



Green Infrastructure Update

for the North East from Natural England

Issue 5 - March 2011

Welcome to the fifth issue of the Green Infrastructure Update. Thank you for your interest in this publication and any constructive feedback given to date.

With all the anticipated changes in Natural England at the time of issue it is not clear whether or not this Update can be continued in its current format. Any encouraging **feedback** would be particularly helpful to make the case for its continuation.

In this issue we bring you a round up of some of the recent developments in Green Infrastructure from across the North East. GI is certainly on the agenda in Durham, where Groundwork North East are working with partners to increase and improve local green spaces (page 3). Durham's landscape-scale Limestone Landscapes Partnership is also preparing to deliver £2.8m of projects across the area (page 3).

In this issue we also examine what the future may hold for Green Infrastructure (pages 4-5), introduce the GI Valuation Toolkit to help in making the case for investment in green infrastructure and the natural environment (page 6) and highlight The Woodland Trust's Visitwoods website (page 7). You'll also find useful information about events, publications and sources of funding for everyone involved in Green Infrastructure.

Enjoy this issue!



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PAINTING THE TOWN GREEN: DURHAM GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POST



People living and working in County Durham are set to enjoy health, economic and social benefits from more natural green space and community woodlands thanks to one of the region's largest voluntary sector organisations.

Groundwork North East, in partnership with Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Durham County Council, aim to increase the Green Infrastructure (GI) in County Durham with the appointment of a Green Infrastructure Programme Coordinator, Shonah Dobson. Shonah will be focussing her initial work on three pilot area within County Durham: East Durham, Durham City and the Bishop Auckland

Area Action Partnership Areas. Shonah will be carrying out a study to identify the requirement for different types of Green Infrastructure within these pilot areas. This study will focus primarily on improvements to existing areas of green space with a view to making multifunctional areas which provide benefits to wildlife, local communities, assist with flood control and climate change adaptation and can boost the local economy.

Work has already begun in the east Durham area to identify areas of green space in urban areas which are underused, have poor access and have high maintenance costs. Priority is being given to those sites which are in areas of deprivation and poor health, using information gathered from the health networks. By working with community group around the priority sites it is envisaged that funding bids will be put together, leading to on the ground project delivery. This process will be rolled out across the pilot areas, with a main focus on working with developers in such areas to ensure that the Green Infrastructure is incorporated into development proposals. Shonah can be contacted on 0191 527 3333 or Shonah.Dobson@groundwork.org.uk

GI IN THE LIMESTONE LANDSCAPES

Following the successful submission to HLF, the landscape-scale **Limestone Landscapes** partnership is now working towards the implementation of projects worth £2.8m over the next 3 years, starting in March 2011. Led by Durham County Council and Natural England, the Partnership is currently recruiting its 5 officer team which should be in place by May. Amongst its 25 projects are 'Leg it across the limestone landscape' and a green Exercise programme. Leg it hopes to improve a section of bridleway in Murton, develop some rights of way in and around Cleadon and Souter lighthouse as well as some important circular

walks on the border of Hartlepool and Durham.

This latter project hopes to realise the creation of two new footbridges in Nesbitt Dene, one of the many Denes on the East Durham coast.



For more information on the whole programme, contact Ken Bradshaw, Limestone Landscapes Development Officer on 0191 383 4078 or email: ken.bradshaw@durham.gov.uk



THE FUTURE OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

For the best part of a decade the concept of green infrastructure has been steadily encroaching on the consciousness of UK policy makers, planners and developers. Realisation has dawned that housing development, especially on the scale calculated to meet current needs, simply can't be countenanced unless it properly accommodates the natural environment.

We also need to create much greener places that foster individual and community pride, health and wellbeing, rather than more soulless beige and grey estates. Many readers will be already be aware that Natural England is going through significant change leading to a new organisational structure from 1 April 2011.

Natural England aims to communicate these changes, including new or confirming existing contact points.

This will be via a communication directed at a broader range of stakeholders than this Green Infrastructure Update, so please watch out for more news in the near future.

All change?

The Coalition Government has a new take on spatial planning. The way in which Green Infrastructure is designed and applied already chimes with this approach to planning. Green infrastructure strategies can only be pulled together by local authorities in partnership with local voluntary and private sector bodies.

Green infrastructure is also very 'Big Society friendly'. There's a clear track record of community groups participating or leading green space projects. Community led projects to improve the natural environment can quickly make a dramatic difference to the character and feel of a place. This can help to generate civic pride, confidence and a readiness to tackle more ambitious projects.

A Natural Environment White Paper to endorse GI?

Spring 2011 will see the publication of a Natural Environment White Paper. It emphasises the importance of the 'Ecosystems Approach' for delivering a host of essential ecosystem

continued on next page





services, and recognises that a healthy natural environment provides invaluable social and economic benefits for free.

It also specifically refers to green infrastructure in recognising that: ‘...we know not only that parks, green spaces and waterways are valuable to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities but also that, properly managed, they form a network of “green infrastructure” that can help us manage surface water flooding, filter pollution and cool the city air by between 6 and 12°C – something that will become increasingly vital in a changing climate’.

Conclusion

Whilst there is certainly no room for complacency green infrastructure is now a well established concept within spatial planning and certainly within the lexicon of planning, development and land management.

Even if the housing building sector is temporarily subdued the latent demand for millions of new and affordable homes isn't going

away and nor is the need to design and adapt places to cope with climate change. Funding, both capital and especially revenue, is going to remain a problem.

Green infrastructure will need to compete ever more fiercely with other demands on reduced local authority budgets and seek new and novel financing measures.

We do need to assemble more robust and quantitative evidence for the benefits of green infrastructure, especially its economic benefits.

That's something that Natural England is keen to work with others to achieve.

*This article is shortened from “**Green Infrastructure - A Concept that's Finally Come of Age?**” by Andy Gale from Natural England's Environmental Advice and Analysis Team in Countryside Recreation Network – Green infrastructure (Issue Oct 2010).*

This issue covers a number of feature/ review articles on different aspects of Green Infrastructure.



THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VALUATION TOOLKIT

The current economic situation means that the rationale for investment is being scrutinised as never before and localism is the defining scale for policy.

This is especially true in the environmental sector. To help in making the case for investment in green infrastructure and the natural environment a Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit was published in February.

A consortium including Tees Valley Unlimited, Natural England, the Northern Way, Natural Economy North West, CABE, and the three Regional Development Agencies in the north of England worked together with consultants Genecon LLP.

The starting point for the project was that well designed, planned and managed green infrastructure can bring a wide variety of benefits to local communities and places – and can underpin sustainable economic growth and add value to a broader development proposal.

A set of tools was developed to help in enabling measurement of the potential economic impact

of green infrastructure investment, and helping people to make good decisions about the value of change. The toolkit aims to provide a simple framework to identify and scope the benefits of green investments and existing green assets.

The toolkit is not perfect and there are a number of areas where further work and research is needed and where care is needed in the interpretation and presentation of results.

For this reason the toolkit is being released as a prototype and stakeholders and interested parties are encouraged to download, use and experiment with the toolkit and provide feedback on:

- Experiences of using it – good and bad
- Suggestions on how the tools could be improved
- Ideas for new tools, and
- Suggestions for sources of better evidence

The toolkit can be downloaded here.

The consortium has also established a Green Infrastructure Valuation Network (GIVaN) to encourage and coordinate feedback.

Comments on the toolkit should be sent to: givaluation.network@merseyforest.org.uk

VISITWOODS IN EAST DURHAM



www.visitwoods.org.uk is a comprehensive, interactive website showcasing virtually all publicly accessible woodland in the UK created by the Woodland Trust.

The Woodland Trust is working nationally with a number of partners using grant funding of £1.2 million from Natural England from its 'Access to Nature' programme (part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme).

In the North East the Woodland Trust has employed a VisitWoods Outreach Officer for East Durham.

The Outreach Officer Chris Affleck will deliver the VisitWoods project at a grassroots level, supporting communities and working with specific target groups which include children and young people, people with disabilities and older people, in order to provide greater opportunities for them to visit their local woods.

To find out more email:
chrisaffleck@woodlandtrust.org.uk

news in brief

Country Park opens on former Sunderland colliery site (HCA)
([click here](#))

National Trust inquiry into whether Britons are losing touch with the outdoors
([click here](#))

People run the risk of becoming 'terrified of the countryside', warns Fiona Reynolds, Director-General.

The National trust has kick-started a six-month nationwide project to find out if the UK public is losing touch with the outdoors. The project will report in summer 2011.

Homebuyers prepared to pay premium to live next to green space
([click here](#))

British property buyers prepared to pay £20,000 over the odds for a sea view, according to a new report. Having green space was the second most popular factor and those seeking such a location are willing to pay an extra £16,340.

Building a healthier and greener New York - BBC
([click here](#))

New York's planning authorities are determined to put healthy living back at the heart of urban design and those seeking such a location are willing to pay an extra £16,340.

news in brief

Future of CABE

CABE and the Design Council have confirmed they will merge from 1 April, following an agreement reached by the two bodies and government. The new organisation will speak with one voice to support a broad spectrum of design, architecture and public space.

It will be the government's advisor on design in business innovation and the built environment. It will provide a "one stop shop" for design support and advice to industry, communities, central and local government encompassing a range of services already provided by both the Design Council and CABE.

The GI Factor toolkit

This **toolkit** is attached to the ERDF programme in North West England and its sustainable buildings policy.

It asks projects to use the toolkit to identify and design in opportunity for Green Infrastructure. One of the main priorities of the Northwest Operational Programme (NWOP) is to enhance and support the Northwest regional economy.

Environmental sustainability has been included in the NWOP to enable negative environmental impacts from projects to be minimised, or mitigated, and positive impacts to be maximised, whilst achieving a lasting and positive difference to the economy and people of the Northwest.

BAP stories wanted

If you have an interesting story that relates to delivery of the Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan then contact Elaine Jaggs, Biodiversity Coordinator, Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership on 0191 284 6884 or Elaine.Jaggs@northwt.org.uk

The Big Tree Plant

It's the International Year of Forest in 2011. The **Big Tree Plant** launched in December 2010. Sponsored by Defra it aims to increase the number of trees planted in towns, cities and neighbourhoods throughout England. The Big Tree Plant is a national partnership bringing together the wide range of organisations who already plant trees, as well as civic and community groups working with Defra and the Forestry Commission. The campaign is aiming to support the Big Society by getting more people involved in planting and caring for trees and establishing local community tree projects throughout England. The campaign follows last year's coalition manifesto announcement that a national tree planting scheme would be launched.

Liverpool City Council calculates green infrastructure worth £8bn

(Source: Horticulture Week)

The **Liverpool Green Infrastructure Strategy** was drawn up to make the most of sustainable management of the city's green spaces, trees and waterways. Liverpool City Council worked with the primary care trust to determine the importance of green space to the economy and health and found that green infrastructure was an £8bn asset.

Benefits of Green Infrastructure Knowledge Portal

This **knowledge portal** contains key publications relating to/containing information on the benefits of green infrastructure, including research, policy, evidence notes and case studies.

news in brief

Green roof with a view (HCA)

Green roofs are a great way to mitigate the effects of climate change and are increasingly being seen as an important part of helping cities to adapt. London has already risen to the challenge. Its Climate Change Adaptation study proposes that all major new developments within London's Central Activities Zone policy area are required to have a green roof (and where not technically feasible, a cool roof).

New climate change adaptation training materials for community practitioners

An online facility for training community groups in climate change adaptation has been launched by Community Forests Northwest on behalf of Liverpool City Council. The training resource helps groups to explore how street trees, private gardens, school grounds and other green spaces can help us cope with some of the challenges – and enjoy some of the benefits – that climate change may bring. This material was developed with funding from the **Climate Change Local Area Support Programme (CLASP)** and the **Green and Blue Space Adaptation for Urban Areas and Eco Town project (GRaBS)**.

Green roof shelter

Ever thought about how to create a long-lasting shelter embedding high wildlife value. This **hands-on guide** may provide you with a solution.

Cutting Carbon, creating growth: making sustainable local transport happen – (DfT Jan 2011)

The **Local Transport White Paper** sets out the Government's vision for a sustainable local transport system that supports the economy and reduces carbon emissions.

In a previous study the Department expressed some concern that many local planning authorities lack the information and resources to ensure that the design of new housing developments encourage walking, cycling and public transport use.

The White Paper also underlines Central Government's direct support to local authorities, including the £560m Local Sustainable Transport Fund over 4 years.

Survey for green space practitioners

GreenSpace is seeking to secure the evidence it needs to provide effective advocacy and properly represent and support the sector. They have produced **a short survey** to gauge the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review to our parks and countryside services. Many sub-regional meetings have been discussing the impacts ad-hoc, but to achieve a regional and national picture, collating this data is key.

PUBLICATIONS

Benefits of Green Infrastructure - (Urban regeneration and Greenspace Partnership; Oct 2010) - The summary report shows communities and local authorities how well-planned and managed green infrastructure can deliver multiple benefits to themselves and businesses. The report supports decision making on green infrastructure, and highlights cost-effective opportunities to achieve local and national policy objectives. It also shows the relationships and interdependency between the benefits, and ways to maximise those benefits. Other project outputs include an in-depth, fully referenced technical report providing a critique of the current evidence, and a series of supporting evidence notes and case studies. [Click here for the main report](#) or [click here for the summary](#).

Economic Contribution of Green Networks - (NW Green Infrastructure Think Tank and LUC; July 2009) - This study is a review of current evidence and action to examine evidence and current action on the relationship between economic regeneration and green networks/ green infrastructure, with a particular focus on regeneration in industrial / post industrial urban settings. [Click here for the study](#)

Blue Sky Green Space (Green Link, Oct 2010) - The report "Understanding the Contribution Parks and Green Spaces can make to Improving People's Lives" outlines in the broadest sense the wide range of green spaces – from parks and gardens to city farms, country parks, woodlands and wildlife sites to play areas, allotments to urban plazas – and the range of benefits they bring, whether provided and managed by statutory agencies, local authorities or by community led and managed groups such as community gardens or 'Friends Of' groups. [Click here to access the report](#)

Monitoring Engagement in the Natural Environment - (MENE; Natural England, Sep 2010) - This report summarises the headline findings from the first year of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. The survey collects detailed information on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment, focusing on visits to the natural environment. Fieldwork took place between March 2009 and February 2010.

The survey covers:

- An overview of visits to the natural environment
- Who? A profile of people that do and don't visit
- Where? The destination of visits
- What? A profile of visits
- Why? Reasons for visiting and not visiting
- Enjoying and appreciating the natural environment

[Click here to access the report](#)

Managing green spaces - (CABE Dec 2010) Examines how the organisation and structuring of parks and green space services affects their performance. Managing green spaces: seven ingredients for success brings together evidence to assist green space managers, corporate decision-makers and advisors in deciding the future of services. It sets out seven 'ingredients for success.' It also outlines the resources that green space managers can draw on to describe the critical services that green space provides to local communities. [Click here to access the report](#).

Community-led spaces (CABE 2010) - A guide for local authorities and community groups - Open spaces function as part of a network that benefits people beyond the immediate locality. This guide is an introduction to the main issues surrounding transfer of public space assets and explores some of the advantages of doing so.

[Click here to access the report](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Urban green nation (CABE 2010)

No one knows exactly how many green spaces there are in our urban areas, where they are, who owns them or what condition they are in. This report presents the findings of the first of two pieces of research commissioned by CABE Space to gauge the state of England's urban green space and its impact on people's health and well-being. It starts to fill the serious information gap highlighted by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and its recommendation that this problem should be resolved.

[Click here to access this report](#)

How well prepared is the UK for climate change? - (Committee on Climate Change Sep 2010)

This report of the adaptation sub-committee provides the first national assessment of how well prepared the UK is to cope with the impacts of climate change through adopting measures to adapt to climate change. The report recommends taking a strategic approach to land use planning, including enhancing green space where effective in the design of towns and cities to help manage surface water drainage and cope with rising temperatures and heat waves.

[Click here to access the report](#)

Greening the UK - Why more planting (HTA 2010)

Greening the UK is the campaign to promote the role of plants and open green spaces in creating environmentally and socially sustainable communities.

The report was launched at a conference for town planning, developer, housing and environmental professionals to explore how to deliver environmental and social objectives within the new localism agenda, and examine best practice in the field of sustainable construction.

[Click here to access the report](#)

Improving Young people's Lives (SDC Oct 2010)

This report looks at the role of the environment in building resilience, responsibility and employment chances. It proposes a green thread through policy and practice, where the impact of the environment is considered alongside social and economic factors – the building blocks of sustainable development. The main conclusion from this report is that Green exercise, outdoor activity and environmental volunteering maximise young people's employment chances and improves their wellbeing and sense of personal responsibility.

[Click here to access the report](#)

A plain English guide to the Localism Bill (DCLG Jan 2011)

This guide describes the main measures under four headings:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

[Click here to access the report](#)

Natural England continues to publish a wide range of other science and technical reports to help support our environmental delivery work and ensure that our advice to Government and others is based on the best available evidence.

All of our publications are free, to access our publications catalogue click [this link](#).

EVENTS

Natural Connections - achieving more with less across rural & urban landscapes

17 March 2011, dialogue matters, London

[Click here for more information](#)

Protecting the Local Environment - Keeping Communities Clean and Green,

22 March, inside government, London

[Click here for more information](#)

Double trouble? The new public health and localism agendas,

23 March 2011, UWE, London - More information 0117 328 3102 or email: Carolyn.Webb@uwe.ac.uk

Trees People and the Built Environment,

13 & 14 April, Birmingham

[Click here for more information](#)

Miscellany of Planning Law, 4 May 2011, RTPI North East, Newcastle

Planning Law - New Directions, 28 March 2011, RTPI North East, Newcastle

Development Viability - Hands On Workshop, 18 May 2011, RTPI North East, Newcastle

[Click here for more information](#)

A conference on research into inclusive outdoor environments -

28-29 June 2011. OPENspace, in collaboration with research partners at the Universities of Salford and Warwick, is hosting a third international conference in Edinburgh. The event will coincide with the publication of findings from the consortium's flagship research project – Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I'DGO).

Green Infrastructure,

29 June 2011, RTPI North West, Manchester

[Click here for more information](#)

FUNDING

Heritage Lottery Fund - Parks for People programme

£250,000 to £5million. Parks for People offers grants for projects that regenerate public parks of national, regional or local heritage value.

Next application deadline is 31 August for a decision in December

[Click here for more information](#)

People's postcode trust

Applications quarterly. Next application window opens 11 April and closes 27 May. Grants ranging from £500- £10,000.

The Trust acts within six fields of operation, including Health, Community Development and Environmental Protection. Phone 0131 555 7287 or info@postcodetrust.org.uk

[Click here for more information](#)

People's Trust for Endangered Species

Main grant is UK mammal grant £500 - £30,000. Next deadline 15 Nov 2011.

[Click here for more information](#)





CASE STORIES

North East Regional Green Exercise Forum
Has produced **a number of case studies**
including:

- Bike it
- Get Active Coast to coast
- Ashington Community Woodland
- Green living
- Green Gym
- Improving the access network

Natural Economy North West case studies
related to the 11 economic benefits of Green
Infrastructure are available by **[clicking this link](#)**

A Case Story about a successful Green Gym
project in St Lawrence Park, Byker is available
by clicking **[this link](#)**.

A Case Story detailing the transformation of
contaminated wasteland in Darlington into a
new housing development and park. **[click here](#)**

A case story on the development of the
Easington Colliery concept statement and the
Ashington Community Woodland exemplary
green space will also be added to Natural
England's North East Green Infrastructure
pages shortly

OTHER RESOURCES

The **North East GI Pages** are regularly
updated, e.g. with the content from this and
future GI updates. Two pdf documents are
available from the page:

- The first signposts Green Infrastructure best
practice documents on the web.
- The second signposts environmental data
sources for use in Green Infrastructure
audits.

The content of both documents will also be
updated on a regular basis.

AND FINALLY...

If you have any article ideas for the next issue,
or comments on this issue, we would like to
hear from you. Please send us your feedback
or **[do the online survey](#)**. If you would like more
information about any of these items, would like
some follow up or have specific comments or
question, then please contact:

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