



**West of England Nature Partnership**  
Joining up the dots for nature

# Prospectus:

An Investment Strategy for  
the natural environment,  
stronger communities and  
a healthy economy



# Contents



Our vision	Page 3
The partnership	Page 4
About the West of England	Page 5
The value of nature in the West of England	Page 6 - 7
Strategic objectives and outcomes	Page 8
Scope of investment strategy and criteria for inclusion	Page 9
WENP advocacy and consultation role	Page 10

# Our vision



Our natural environment is our most important asset as it supports everything we do. It is an asset that needs to be better managed in order to continue to support our economy and our wellbeing. WENP exists to create and coordinate a plan for the restoration of the natural environment within the West of England region.

The WENP exists to create and coordinate a plan for the restoration of the natural environment and integrate that plan into regional strategies for economic development, spatial planning and public health.

We will deliver this vision through advocacy and by bringing together key stakeholders to work in partnership for the benefit of the natural environment. We believe this region can lead the way in creating a stronger economy and healthier communities by investing in our natural capital.

Our natural environment is a big reason why people want to live, work and play in this region. It is one reason why businesses want to invest here. We have part of the Cotswolds, Mendip Hills and North Somerset Levels in our region, as well as the Severn Estuary and Avon Gorge. These landscapes and the wildlife that thrives within them are important in their own right and have a value beyond value. They also provide us with a range of economic services that are not taken into consideration in traditional financial accounting, such as carbon sequestration, flood defences, crop pollination, clean air and water, as well as supporting human health and wellbeing.

We all benefit enormously from the natural environment around us but it doesn't just exist for our benefit and we have a responsibility to restore it. We want a future that is nature rich to protect us, provide for us and inspire us.

The WENP invites you to join a growing partnership with the ambition to deliver a step change in the way we invest in and manage our natural capital alongside economic development, public health and spatial planning.

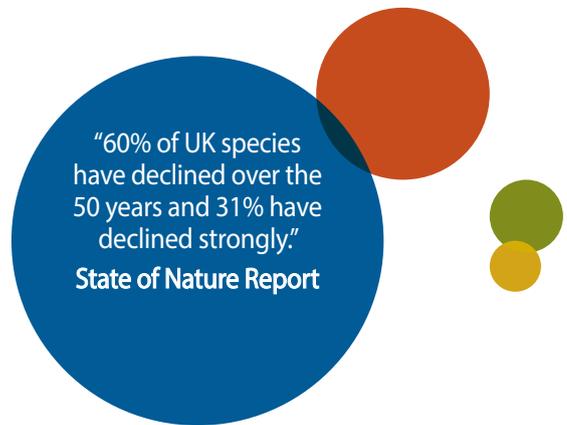
"Of the range of services delivered in the UK by eight broad aquatic and terrestrial habitat types and their constituent biodiversity, about 30% have been assessed as currently declining."

**UK National Ecosystem Assessment**



"60% of UK species have declined over the 50 years and 31% have declined strongly."

**State of Nature Report**



*If we safeguard nature's quality of life, our quality of life will also improve, as will the attractiveness of this region, and the distinctiveness of its economy.*

# The Partnership



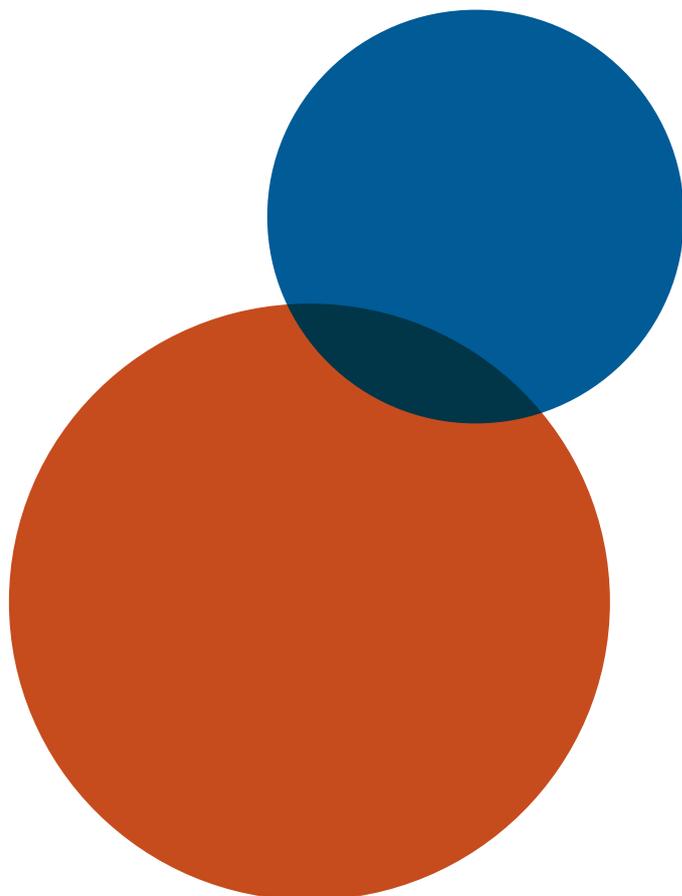
The West of England Nature Partnership represents a wide range of stakeholders with concern for the natural environment who want to support and add to our vision.

We believe working in partnership will help deliver our vision and objectives, by seeking creative and innovative solutions that result in net gains for the natural environment. Our movement has to be more coherent and work in a more joined up manner that supports economic development, influences spatial planning and improves health strategies in the West of England.

The WENP is a partnership with a lot of commitment already and we want you to help engage more stakeholders, building this platform further, and in thinking about our natural environment, as the Lawton Review demanded in a BIGGER, BETTER and MORE JOINED UP way.

A full list of partners can be found at [www.wenp.org.uk](http://www.wenp.org.uk)

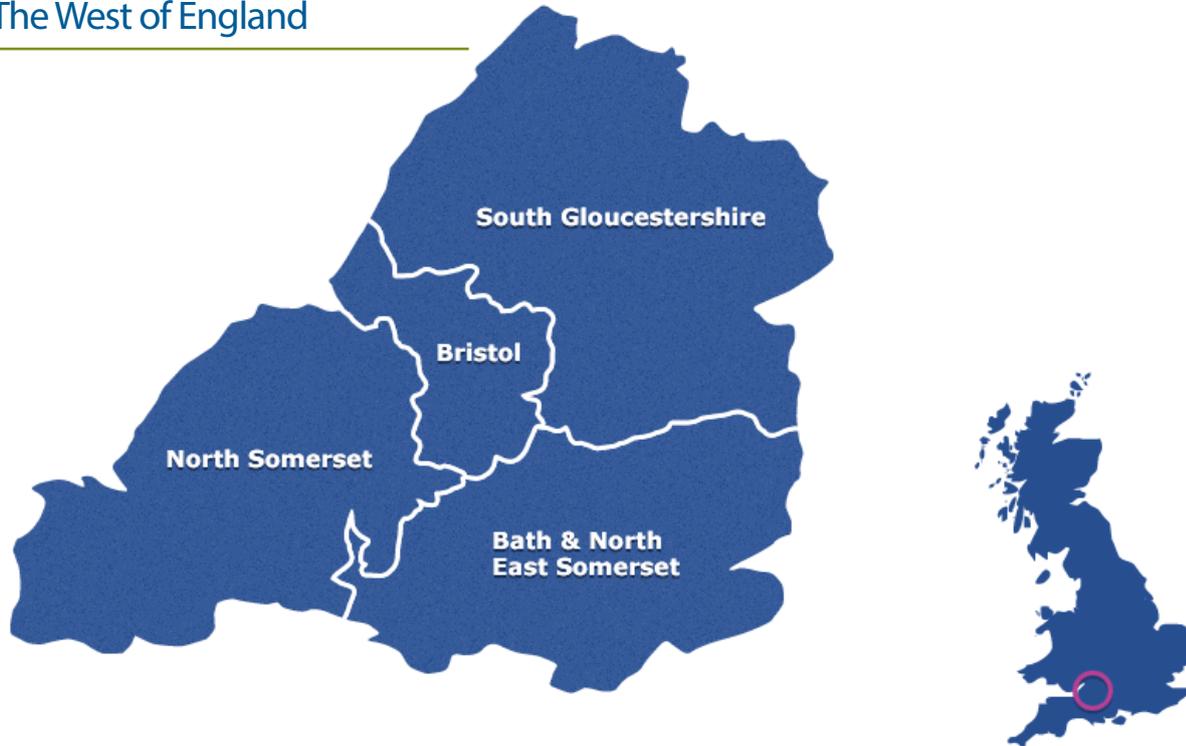
If you or your organisation would like to get involved, contact [info@wenp.org.uk](mailto:info@wenp.org.uk) to find out how.



# About the West of England



## The West of England



The map above shows the West of England, which covers the four Unitary Authorities: Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire.

This includes the urban centres of Bristol, Bath, and Weston-super-Mare. The area has an enviable track record in innovation, creativity and connectivity, and an outstanding strategic location.

Over the last ten years, the West of England area has grown faster than the UK average to a current population 1.1 million people.

### Key facts and statistics about the region:

#### Economy

- Over a million people and half a million jobs. Highest Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita of any major city in England outside of London
- High degree of self-containment - nine out of ten people who live in the area also work in the area
- £25 billion economy
- Six Enterprise Areas
- Employment rate of 74.8% which outperforms other core City areas

#### Creativity

- Bristol is one of six Science Cities in the UK, one of three Creative cities
- Home to the biggest silicon design cluster outside Silicon Valley
- 4 world class universities with internationally leading departments 67,000 university students and over 83,000 college students .
- Most educated core City region in the country
- 28 million day visitors annually
- £1.8 billion annual expenditure by tourists
- 2 million visits to the top ten visitor attractions

# The Value of Nature in the West of England



Greening our economy doesn't simply mean creating jobs in green industries, it means creating one that recognises its fundamental link to the natural environment. Whilst we should value nature beyond value, we should also recognise that a healthy natural environment is essential to economic development as well as societal wellbeing. The benefits of protecting biodiversity and investing in ecosystems greatly outweigh the costs of doing so.

#### Example economic development benefits:

- 'Sense of place' is a crucial factor in attracting and keeping businesses and skilled workers. The natural environment is the major factor for creating a sense of place in the region. The higher the quality of the natural environment the better the sense of place.
- The natural environment contributes economically to many industries:
  - Food and farming, a significant component of the local economy, needs a healthy natural environment – fertile soil, clean water and pollinating insects are essential components for agriculture
  - Our tourism and heritage sectors and the local food and drink industry rely on the unique aspects and special landscape to produce and market their offerings.
- The 'business' of protecting the natural environment is a growth sector in its own right and we already have a significant cluster of environmental business and organisations based in our region. For example, in 2005 the UK forest industries directly employed a total of 167,000 people and generated £7.2 billion worth of GVA. Estimates by the Forestry Commission suggest that in England alone, the increase in woodfuel production demanded by its Woodfuel Strategy could attract the equivalent of 24,000 new jobs by 2020
- Natural environment projects are already a significant source of inward investment in the region from external sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, national public bodies, landfill tax, national/international companies and Countryside Stewardship funds.

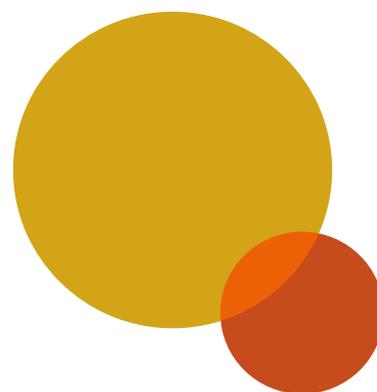
#### Example economic resilience benefits:

The long-term viability of our rural economies depends on the protection of our natural capital:

- All sectors benefit from the natural environment absorbing carbon and pollution as well as reducing costs. For example, urban trees also help with solar cooling in summer reducing energy costs for buildings – an increasing issue.
- Pollution imposes not only environmental costs but also financial costs, for example drinking water treatment. The cumulative cost of water pollution in England and Wales has been estimated at up to £1.3 billion per annum.
- Climate change adaptation will be increasingly important for businesses and society in order to cope with threats such as increased flood risks. Increasing tree cover in urban areas by 10% reduces surface water run-off by almost 6%, contributing to flood alleviation.

#### Example societal benefits:

- Natural green space is known to have a positive effect on mental health. Annual treatment costs for mental health in England are £105 billion versus £630 million to maintain 27,000 parks and green spaces. Practical environmental volunteering can provide engagement, employability and career support, alongside welfare advice; leading to employment, education or training. Many environmental businesses and organisations also employ people of all ages and abilities, increasing social inclusion.
- Trees and woodland have a measureable impact on air quality, in particular by adsorbing pollutants. Trees can also reduce urban noise through sound deflection and absorption, improving the environment for residents and workers.



# The Value of Nature in the West of England



## Natural benefits:

The benefits derived from the natural environment are vast, and the economic benefits are only one part. The same areas of land that generate economic value can also act as carbon sponges, flood mitigation, combat physical and mental health problems and contribute to social equity. The values of those benefits vary according to where they are located, who receives the benefits and how the value is calculated. However, all of it is well known and documented, and the overall sums involved are considerable. The small cost of managing a green spaces and enhancing our ecological networks should be set against the wider benefits it will have in areas such as economic development, health, social care, flood defence budgets and the cost of achieving low carbon targets.

Sustainable economic development can only occur by fully accounting for, and investing in, our natural capital. Opportunities for economic development in The West of England will be missed if we do not recognise the importance of the natural environment to the local economy and provide greater emphasis on investing in our natural capital.

*In the health sector, we now recognise that the greatest threats to public health will now come from our natural environment if we do not look after its own health. We also recognise the immense value connecting people with nature can have in dealing with increasing instances of mental health problems and issues such as obesity as well as supporting general wellbeing.*

Dr Janet Maxwell, former Strategic Director of Public Health.

"The decline in natural capital seen over the last 60 years will continue into the future, and is likely to accelerate, unless there is some radical departure from the approaches of the past."

State of Natural Capital Report  
2015

# Strategic Aims and Outcomes



The overall strategic aim of the WENP is to create and coordinate a plan for the restoration of the natural environment and integrate that plan into strategies for spatial planning, economic development and public health. However, we can't be a talking shop and create another system of bureaucracy. We have to be focused on outcomes and challenge ourselves on whether we are achieving anything differently.

Our key aims and outcomes are:

**Aim 1:** Identify and prioritise the needs for the restoration of the natural environment in the West of England, strengthening and securing nature at a landscape scale

**Outcome 1.1** Collate, increase and expand our environmental evidence base to enable informed decisions to be made relating to the natural environment, supporting an ecosystem service approach.

**Outcome 1.2** Work at a landscape-scale, by building cross-sector partnerships to secure direct benefits for the environment, local people and the economy.

**Aim 2:** Through high level engagement with decision makers and strategic planners, ensure our outstanding natural environment is at the heart of regional planning decisions and recognised as a key asset of the region.

**Outcome 2.1** Provide a joined up point of consultation, by providing decision makers with the analysis and evidence required to make informed decisions relating to the natural environment when making regional planning decisions

**Outcome 2.2** Develop an effective, resource efficient and accountable mechanism to respond, and challenge where appropriate, to major planning applications and decisions.

**Aim 3:** Secure investment to drive positive outcomes for the restoration of the natural environment, recognising that nature underpins our economy and societal wellbeing.

**Outcome 3.1** Establish a Natural Capital Trust that would enable new markets and mechanisms for natural capital enhancement and gain.

**Outcome 3.2** Facilitate optimal targeting of biodiversity off-setting payments.

**Aim 4:** Facilitate greater awareness of the benefits the natural environment provides to our health & wellbeing to all levels of society.

**Outcome 4.1** Work to influence decision makers and inform strategic health strategies about the value of nature for health & wellbeing, and the potential cost saving results.

**Outcome 4.2** Provide a joined up point of contact for those involved in nature based health care, to facilitate a network of people committed to sharing best practice, skills and exemplar projects.

**Aim 5:** Facilitate the restoration of the natural environment through effective multi-sector working and transformational change. Actively promote and communicate the value of the natural environment to all stakeholders.

**Outcome 5.1** Develop an investment strategy for the West of England region which outlines the regions priorities for the restoration of the natural environment.

**Outcome 5.2** Improve and build cross-sector partnerships, by bringing together the right stakeholders to result in positive outcomes for the natural environment.

**Outcome 5.3** Implement a communications strategy to inform and educate new and existing stakeholders about the work of the WENP, providing transparency through a variety of communication methods.



# Scope of WENP strategy and criteria for inclusion



WENP is developing an Investment Strategy that will include a wide range of projects that are advocated by the partnership and supported in applying for funding. The criteria for projects to be included in the strategy are that they:

- Provide a net benefit to wildlife or the natural environment (e.g. biodiversity, clean water or air quality);
- Provide benefit to people by connecting them to the natural environment;
- Give enhancement to the quality of life and a sense of place that is the West of England region;
- Deliver impact at scale or gives scalability through replication;
- Focus on the natural environment, not duplicating activity covered by other intermediaries (e.g. renewable energy unless specifically related to harvesting natural resources);
- Enable the West of England to trial something unique in the broader sustainability arena that would not otherwise happen via existing intermediaries.

The Investment Strategy will be very focused initially and contain projects that benefit economic value and public health in the following thematic areas:

- **Water, Energy and Food** (restoration of the natural environment to support future provisioning and management of these vital resources)
- **Health and wellbeing** (connecting people to the natural environment for their wellbeing and to support its protection and restoration)
- **Iconic Wildlife and Landscape** (restoration of the natural environment because nature has a value beyond value)

A framework for the Investment Strategy has been developed to enable the wider partnership to contribute project ideas that can benefit the delivery of the outcomes WENP seeks to deliver.

Please contact [info@wenp.org.uk](mailto:info@wenp.org.uk) to find out more.



# Scope of WENP strategy and criteria for inclusion



In addition to advocating an investment strategy for the natural environment the WENP exists to provide a coherent mechanism for economic development agencies, local government and health and wellbeing boards and others to consult on the major aspects of their strategies.

There is a balance to be struck between having influence and seeking a level of engagement which is insufficiently strategic. In terms of its relationship with the public sector the WENP has both a statutory and by agreement, a non-statutory role to play in helping inform and influence strategic decision making and the consequential allocation of resources. WENP has a strategy available on request detailing the nature of the relationship the LNP intends to develop with these bodies.

Local Nature Partnerships such as WENP are prescribed bodies as detailed in section 33A(9) of the Localism Act 2011 and a detailed explanation of the role of such partnerships is provided by DEFRA.

Section 110 of the Localism Act, introduced a formal Duty to Cooperate (DtC). It applies to all local planning authorities, national park authorities and county councils in England and to prescribed bodies, including Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs).

The duty to cooperate:

- Relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas, including strategic infrastructure provision.
- Requires that councils set out planning policies to address such issues.
- Requires that councils and public bodies “engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis” to develop and implement strategic policies.
- Requires councils to consider joint approaches to plan making.
- Requires councils to work collaboratively with LEPs, LNPs, private sector bodies utility and infrastructure providers.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out where cooperation might be appropriate to deliver strategic priorities; what joint working activities may be appropriate to ensure issues are reflected in local plans, and the expectation that local planning authorities should demonstrate evidence of having effectively co-operated.

Such strategic planning priorities include:

- Creation, protection, enhancement and management of ecological networks and Green Infrastructure.
- Recognising wider benefits of ecosystem services.
- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- Minimising impacts and delivering net gains in biodiversity.

