

People's Assembly for Nature

Programme of Activity

Week one - What is nature and why protect it? (11 - 13 November 2022)

Friday Evening

Welcome

- A general welcome to the assembly
- An overview for attendees of what to expect from the assembly process.
- An explanation of the wider impact of the People's Plan for Nature process.
- An opportunity to explore the exhibition space which included illustrations of ideas from the People's Plan for Nature National Conversation.
- Dinner and a chance to people to get to know one another

Saturday Morning

Topic: What is nature and why should we protect it?

- Introductory video by **Sir David Attenborough**
- **Professor Nathalie Seddon: 'What is nature and why should we protect it?'**
This talk provided an overview of what 'nature and 'biodiversity' are, and why they are important from a scientific perspective. She also highlighted that how nature is perceived and valued varies in space and time, and among different cultures.
- Time for discussion and reflections
- **Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England: 'What has nature ever done for us?'**
This talk gave an overview of why nature is important and how we rely on it in the UK, covering both the material and security cases.
- **Dr Radhika Borde: 'The intangible value of nature-spiritual, religious and cultural significance'.**
This talk discussed the intangible value of nature, both in the UK and globally, with a particular focus on its spiritual, religious, and cultural significance.
- Discussion and Q&A

Topic: How have we ended up here?

- **Sir John Lawton: 'The current state of nature and how we have ended up here'** Discussed the main drivers of biodiversity loss globally, focussing on how these have impacted nature in the UK.
- Discussion

Saturday Afternoon

Topic: Who is responsible for these challenges?

- **Ruchir Shah, Director of External Affairs Wildlife Trust: 'Who's responsible for addressing these challenges'**- This talk gave a brief overview of the different actors, helping participants understand the range and scale of actions the assembly could recommend and ensure they are targeted appropriately.

Actors include:

- UK Government and Devolved Administrations
 - Local Authority
 - Businesses/ Industry
 - Wildlife and Environmental NGOs
 - Communities/ Citizens
- Discussion, Q&A and initial visioning exercise

Sunday Morning

Topic: Setting the scene for visioning

- **Ella Saltmarshe: 'Long-time thinking and being a good ancestor'**. This talk introduced the concept of environmental stewardship and its role in addressing the nature crisis.
- **Professor Bill Sutherland: 'The nature crisis is solvable, but we must use evidence'**. This talk highlighted that the nature crisis is a solvable and demonstrated that we have a toolbox of solutions which must be deployed at scale, using evidence to guide decisions.
- **Talk by Dr Radhika Borde, from the University of Leeds**, to highlight that assembly members must consider fairness, equity and a just transition as they deliberate on potential actions. Looking at the UK context, issues such as access

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to nature, equity within decision making and ensuring a just transition (where traditional livelihoods might be at risk from proposed changes) will facilitate discussions throughout the assembly.

- Discussion, Q&A, Visioning exercise, wrap-up, and next steps.

Week Two - Protecting and restoring nature (3 - 4 December 2022)

Saturday Morning

Topic: How we use our land, rivers and seas, what frameworks are in place to protect nature and why have these not worked?

- General welcome to the online assembly.
- A recap for assembly members about the first assembly weekend from Pete Smith.
- **Professor Nathalie Seddon, University of Oxford and Academic Lead**, welcomes assembly members back, recaps what was covered in Weekend 1 and gives an overview of UK land, freshwater and sea.
- **Richard Benwell, Wildlife and Countryside Link: 'UK habitats, species, and the protection mechanisms currently in place'**
This talk introduces UK habitats, species and associated processes and gives a summary of current protections in place, including through protected areas, planning systems, legislation, and why these are in place.
- **Nadia Shaikh, Freelance Nature Consultant: 'Why are current protections not delivering for nature?'**
This talk explores why, whilst there are some examples of effective nature protection, the overall picture is that these have not succeeded in stopping the decline.
- **Group discussions:**
 - What information struck you from those talks that seems important to return to and/or explore further?
 - Did you hear anything that surprised you?
 - Before joining this session, what did you know, if anything, about protected areas and protections for nature in the UK? Have you ever visited one? Have you seen them on programmes? Where is the nearest one to where you live?
- Break
- **Group discussions – making sense of what we heard. Prompts:**
 - What stands out as important from each presentation?
 - What seems central to our understanding of the current situation and the challenges relating to it?
 - What do you consider to be the key role of these mechanisms for protecting and conserving nature?

- What would you expect to see if protections were effective? i.e. what would good look like?
- Agree in your group the 2 – 3 big key issues/barriers relating to the current approach to putting mechanisms in place to protect and conserve nature - *What is holding this back?*
- If time, consider which of the actors play a role here, and why they may be blocked from effective action?

Saturday Afternoon

Topic: How Protections can work?

Having heard about why existing protections have not brought about sufficient nature protection overall, assembly members will hear about some examples where they *have* been effective. Importantly, these presentations will discuss the enabling factors and the barriers to success, so that assembly members can consider how these might be used in making protections more effective.

- **Sara McGuckin, Chief Scientific Officer of NI Environment Agency: ‘How have legal protections on an internationally important site resulted in a good outcome for nature?’** discusses this topic through a case study of Ballynahone Bog.
- **Tom Tew, Nature Space: ‘How planning can help, focussing at a local authority level’**
This talk looked at great crested newt district level licensing schemes and where they have resulted in a good outcome for nature.
- **COAST, Community of Arran Seabed Trust: ‘Scotland’s No Take Zone inspires at EU Life Platform Meeting’.**
Assembly members watch a short film which demonstrates an effective nature protection scheme led by the local community.
- **Sam Beaumont, Gowbarrow Hall Farm: ‘Farming within a protected landscape’**
This talk focusses on the enabling factors and challenges of farming within a protected landscape.
- **Facilitated small group discussions:**
 - What information struck you from those talks that seems important to return to and/or explore further?
 - Did you hear anything that surprised you?
- Break

- **Group discussions - Identifying potential areas of focus for 'Calls to Action' relating to protected areas:**
 - What insights are emerging about what works with regards to protections?
 - What are the common/effective ways of approaching barriers/difficulties?
 - What should we be really paying attention to when trying to protect/restore nature?
- **Wrap-up**

Sunday Morning

Topic: Disconnect from Nature- Reconnecting With Nature

Assembly members explored how a disconnection from nature - from the individual to the structural level - is a driver of the biodiversity crisis. The assembly learned about how these impacts different parts of society and heard about some of the reasons for disconnection, particularly noting continued urbanisation. In addition, there were examples of where connections have been re-built, the associated benefits of these, and how these examples might be taken to expand better access to nature for all

- **Professor Miles Richardson: 'The role of nature connection and improving it to unite both human and nature's wellbeing'**

This talk discusses nature disconnection, its effects, how these vary across communities/ age groups and the impacts this has on structural level decision making.
- **Maxwell Ayamba, Sheffield Environmental Movement: 'Access to nature and how this varies across different communities'**

This talk discusses how access to nature varies across different communities, not only within cities, but also in the countryside. Implications of inequality of access to nature, examples of outcomes when nature access has been improved and how this can be better supported/facilitated.
- **Gillian Dick, Glasgow City Council: 'Active urban greening projects'**

This talk discusses examples of active urban greening projects and retrofitting water quality improvements in towns/cities. It explores what the multiple benefits are, as well as the challenges and enabling factors in delivering these.
- **Nigel Symes, RSPB: 'New housing developments and building in biodiversity-friendly measures'**

This talk uses the example of Barratt Homes Kingsbrook development to demonstrate how new housing can be built with nature in mind. It covers both the challenges and enabling factors.

- **Kat Deeney, Plymouth City Council: 'How could decision making be done differently if those round the table were connected to – and accounted for – nature?'**

This talk introduces the concept of Natural Capital and how Plymouth City Council has applied this to give nature a seat at the decision-making table.

- Break out into small group discussions
- 10-minute break
- **Group discussions: Identifying potential areas of focus for 'Calls to Action' relating to nature disconnection and reconnection:**
 - What stands out as important from each presentation?
 - What was said that is central to our understanding of the current situation and the challenges relating to it?
 - What are the consequences of people being disconnected from nature?
 - What are the consequences of decision makers being disconnected from nature?
 - What are the main elements of reconnecting with nature?
 - What can help ensure that nature is accessible to all?
 - What does it mean to give nature a seat at the decision-making table?
- Break up for lunch

Sunday Afternoon

Topic: Restoring Nature

This session moved beyond protection to consider restoration - how might we consider restoring nature where it has been lost? Assembly members heard about nature restoration as a concept and some of the challenges and trade-offs to consider in implementing this. They heard about initiatives to restore nature at a range of scales (including how these have been enabled, or not, by our existing way of doing things), what can be learned from these examples, and to consider what might enable more nature restoration.

- **Professor Rosemary Hails, Nature and Science Director, National Trust: 'What do we mean by restoration?'**

This talk provides an overview on the concept of restoration, why it's important and how/where it can be successful in the UK today, including species reintroduction.
- **Philip Price, Seawilding: 'Community-led restoration initiatives'**

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This talk explores Seawildling, the UK's first community-led native oyster and seagrass restoration project. It explains both the enabling factors that supported the project's development and the challenges that had to be overcome.

- **James Rainey, Senior Ecologist at Trees for Life: 'Rewilding the Scottish Highlands'**

This talk discusses an ambitious project under way in the Scottish Highlands, which focusses on 'process-led' rewilding. Covering the successes, along with the enablers and barriers that have been met along the way.
- **Tim Ferrero, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust: 'Wilder Solent'**

This talk gives an overview of an ambitious restoration programme and multi-agency partnership being developed across The Solent; a highly populated area of the south coast of England that includes agricultural land, freshwater and coastal habitats. It looks at the multiple benefits for nature and climate of this kind of project, but also the challenges and barriers.
- **Small group discussions**
- **15-minute break**
- **Group discussions – making sense of what we have heard.**
 - What stands out as important from each presentation?
 - What was said that is central to our understanding of the current situation and the challenges relating to it?
 - What are the main difficulties and challenges in making successful restoration happen?
 - Why does it seem difficult to do more of it? Where are the issues and challenges? How do these vary in urban vs rural examples?
 - What seem to be important elements of successful restoration of nature?
 - Where can restoration play an effective role?
- **Conclusions presented from across the four sessions**
- **Wrap-up and end of Weekend 2**

Week three - Sustaining people and nature (14 - 15 January 2023)

Saturday Morning

Topic: How we farm and what that means for nature?

This session will remind participants that food production is a major current use of our land and seas, highlighting ongoing and forthcoming changes driven by a climate-warmed world and an increasing need to meet our energy needs sustainably. The focus will be on how we currently farm, the drivers of this, the nature impacts and the trade-offs inherent in changing this. Assembly members will hear about what potential there is to do things differently and consider how this could be enabled.

Professor Pete Smith- Academic Lead – ‘An overview of land, freshwater and sea use in the UK’

This talk provides an overview of the current issues surrounding the use of land, freshwater and sea, and likely future requirements.

Sue Pritchard- CEO of the Food Farming and Countryside Commission. ‘Nature and Farming’

This talk gives an overview of the key interactions between farming and nature including soil health, inputs and run off, pesticide and herbicide use. Sue also addressed the yield and biodiversity trade-offs that come with reducing intense farming whilst touching on how climate change will impact current farming practices. Sue also summarises the current picture regarding regulation and agricultural subsidies across the UK, and how the future of subsidies is still under debate following Brexit.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- Reactions to the issues. What are the significant challenges with farming and its impact on nature? Has anything surprised you about current farming subsidies?
- What ‘stuck out’ to you from what you have heard that seems important to return to / explore further?
- Are there any points you need clarification on to help us with the next stage of our discussions?

Aled Jones- President NFU Cymru- 'A history of farming, current challenges and hopes for the future'

As a large-scale farmer and NFU representative, Aled talks about how they perceive the challenges, how they have sought to address them, what the barriers and enablers are, the trade-offs, and their hopes for the future of farming.

Martin Lines- UK Chair NFFN- 'The Role of Regenerative and Nature Friendly Farming'

Martin addresses the role that regenerative agriculture and nature-friendly approaches to farming can play in restoring and enhancing nature, and how these approaches can be scaled to support sustainable farm businesses of all sizes.

Helen O'Keefe- Young Crofter of the Year- 'Crofting: Farming, nature, community and heritage'

As a small-scale crofting and collective rights speaker, Helen talks about links between farming, nature, culture, community, and heritage. She discusses how different approaches have supported better outcomes for nature and what the barriers, enablers and trade-off are.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- What do you think are the biggest struggles for farmers currently working to protect nature?
- How can farmers have a greater role to play in helping prevent biodiversity loss in the UK?
- How do you think farmers can be supported to produce food in a way that also supports nature, locally and nationally?

Saturday Afternoon

Topic: How we produce seafood and what that means for nature?

Food production is also a major 'use' of the sea, with big influences on the state of nature. Assembly members hear about the current 'squeeze for space' at sea, with increasing demands for energy production, areas for protection, marine cable and shipping. Discussion covers the main challenges faced in fisheries and aquaculture in the context of the nature crisis - the overexploitation of target fish stocks and the damage to species, habitats and stored blue carbon that can occur in commercial seafood production.

Professor Paul Kemp- University of Southampton- 'What are the main challenges faced in fisheries and agriculture?'

Paul provides an overview of the main 'nature' challenges faced in fisheries and aquaculture including competition space, overexploitation of target stocks and impacts on species and their habitats. He also highlights the current regulatory and subsidy regime and the importance of evidence-based decision making.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- Reactions to the issues. What are the significant challenges with fishing and aquaculture and its impact on nature?
- What 'stuck out' to you from what you have heard that seems important to return to / explore further?
- Are there any points you need clarification on to help us with the next stage of our discussions?

Hannah Fennell- Orkney Fisheries Association- 'A seafood industry perspective on sustainable fishing methods'

Hannah provides a seafood industry perspective on why current practices are in place and how seafood sourcing fisheries can be supported to improve both on the conservation of target stocks and protecting nature. Hannah also talks through various success stories and planning examples and how these can be built upon at a local authority level. She also discusses where existing protections have resulted in a good outcome for nature and what the enabling factors and barriers were.

Helen McLachlan- RSPB Scotland- 'How we produce seafood and what that means for nature – an NGO perspective'

Helen talks about tackling challenges of overexploitation and its impact on nature. She discusses how we could do things differently with reference to policy and innovation.

Rhianna Rees- Scottish Association for Marine Science/ Seaweed Academy- 'Regenerative approaches to food production in the sea'

Rhianna examines regenerative approaches to seafood production by discussing how diversification can support nature, climate and people. Using a wholescape approach Rhianna examines how the land and sea are connected, and how diverse coastal habitats can support nature, sequester carbon, produce food, support new livelihoods and a just transition.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- What are the implications for nature in the way we currently exploit fish?
- How might fish stocks be managed into the future?
- What are the trade-offs that we need to manage?
- What are the considerations for a transition to sustainable fishing and aquaculture that is both fair and which works?

Sunday Morning

Topic: How we feed ourselves and what that means for nature

What we eat is a major determinant of how we use our land, freshwater and seas. The environmental impacts of raising animals for meat, dairy and eggs are high, and this has an impact on nature here in the UK, as well as 'offshored' impacts on nature globally. Equally, what we eat and how we buy our food are influenced by a range of factors. Assembly members hear from the farming industry about the influences on what is produced and what dietary changes would mean for them. Assembly members also hear about the risks of 'offshoring' impacts if land use changes don't occur alongside dietary change, what this means for nature overseas, and the highly influential roles of food businesses further up the supply chain, as well as government, in incentivising changes and ensuring livelihoods can be supported.

Professor Pete Smith- Academic Lead- 'Our diets and the impact on people and nature'

Pete gives a quick recap of what assembly members heard the day before and introduces the topics that the assembly will cover today. He outlines land use requirements for different diets, how much of our food is currently imported and exported and the risks of offshoring impacts. Pete also touches on wider structural challenges affecting food and its production, like public procurement and food waste.

Mark Lea- Green Acres Farm- 'The benefits of diversifying what we farm and eat'

Mark highlights what changes in diet might mean for farmers, what their concerns are, the trade-offs around meat production and the opportunities.

Anna Turrell- Sustainability Director at Tesco- 'The role of supermarkets within supply chains'

Anna discusses the role of supermarkets within supply chains by examining how supermarkets can influence farming and food producers. She also highlights some of the sustainability successes and challenges for large supermarkets linked to nature, and the enabling factors and barriers to these. Anna also talks about the role that pricing and labelling plays in influencing supply chains and consumers, as well as how the current food system in the UK could help nature thrive.

Hannah Norman- Food Sense Wales- 'Regional Sustainable Food Partnerships'

Hannah talks about how regional sustainable food partnerships could shorten supply chains and support better outcomes for nature, producers, and citizens. Using examples, Hannah discusses how these can be scaled up and what the barriers and enablers are.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- What role does diet play in addressing the nature challenge in the UK?
- What are the challenges of a more nature friendly diet?
- What are the areas of greatest impact?
- What risks and trade-offs do we need to be mindful of? (offshoring/costs/affordable food)
- What are the roles of the different actors with regard to diet?

Sunday Afternoon

Topic: Beyond food- how we use our waters and what that means for nature

Whilst what we eat is a major determinant of how we use our land, freshwater and seas, it is far from the only demand we place on nature. In this session, assembly members hear about how we meet another of our basic needs, clean water, and the pressure that this puts on nature and how we might meet this need in a more nature-friendly way.

Professor Steve Ormerod- University of Cardiff- 'How we use our rivers and waters and the impact on nature'

Professor Steve Ormerod provides an overview of our needs and challenges in relation to our rivers and waters, and how this may change in the future. He also talks about current water regulations, infrastructure and how effectively we are addressing the challenges.

Yvette Degaris- Head of Environmental Engagement at Thames Water- 'The water industry and nature'

Yvette provides a top-down perspective from a water company of how we might address challenges, the enabling factors and the barriers that had to be overcome.

Mark Lloyd- CEO Rivers Trust- 'Catchment management: nature-based protection for people and wildlife'

Mark provides a bottom-up perspective from a community organisation on how we might address challenges, the enabling factors and the barriers that have to be overcome.

Facilitated small group discussions - initial responses to what they have heard.

Prompt questions:

- What are the main issues of concern with regards to protecting freshwater resources?
- What is surprising about what is happening?
- What are some of the things that have to happen to overcome those?

Dr Matthew Agarwala- Economist at the Bennet Institute for Public Policy at the University of Cambridge AND Professor Ian Bateman- Professor of Economics at the University of

Exeter- 'The Economics of Biodiversity- How nature is accounted for (or not) within the current economic model and who pays?'

In a joint talk, Matthew and Ian discuss how nature is accounted for (or not) within the current economic model, the results of that and the key recommendations of the Dasgupta review. They also use examples of 'the art of the possible' from around the world, highlighting the barriers and enabling factors in taking these examples to scale.