



The countryside charity
Hampshire

VERSION 1 as at Sept 2021

Position Statement

Natural Capital and Ecosystems Services

CPRE Issue

The protection and enhancement of the natural environment is at the heart of CPRE's approach to planning. This guidance relates to the recognition of this in terms of the value of the assets the natural world provides to us all.

Guidelines

Natural Capital

This is defined by the OECD as *"natural assets in their role of providing natural resources, inputs and environmental services for economic production"*.

The National Ecosystems Assessment in 2011 recognised the critical importance of the natural world in well-being and economic prosperity but found that it was consistently undervalued in conventional economic analysis and decision making. This led to the formation of the Natural Capital Committee in 2012 which continued its work until 2020. Its work has been influential in formulating the Government's 25-year Environment Plan and subsequent legislation.

Ecosystems Services

There are four main categories of ecosystems services defined, which are ecologically and functionally inter-related:

Supporting Services

These underpin all the other services. They are provided by flora and fauna and micro-organisms that are essential for healthy soils, habitats, nutrients and water cycling.

Provisioning Services

Are the products and productivity from the natural world including raw materials: crops, grazing, timber, energy and water, both surface and underground aquifers.

Regulating Services

Are the controlling mechanisms of the natural environment that sequester carbon, help to regulate pollution in the air and on the land, regulate water flow to prevent flooding,



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prevent soil erosion, provide the pollinators vital for food crops and the natural disease and pest control organisms.

Cultural Services

Relate to people's enjoyment of the natural environment; its inspirational and spiritual values, tranquillity and cultural heritage that can support peoples' well-being and the recreational value of the area.

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF provides:

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) ...
- b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems services – including the economic and other benefits of the most versatile agricultural land and trees and woodland

Sample Policy

Very few Local Plans include a policy on Natural Capital or Ecosystems Services. The best developed so far is a core policy of the South Downs National Park Local Plan, which was drafted with the support of leading academics in the field. Based on this a policy might read:

1. Development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This will be achieved through the use of high quality design, and by delivering all opportunities to:
 - a) Sustainably manage land and water environments;
 - b) Protect and provide more, better joined up natural habitats;
 - c) Conserve water and improve water quality
 - d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;
 - e) Improve the area's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change
 - f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting and other means;
 - g) Conserve and enhance soils, use soils sustainably and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;
 - h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;
 - i) Reduce levels of pollution;
 - j) Improve opportunities for people's health and well-being;
 - k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources of the area.



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2. Development proposals must be supported by a statement that sets out how the development proposal impacts, both positively and negatively, on eco-systems services. The statement should be proportionate to the impact of the development.

NB In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters,