

Northern Upland Chain

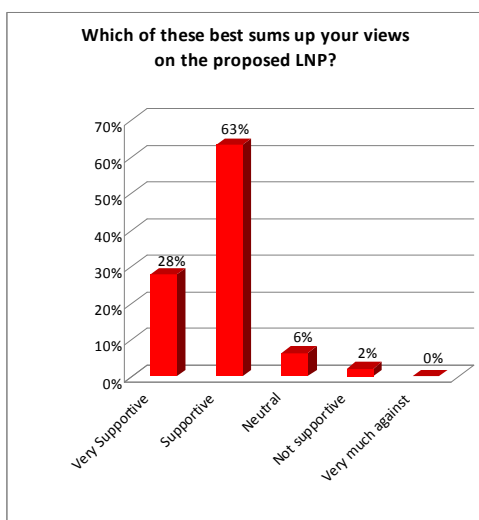
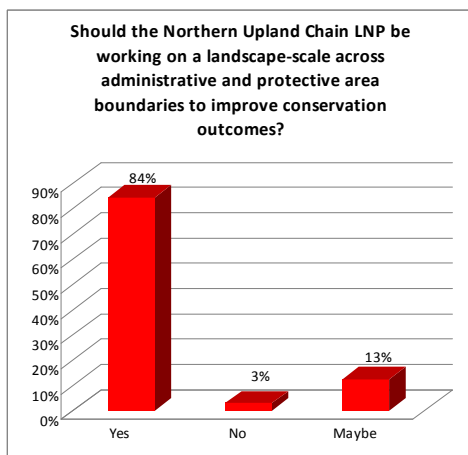
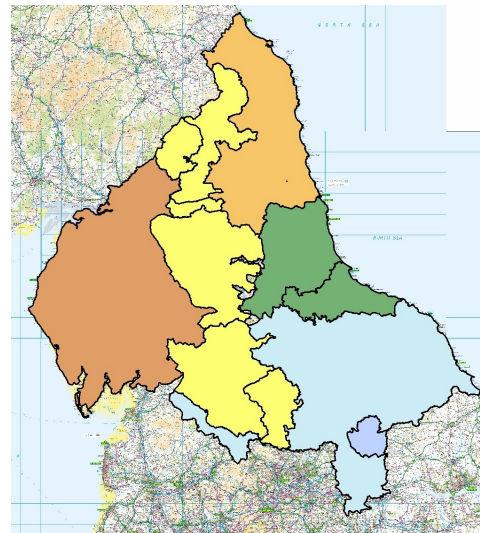


March 2012

Clear mandate to press ahead with the Northern Upland Chain

A proposal to create a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) encompassing a large swathe of the northern uplands has been given an overwhelming thumbs-up by representatives of a wide range of organisations. Following discussions at meetings in Hexham and Bolton Abbey more than 70 delegates representing 45 different bodies voted in favour of establishing the Northern Upland Chain (NUC). The NUC - coloured yellow on the map - would include the Nidderdale and North Pennines AONBs and the Northumberland and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

The results of the vote were unequivocal:



An LNP with a natural identity

The NUC is just one of 47 areas that received a development grant from Defra – but few others are likely to match it in terms of ecological coherence:

- The same habitat types are found across the whole area, including extensive tracts of blanket bog and species-rich upland hay meadows.
- Similar land-uses prevail: upland livestock farming, sporting estates and forestry.
- The area is host to a number of important species, perhaps most notably the Black Grouse
- Critical services provided by these landscapes include water supply to surrounding centres of population, and one of the countries best natural stores of carbon.

On other pages:

Delivering the Lawton vision: “more, bigger, better and joined”	page 2
Working with other LNPs	page 2
The Northern Upland Chain focus	page 3
What happens next	page 4

“More, Bigger, Better and Joined”

The concept of Local Nature Partnerships draws on John Lawton's 2010 report “Making Space for Nature” which had a major influence on the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper. The Lawton report focuses on the need to increase the resilience of our natural environment by linking fragmented habitats together at a landscape scale.

Two leading figures from the conservation world - Rob Stoneman (Director of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) and David Hill (vice-chair of Natural England) shared their thoughts on the LNP process with delegates at the workshops.

Our speakers were direct in acknowledging that LNPs will not, on their own, prevent and reverse the continuing loss of wildlife interest across England. But if we get them right, and adopt the sort of bold approach implicit in the Northern Upland Chain, LNPs will provide us with an opportunity to think and act more strategically, to improve the range of benefits and services we get from a healthy natural environment, and increase the extent to which nature is seen to be central to society's needs.



Rob Stoneman



David Hill

LNPs enter a world already perhaps over-laden with initiatives and partnerships. Partners will only want to engage if they are sure that the benefits exceed the costs in terms of their own mission; government will support us only if we use the LNP concept to promote and deliver nature-based solutions to challenges faced by society. This means engaging properly with those representing wider interests, in particular the economic regeneration agenda and those charged with improving the health and well-being of our fellow citizens.

You can learn more about the government's vision for Local Nature Partnerships by visiting the Defra website:

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

Who's driving this process?

Once established, the Northern Upland Chain will need to involve as many organisations as possible with a stake in the upland natural environment. Partners will then come together on an equal basis.

It is important at this stage however to drive things forward, so the four protected landscapes which together cover perhaps 85% of the area have established a working group which is leading the development process. The group comprises:

- Adrian Shepherd, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
- Paul Burgess and Kelly Harmar, Nidderdale AONB
- Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB
- Andrew Miller, Northumberland National Park Authority.

The group has appointed the Countryside Training Partnership (David Mount and Simon Lees) to facilitate the workshops, run an on-line consultation process and help with the LNP application process.

Working with other LNPs

Natural processes don't stop just because we draw a line on a map. One key to success will be to ensure activities and projects promoted by the NUC will complement those undertaken by the five (or more) LNPs with which we will share a border.

There has already been close collaboration with the different organisations developing neighbouring LNPs, and this will of course continue into the future. One priority for the Partnership is to share our plans with others, identifying areas of mutual interest and where long term collaboration will be necessary. This is an important next step in the process towards establishing not just the NUC but also all of the other LNPs across the North of England

What will be the focus for the Northern Upland Chain?

The central element of the meetings earlier this month were small group sessions at which delegates debated ways in which the NUC might make the most impact.

A strategic perspective

One challenge will be to identify activities that can be better undertaken across the NUC area as a whole, leaving partners and others to continue with more local delivery as at present. It was agreed at the workshops that the NUC should operate at a strategic level, rather than getting involved in project delivery on its own account.

Activities which NUC should prioritise as we develop a Partnership action plan

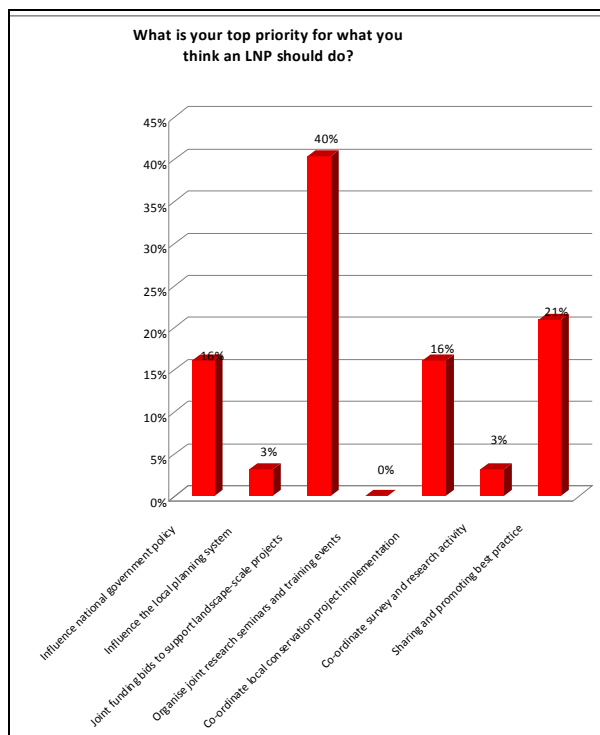
Four priority areas were identified for inclusion in the NUC delivery plan, all of which will be underpinned by effective communication between partners and sharing of best practice:

1. Accessing resources

NUC should co-ordinate joint funding bids that will deliver programmes across a wider area.

2. Influencing and engaging

The NUC should aim to represent 'nature' in other forums in a more powerful way than individual members might achieve on their own. This includes representation for example in the planning system, amongst the business community (especially through constituent LEPs) and by working with the emerging Health and Well Being Boards



3. Developing joint initiatives

The NUC should work to ensure delivery across the region is co-ordinated, in order to delivery greater habitat continuity.

4. Research and monitoring

One goal for the NUC should be to strengthen the evidence base which underpins the partners' management of the natural environment. Pooling both knowledge and monitoring protocols means we can learn more at no extra cost, and so deliver more effectively.



Expanding current work on hay meadows and species-rich grasslands could be a focus of the LNP

What happens next?

Defra have told us that they will launch the LNP application process before the end of March 2012, with an end of May deadline for submissions.

Having received such positive endorsement for the NUC concept we now need to start to develop a partnership delivery plan. At the workshops we talked about what might be achieved under a number of topics:

- Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- The natural economy
- Health and well being
- Data and evidence
- Education and volunteering

We need to build on what has already been proposed, as well as considering the possibility of taking on other areas of work.

What sort of a partnership?

The March workshops focused on function – what the NUC might most usefully deliver. Now we have a feel for this we need to scope out the means by which this will be achieved. The partnership will almost certainly be ‘light touch’, keeping costs to a minimum.

There is no intention that involvement in the partnership would mean delegation of powers or budgets, and partner contributions would be in-kind – for example use of meeting rooms and officer time.

Tuesday 24th April, 2012

A follow up to the March workshops will take place in April. We will be inviting a range of people to this meeting to ensure the environmental, economic and health sectors are represented, together with landowners and land managers.

By the end of the meeting we need to be ready to draw up the LNP application for submission to Defra. Our agenda therefore needs to include:

- Confirming our vision for the NUC
- Partnership action plan
- Partnership structure / delivery mechanism
- Working effectively with neighbouring LNPs
- Communication / knowledge exchange strategy

Partner endorsement

Our application will be greatly strengthened if it is endorsed by partner organisations. Defra doesn't expect everything to be signed and sealed by the end of May, but will expect partners to sign up to the application, confirming their support for this response to the LNP initiative.

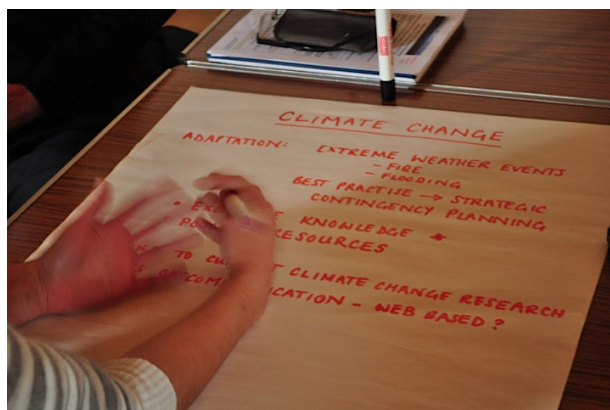
Such endorsement does not mean partners have to commit funds to the process, but it does imply that partners are prepared to engage with the NUC as it develops its delivery plans over the coming months.



© Countryside Agency / Charlie Hedley

Keeping involved

- We have built up a mailing list of more than 200 individuals who will receive this newsletter. We hope those on this list will forward the newsletter to colleagues both within and beyond their own organisations.
- A consultation web presence has been established:
<http://www.countrysidepartnership.co.uk/consultations/NorthernUplandChain.html>
The web page allows you to access an on-line questionnaire. This has been designed to give those who have not been involved to date a chance to add their views about the proposed partnership.
- We will use our mailing list and the website to keep you updated on progress over the coming weeks.
- A representative group of potential partners will be invited to the meeting on Tuesday 24th April in due course.



Organisations which have been involved in the process so far

The organisations which were represented at the NUC workshops in March 2012 are listed below.

Voluntary sector organisations / conservation partnerships

Association of Rivers Trusts
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Durham Wildlife Trust
Friends of Nidderdale AONB
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Kielder Partnership
North of England Raptor Trust
Northumberland Local Nature Partnership
Ribble Rivers Trust
RSPB
Tyne Rivers Trust
Woodland Trust
Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum
Yorkshire Dales Environment Network
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
Yorkshire RIGS group (geo-conservation)
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Land management organisations

Farmer Network (Yorkshire Dales)
Moorland Association
National Farmers Union North East
National Trust
Northumbrian Water
Yorkshire Water

Protected landscapes

Nidderdale AONB
North Pennines AONB Partnership
Northumberland National Park Authority
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Local authorities

Carlisle City Council
Cumbria County Council
Durham County Council
Eden District Council
Harrogate Borough Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Northumberland County Council

Defra Arms Length Bodies

English Heritage
Environment Agency
Natural England

Academic community / data organisations

British Ecological Society
Cumbria Biological Data Centre
Durham University
North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre

Access organisations

County Durham Local Access Forum
Land Access and Recreation Association
Northumberland Joint Local Access Forum
Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum

Organisations with an economic / social remit

Northumberland Upland LEADER
Rural Action Yorkshire
Teesdale Area Action Partnership

The "Northern Upland Chain" newsletter is published by the Countryside Training Partnership (David Mount and Simon Lees) on behalf of the proposed Northern Upland Chain partnership