft objectives:**

16. The priority areas of work and the opportunities identified above will be undertaken in pursuit of the following draft objectives:

#### **17. The LNP will work at a strategic level to help organisations collaborate to:**

- Through the development of integrated landscape-scale initiatives, conserve and enhance the natural heritage of the Northern Upland Chain so that it is more resilient in the face of future challenges
- Support the economic and social well-being of our upland communities through projects and programmes which also contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the Northern Upland Chain provides for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of the Northern Upland Chain and encourage people to take action for their conservation

#### **18. In achieving these objectives we will strive to:**

- Seek every opportunity to create links between a high quality natural environment, growth in the local economy and the well-being of local people and visitors

- Be mindful of the need to sustain a living, working countryside
- Work at a strategic scale to actively facilitate development planning which conserves the natural and built environment and meets community need
- Support opportunities for people to enjoy the uplands in sustainable ways
- Maximise and diversify the income streams of partner organisations
- Have regard for the environmental impact of our activities without compromising our ability to deliver our environmental objectives
- Collaborate with neighbouring LNPs and with other Protected Areas to achieve common goals

### **Part 3 Form Following Function**

19. Whatever final objectives and priorities are confirmed for the LNP, it will require a structure that is best able to deliver them. Engagement and partner discussions have highlighted the need for a structure which:

- Is focused on getting things done
- Ensures that collaboration happens by design, not by accident as has often been the case in the past.
- Avoids too much duplication of meetings and activities
- Is capable of providing feedback to, and input from, a wide range of organisations
- Establishes a close working relationship with the relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health and Well Being Boards
- Is representative of a broad range of interests with a stake in, and influence over, nature conservation and the rural economy, yet is not so large as to create 'organisational drag'.

20. It is proposed that the LNP has a flat structure with:

- a core group (a Board) of cross-sectoral representatives which would meet up to three times per year and
- a wider 'stakeholder' group which would meet annually
- Specialist time-limited task and finish groups as required, which should be wound up once their primary goal is achieved.

21. The Board would be comprised of those who would:

- drive collaborative working
- generate new ideas
- have an appropriate degree of influence balanced by a good knowledge of the relevant issues (rather than just be 'big hitters' on the one hand or 'specialists' on the other – though it is recognised that one can be both)
- feed-back to a wider group of organisations and individuals and bring those people and groups' ideas to the table.

22. The initial proposal for the Board is to have representatives from the four lead partner Protected Areas at officer and political lead levels, plus other parties as follows:

- National Farmers' Union
- The Moorland Association
- A representative of one of the area's water companies
- A representative from one of the area's four LEPs (Could a private sector business partner represent LEP interests and influence on the Board?)
- A representative from one of the area's four Health and Well-being Boards
- One representative from one of the area's four Wildlife Trusts
- The RSPB
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Two further seats elected for two years from the annual wider stakeholder meeting

23. Though this would make a Board of 20, it is recognised that not everyone would be able to attend each meeting and that it may be necessary to accept a large Board, with smaller project-focused sub-groups, if a range of influential and appropriate interests is to be engaged.

*Is the right **structure** (Board, Annual Stakeholder Forum, Working Groups as required) and right **Board composition** (above) to fulfil the stated criteria and meet the objectives and priorities for action outlined in this paper? If not, what is a better alternative?*

#### **Part 4 More to do...**

24. Our LNP has a 'north-south' focus, but there is still more work to do on ensuring that the strong partnership working continues 'east-west' out of the Protected Areas. There is still work to do to establish joint arrangements with the LNPs for the Durham Lowlands and Coast (Three Rivers LNP), Northumberland Lowlands and Coast, North Yorkshire and the Cumbria LNP. There will be some functions which still need to be considered on a county basis (e.g. Local Wildlife Sites) and it may be that in some cases on LNP will take a lead in a county on engagement with the LDF process and feed-in input from the NUC so that there is a single voice.

25. It is crucial to remember that the LNP will not sweep away the good work that is already happening – it should enhance it. Equally there should be several routes into the LNP and to receive feedback from it – e.g. Cumbria Wildlife Trust, if not on the LNP Board, would have a route into it through a Wildlife Trust representative and through CWT's membership of the NPAONB Partnership.

26. There are still final boundary issues to confirm in Cumbria in relation to the North Pennines AONB / Yorkshire Dales National Park and LNP proposals in the rest of Cumbria. Work on these issues is continuing, with the guiding principle being that decisions should be driven by the functional priorities of each LNP and what brings the best results.

## **Timeline and application process**

27. The timeline that we are working to is as follows:

*March 2012* ~ NUC LNP workshops

*April 2012* ~ NUC LNP follow up workshop

*May 2012* ~ summary of the LNP role and LNP key actions posted on the NUC LNP website, online forum to facilitate comment from NUC LNP

*June 2012* ~ Deadline for application for Government recognition as a Local Nature Partnership

*July 2012* ~ Defra decision on LNP status expected + ministerial event

*Autumn 2012* ~ if successful, inaugural meeting of NUC LNP

28. The application process has now been published by Defra. The assessment criteria that all proposed LNPs will have to demonstrate progress on can be seen in Appendix 1.

## **Next Steps**

29. The proposal for an NUCLNP has been very well-received by the overwhelming majority with whom the lead partners have engaged to date. A very wide range of people have been able to easily identify with the proposal because of its clear biogeographic focus with the existing protected landscape bodies and their many partners at its core.
30. The challenge now is to confirm the objectives and priorities, confirm joint arrangements with our neighbours, better engage LEPs and Health and Well Being Boards, establish a shadow structure and create a widely agreed vision and draft action plan. This should all be with the goal of increasing collaboration and making real improvements on the ground, supporting all those involved to 'conserve, enhance, expand and connect' our natural heritage and to support the rural economy.
31. We need your organisation's support in order to do that and will value your input to the next stage of LNP development during April 2012.

## APPENDIX 1

### Local Nature Partnership Application Assessment Criteria

Criteria	In your answers to the application questions, we will be particularly looking for information about:
Ambition & Understanding of the LNP role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Your understanding of the strategic nature of the LNP role and your initial ideas about how the LNP could add value in your area.</li> <li>○ Your understanding of, and ideas about, how working at a landscape scale and using ecosystem services thinking will shape your partnership and its priorities.</li> <li>○ Your intended timescale and process for developing your strategic vision for the area and how you intend to use it.</li> </ul>
Credibility and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How you plan to ensure that there is effective governance and decision making in the LNP.</li> <li>○ How you plan to establish credibility and be able to 'do business' with a range of local senior decision makers.</li> <li>○ How you plan to monitor your progress and know you are making a difference.</li> </ul>
Representation and Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The mix of skills, expertise and level of authority of <u>individuals</u> in your partnership and how you plan to address any key gaps</li> <li>○ The range of <u>organisations</u> and <u>interests</u> within your partnership and how you plan to address any key gaps.</li> <li>○ How you plan to involve and engage <u>wider interests</u>, including those of local communities, who aren't represented in your membership, in your work.</li> </ul>
Working across boundaries, sectors and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How the boundary was chosen and why it is the most suitable one for the area. What you have agreed with other LNPs about how any overlaps with them will be managed and how you plan to resolve any remaining issues.</li> <li>○ Your plans for working with businesses and strategic economic and public health planners and decision makers.</li> <li>○ How you plan to make the most of opportunities and address challenges around working with other LNPs and other local partnerships and projects.</li> </ul>
Achievability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The opportunities you see for funding the delivery of your aims by aligning and targeting local resources and sources of funding. Your plans to support the running of the partnership.</li> <li>○ How you plan to take future pressures and the longer term needs of an area into account in the development of your vision for the area.</li> </ul>

From: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/applying/>