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Wetland Vision: Summary of workshop stakeholder feedback

**Wetland Vision Technical Document:
Overview and reporting of project philosophy and approach**

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This report was developed specifically as an annex for the Wetland Vision Technical Document. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the Wetland Vision Project partners.



WETLAND VISION: SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

WORKSHOP1: PHILOSOPHY AND TARGETS, JULY 2006

Themes covered on the day:

Theme 1: Targets in the vision. This theme was designed to explore how the Vision can add value to and express the existing BAP targets, and whether the Vision could advocate, or develop longer-term process orientated targets.

Theme 2: Issues of scale; how deterministic do we wish to be. This theme was designed to begin exploring if it is possible to start describing what these wetlands will 'look like', particularly those of a larger landscape scale, or as part of catchment-wide restoration.

Theme 3: Future wetlands – articulating them through the vision. There is a careful balance between describing our future asks for wetlands without being seen to close off options for further development at the local level. This theme will also explore, through a checklist, specifically what words the vision is likely to contain, and whether these should be expressed in purely mapped or descriptive text form.

Organisations represented:

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, various independents, National Trust, English Nature, Rural Development Service, Countryside Agency, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, WWT, Ponds Conservation

Main stakeholder recommendations from the day:

- The Vision should be used as a platform to advocate a landscape-scale approach to wetland restoration
- The Vision needs to adopt an inclusive language
- The Vision should explore or advocate target setting for the restoration of natural processes, and fit of current targets within this
- New targets should be included that fall outside the current BAP target setting process (e.g. ponds), where appropriate, but use the revised BAP targets as a bench mark within the 50-year vision – there is a natural fit with current government
- The proposed nested approach to mapping will meet multiple user needs – but stay focussed on the national audience
- Don't prescribe specific end points, 50 years ahead may be very different
- Do not release field data scale data or detailed local aspirations under the umbrella of the project

- We need to seek a way to express local vision material that does not seemingly close off options for future local projects to develop
 - We need a double-stranded approach, involving targets and actions to secure species against extinction during the onset of climate change, plus targets and actions to secure large areas of habitat which could be more extensively managed and more flexible in the range and type of biodiversity they were designed to support
 - The 20 year targets are not particularly visionary for some habitats – and insufficient to provide us with a buffer against future climate change
 - Much of the language around ecosystem processes and services remains confused. We need to work through what these concepts mean in order then to develop meaningful objectives for their promotion or delivery via the Vision
 - We need to become more sophisticated and specific about the way we express the functions of wetlands for biodiversity and people, and how we then translate these concepts into something measurable (and mappable) within the Vision
 - Consider developing guidance material on how to put together a local vision within the project
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WORKSHOP 2: CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER LAND USES, 12TH SEPTEMBER 2006

Themes covered on the day:

Theme 1: Incorporating elements of climate change into mapped aspirations for wetlands (current extent and future possibilities). The first theme was designed to help us understand the extent to which we can incorporate current thinking about how the climate, and wetlands will change into our Vision.

Theme 2: What predicted land-use changes may actually enhance or deliver new wetlands that we could espouse through the Vision? E.g. Carbon storage. The second theme acknowledged that other land use changes will occur within the 50-year time-frame, often related to climate change, and that creating and enhancing wetland might be of benefit. We asked people to help us to define what it might be appropriate to articulate through the Vision.

Theme 3: Ecological changes in wetlands habitats and species. The third theme was designed to capture how ideas about how 'rigid' we should be about describing wetlands of the future given that community types may change.

Organisations represented:

BTO, Defra, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Freshwater Biological Association, Herefordshire Nature Trust, various independent, National Trust, English Nature, Rural Development Service, Countryside Agency, NFU, River Restoration Centre Ltd, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, The Woodland Trust, University of Exeter, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, WWF, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust.

Main stakeholder recommendations from the day:

- We should learn from other sectors as to how they intend on coping, or adapting, to climate change, but don't necessarily be limited by the aspirations or demarcated 'no-go' areas of others sectors since policy can change
- Modify our aspirations on a map only where we are confident that areas are 'no go' due to climate change effects, and couch our advocacy in terms of positive language where ever possible
- Be wary of crude arguments
- Revise how explicit we are about describing or classify habitat types of the future
- Change must an accepted component of describing future habitats
- Be careful when describing, or counting on current water availability scenarios as a means to advocating wetland potential
- A big scale of action for wetlands is needed in order to meet the big scale of impacts likely due to climate change. Bigger wetlands will facilitate adaptation to climate change
- Future infrastructure developments could create opportunities for wetland creation

- Use the vision to advocate a sensible approach to wetlands creation around airport zones
 - Be careful of the science when advocating the role of future wetlands in storage carbon, for example – stick to the science
 - Species should form flagships, but not targets in their own right – they should be indicative of ecologically functioning wetlands and management tools
 - The public not yet ready for the notion of a dynamic wetland – absorb this sensibly into the vision
 - Habitats will change, and new locations will not necessarily be the same in terms of species composition and ecosystem services
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WORKSHOP 3: EXPLORING DRAFT MAPS, 7TH DECEMBER 2006

Themes covered on the day:

Theme 1: Methodology and prioritisation. This theme was designed to look briefly at the methodology we are using in the project, and then to work through how significant some factors are in informing our national map, or limiting our aspirations.

Theme 2 – map styles and presentation. There are a number of key messages that the project needs to convey to a wide audience about where wetlands could go in the future, some of which are supported by maps. Rate each the following maps (marks out of 10 could be useful) in terms of a) Fit with the message that is being conveyed b) The visual presentation of the map and the use of colours.

Theme 3 – local visions informing the national map. Information on local visions has been collated in varying detail and depth across the country. One of the main purposes of this was to utilise them in informing, or prioritising areas on our national vision map. We have only taken this work so far, and feedback from this session will inform whether we continue to collate information and how we express it or not, within our sub-catchment database.

Organisations represented:

Anglian Water Services Ltd, CEH, Defra, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Faber Maunsell, Freshwater Biological Assoc, various independents, Natural England, NFU, Ponds Conservation Trust, RSPB, SEPA, Severn & Avon Vales Wetlands Partnership, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, WWT, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts

Main stakeholder recommendations from the day:

- The potential for future fen habitats is clearly very difficult to illustrate on national level maps. Many fen communities exist where they do due to complex local hydrological conditions. Keep maps simple by illustrating areas around the existing communities of fen types, and supplementing this with an understanding that these rarer habitats should also be sought first when seeking new future wetlands, supplemented by the need for in-situ improvements.
- We need to check some of the methodology developed for the northwest (Penny Anderson work) and see if it can be applied at the national level. Current work on Wetmecs will eventually inform the project, so we need to check this area of work for potential advocacy/incorporation through the project.
- Separate maps for ponds and ditches are valuable and the methodology proposed seems in principle fine.
- We need to check how ditches are represented in the vision, and consider the relationship between this and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh which are usually closely related.
- The potential for coastal and floodplain grazing marsh maps is less problematic to illustrate than some other habitats – all agreed that potential has been illustrated fairly well, but that the justification for the selection of 1% slope areas needs to be made clearer.

- Circulate scoring table and text to participants to score each ecological, physical and political factor accordingly. In general, ecological factors are highly specific to habitat type, whereas the physical and political factors can broadly be applied in the same way to all habitats. Some of the factors, such as airport areas, were considered as 'not a show stopper' but rather an issue that needs illustrating through the vision. Some of the factors need their underlying data improved, such as liability to future coastal flooding, and the airport zones map. Often factors do not need weighting at all, they simply illustrate that different types of conservation measures will be needed in different places.
 - There should always be a presumption that potential for the restoration of a rarer habitat should come first, or should provide the future focus in any area. Other habitats could then be seen as linking and buffering habitats. If there is no potential for more specific habitats, or that an area is characteristic of less specific habitats then this provides clarity on the preferred future habitats. JCA descriptions and a-e targeting statements could be used to help clarify what the rarest habitat in any area is, or what the maximum potential might be given the landscape type.
 - Message and associated map has to be as simple as possible, and immediately understandable, with a clear and easy to interpret key.
 - Some maps can be useful to show the journey that we have gone through to the final map, but where this is the case we need a clear tick box scheme on the side to show how the layers have been built up.
 - The support for individual habitat maps remains high.
 - Maps can be the means to gain confidence in the scoring, but the scoring itself needs to be signed off and justified. Simplify as much as possible any grading to three levels of priority rather than a set of numerical ranges.
 - Double check how current wetlands are being expressed - there is great potential for a misleading message, especially for the uplands.
 - When representing small sites on maps through dots we can inadvertently over represent areas. We can however, exclude areas below a minimum area or size, until zoom into to a region/area when then can appear again. Find out if there is a mapping standard surrounding this.
 - Focus on producing A0 (wall sized) maps as well as maps for PowerPoint presentations etc.
 - In general, the local visions database should be allowed to grow and be updated over time, with new local visions developing in line with the national vision. The database should be web enabled or form an interactive map with live web links.
 - Robust minimum standards should be defined to ensure there is agreement between the national and local vision areas of opportunities.
 - In terms of expressing local visions on a national map, opinions include no addition to the national map, dots to represent each vision and to indicate active/incomplete status only, or boundaries shown on both national and then regional maps.
 - We must join up better with some of the macro visions, i.e in the west midlands and use regional summaries as a gateway to information about local visions. We need a proper cross check to highlight all the visions that are truly valuable. The link to RSS needs to be explicit, and linked with maps being provided for that purpose (if appropriate).
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WORKSHOP 4: EXPLORING LINKS WITH THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, 25TH JUNE 2007

Themes covered on the day:

Theme 1: Mapping historic wetlands. This theme explores how the Wetland Vision can show where wetlands were using maps and appropriate case studies. A key message of the Vision is to illustrate the contrast between the vast wetland landscapes of the past, and the diminished wetlands of the present. This provides the context within the project for describing our aspirations for future wetland landscapes over the next half-century.

Theme 2: Incorporating historic environment datasets. Within the Vision project we want to show that restoring and recreating wetlands could also work to protect and enhance wetland archaeological sites. Our maps currently prioritise areas according to potential importance for biodiversity. Showing how this links in with historic environment priorities would lend considerable credence to the project. This session is designed to identify the most appropriate ways to integrate historic environment datasets into the Vision given the approach we have taken to date.

Theme 3: Nature conservation and historic environment sectors working together for wetlands. To make the link from the national strategic Vision to local wetland delivery, the project will also be developing guidance to inspire the development of local wetland visions on the ground. We want to highlight those local visionary projects that espouse the principles of partnership working and multiple benefits, such as to both nature conservation and cultural heritage sectors. This session aims to explore the opportunities and issues surrounding the biodiversity and historic environment sectors working in partnership to develop joint aspirations through the development of a vision.

Theme 4: Historic environment messages. This theme will explore what the Vision should be promoting, looking at what both individuals and organisations want from the Vision, and what the success criteria are. This session will look at stakeholders and the engagement in the heritage sector; who we should be talking to and why, who we are launching it at, what will the Vision do for the sector, and relevant historic environment targets. The aim of the final session will be to gain clarity on what this project can deliver for historic environment professionals.

Organisations represented:

Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice, Devon County Council, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Exeter University, Heritage Lottery Fund, Lincoln Record Society, National Trust, Natural England, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Somerset County Council, Suffolk County Council, University of Birmingham, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology service, WWT

Main stakeholder recommendations from the day:

- Use the simple expression of landscapes dominated by expansive wetlands, as the Visions theoretical historic wetlands map. This map is to be supported by case studies and text which describe the diversity of habitat types, quality and extent that have been lost e.g. uplands and lowland wetland loss. What 'historic period' is represented will be discussed in the supporting text.
 - The following case studies will be added to the Vision material to demonstrate wetland and wetland landscape loss:
 - 1) Witham Valley – drainage of fens over large area and effect of changing land use pressures over time
 - 2) Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation – loss of wetlands in extent throughout county, and time depths
 - 3) Humber Wetlands studies – upland wetland loss, peat, Robert Van De Noort *et al* studies
 - Putting together a single map expressing the interests of the historic environment is not only a difficult task, due to the complexities of the varying types and requirements of potential preserved archaeological resource, but also because politically a single map could be misinterpreted as a 'constraints map'.
 - The factors that give rise to 'high potential' for wetland archaeology are multifaceted and may interact, requiring expert interpretation from an historic environment specialist. The maps presented, which expressed options for wetland archaeology potential, were almost identical to that depicting current wetland extent. The key message is that there is potentially valuable wetland archaeology throughout all the wetland habitats and landscapes in varying degrees, and that this potential resource must be borne in mind when considering wetland creation or enhancement.
 - Of the suite of historic environment factors to be considered, a range of key factors could be presented to highlight the need to consult historic environment records on e.g. potential for wet preservation, potential for buried archaeology, potential for palaeoenvironmental record.
 - The maps will not be weighted with an historic environment factor. All areas of wetland potential identified by soil suitability and other physical factors should consider the historic environment by default with local expertise. We can signpost information and advise which bodies to consult and promote the Wetlands for Archaeology GIS datasets.
 - Within the feedback, there is a resounding call for early and sustained communication from inception of projects and local visions, leading to integrated management planning for the site.
 - A selection of case studies will be added to the Vision material to demonstrate best practice in working together using the material and key issues recommended, and will include 1) Somerset Levels and Moors , 2) Sweet track and Shapwick Heath NNR and 3) Lincs Grazing Marsh Project, 4) elements of the Beccles Marshes excavation as part of the Suffolk River Valley Project
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WORKSHOP 5: PE-LAUNCH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, 8TH NOVEMBER 2007

Themes covered on the day:

Theme 1: Reviewing maps and messages. The first theme is designed to help us understand your general views on what the project has developed. What we will present you with here is something quite close to what we'd like to launch, and so this is the ideal time to find out which bits you think are particularly useful, or which, despite extensive work still don't quite hit the mark, need re-couching or otherwise marginalising.

Theme 2: Options around the launch. The second theme gives us, and you, the chance to help shape the launch itself. Given that we are intending to launch early next year, there may be areas you think we need to give extra attention to before hand, and research you yourself think is needed in advance from within your organisation. There are links and other events we could probably capitalise on, or should otherwise avoid. How can we support each other with statements or commitments about wetlands, making the most of the projects outputs for wetland conservation?

Theme 3: Stakeholder views on the vision in the future. The third theme is designed to look at options for the future, beyond the launch.

Organisations represented:

ALGAO UK, Association of Drainage Authorities, Broads Authority, Buglife, CLA, Council for British Archaeology, Defence Estates, English Heritage, Environment Agency, various independents, National Trust, Natural England, NFU, RSPB, Somerset County Council, Suffolk County Council, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, University of East Anglia, Water Management Alliance, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, WWT, Bat Conservation Trust

Main stakeholder recommendations from the day:

- Map 1 – Theoretical historic extent of wetlands. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear and supplemented with supporting info. A decision needs to be made about whether to split this map into upland and lowland historic wetlands.
- Map 2 – Current extent of wetlands. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear and a decision needs to be made about whether to split this maps into upland and lowland current wetlands. We need to seek ways to better reflect quality issues.
- Map 3 – Future wetlands. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear and consider developing a two-tone map distinguishing new from future, and enhancement from creation if possible. Add in top sites from all habitats where feasible or appropriate. A decision is needed over whether to split the presentation of the map into upland and

lowland. Clearly define what 'can be', from what we want or 'should be', and the kinds of conditions that will give rise to the 'should'.

- Map 4 – Habitat creation potential for coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear and the colour and interpretation of legend needs to be decided. Consider combining individual habitat visions together
- Map 5 – Lowland wetland priority areas for the historic environment. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear. Decide whether or not to absorb these priority areas directly into the 3rd map
- Map 6 – Grazing marsh and the tidal floodplain. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear. A decision is needed on whether to 'blank' out all saline areas on all maps, or only on the major 3rd map
- Map 7 – Airport safeguarding zones. The map's interpretation note needs to be clear. Co-present this map with supporting statistics and explore access to low fly area MOD datasets. Remove catchments from backdrop. A decision is needed on how to incorporate and nest this map within products.
- Project Steering Group needs to decide how to take forward wording and selection of key messages and a decision is needed on the level of consultation on key messages, in addition to consultation on maps.
- We need a robust selection of supporting local visions to supplement a launch, drawn from a variety of case studies and not the 'usual suspects'
- Clear identification of audiences and an MP for launch needed
- Pitt review – is there a relationship we can capitalise on?
- A decision about the extent of regional efforts, and other key stakeholder engagements is needed pre-launch
- The development, and sign off of 'next steps' needs to be ready and presentable
- Get commitment to delivery lined up from government and try link to other government events – get Defra very warm and ready to support
- Must have land-owners on our side, and cooperative before a launch. They are the key and funding is the issue they are most likely to want explained
- Backing from central government beforehand is essential
- Engagement with landowners through agricultural shows would be good, and the message would probably come best from the EA, and other water managers
- Prepare and present the Vision as dynamic and iterative
- More focus on stakeholders who can deliver before a launch to work up package of how to sell and deliver the vision
- Get the key messages right, and articulate why big wetlands are good and explain why. Maps are not good enough to do this, and the multifunctional role of wetland needs evidence
- Consider some kind of coalition agreement about the value of wetlands and a new physical project that we can say is representative of the Vision for the future and which we have inspired
- We need to be clear on the value of the process vs the product
- A decision is needed on level of effort required in generating tie-in with other initiatives currently influencing government policy
- Long term ownership and reporting – part of pre-existing partner work, BAP and WHAP?
- Partnerships, coalitions, TAG – decide how to engage and structure of these in the future

- Undertake an analysis of delivery funding and policy options
 - Decide how to express the wider remit of NE, and incorporating an ecosystem services based approach based on the results of our ecosystem services scoping report
 - Explore further with stakeholders, and communications group, whether there is a need for tailored material (to, for example, farming groups) to support the release of project outputs
 - We need to articulate our intent to influence and drive policymaking with regards to future wetland delivery through this project
 - Decide who else we, or those taking on the challenge of delivering the vision, ought to be talking to in the future to help deliver on our aspirations
-