Launch of the Northern Ireland Chapter of the National Ecosystem Assessment

20th October 2011

AFBI Hillsborough

Notes from workshops and discussions

Coast

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Designations need to involve wider criteria to accommodate Ecosystem Services. • Designations need to have 'power' to address the wide range of upstream influences that impact particularly on the coast. These influences/pressures are much wider than water pollution and need to be recognised and addressed. • Local communities need to be engaged with designations and their maintenance (e.g. Portrush Coastal Zones) • Ecosystem principles need to be adopted across all local and regional government departments. EM should be used as a means of integrating government departments. • The need to engage communities may be best done through NGOs and, in a time of strained finances, NGOs may provide best value for implementing gov't policies and actions. • Need to channel existing resources to get better results. For example, CMS allows for proactive management. • Enforcement needs to be followed through when damage is, or may be done. The potential for cumulative impacts needs to be much better identified and countered.	• As fuel costs increase, coasts will be increasingly subject to local visitor pressures. Infrastructure and management needs to be in place to cope. • Just as government departments and agencies have a financial balance sheet and accompanying audits, the land/sea they manage (OR impact through their policies) should be subject to audit in a similar sense. Valuation of ecosystem services should show an improvement over a fixed period, such as 5 year terms. The equivalent of EU infraction fines could be levied for failure, but this would keep the fines in the NI economy where they would be dedicated to Ecosystem Services. • Local communities and land owners need to be skilled up to manage designated sites. • Councils need to be skilled up for future planning roles and Ecosystem Services safequarding. • Ecosystem Services approach should be integrated into all management plans. • There are significant jurisdictional issues – e.g. with Crown Estates, ROI, etc • Local area plans need to be brought up to date and should encompass Ecosystem Services. Ideally Ecosystem Services should	• Local (NI) scenario setting is essential. These need to be agreed and used as the basis for planning, education, integrated government • The example of the NZ 500 year plan with shorter term milestones has merit.

• Need to coordinate planning and management specifically for the coast. Need to be able to, for example, refuse planning permission for a development that, in whatever is the accepted climate change scenario, will become vulnerable to SL rise within the life of the development. • There is a need for education/information about the different roles and responsibilities within government agencies and departments. This is especially the case with planning. • Education (primary, secondary and tertiary) needs to include ecosystem services. Education also needs to teach what should be, not just what is. • Coast should be seen as part of the continuum from terrestrial to marine – there should not be a separation between them. This would also remove the inter-tidal zone hiatus. • Political parties may be the key to ensuring all present and future ministers sign up to ES principles and share the same goals.	be a fundamental consideration in the same way as topography is and climate change should be. • There is a need to decide on holistic responses to climate change especially with the coast. Issues such as managed retreat, hard defence, infrastructure construction need to be planned, not a piecemeal reactive panic action.	

Enclosed Farmland

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Reform CAP for delivery of public goods • What exactly is food security? • Maximising productivity and maintaining biodiversity need not be mutually exclusively • Countryside management has helped maintenance and planting of hedgerows in NI (with small fields) • Target areas for intensive systems/less intensive systems • Focus on the economics of farming • Lack of alignment between agricultural and environmental messages • Taxpayer pays for everything in NI – no right to roam, no right of access to enclosed farmland • Continuing loss of hedgerows and excessive trimming of hedges is a problem • Efficient production will benefit the environment, so good farmers should be encouraged • Why not pay farmers for 'flood storage' • Heed the warning signs about biodiversity loss and take action accordingly	• Need to halt biodiversity decline • Compliance with 2 metre hedge rule limits biodiversity – this is an unintended consequence of EU rules, such as CAP • Phased basis of CAP for public goods • Deal with bungalow blight • Progress may be slow but it is being made- the farmer is at the centre • Countryside access • Differing timescales – the government works in short term, but ecosystems need long-term management • Maintaining the productive capacity of the land	• Protection of pollination services is essential • It is easier to comply with CAP if farms are profitable • Aim for win-win scenarios where farmers and public both benefit • High soil phosphate levels have been successfully addressed in recent years • Policy decisions are often based on cost/benefit and it is difficult to evaluate biodiversity • There has never been a dialogue with farmers about long-term ecosystem services and enclosed farmland • NI farmers are not 'soil farmers' • Farmers have tended to manage grass rather than soil • Only 5 years ago slurry was regarded as a waste, now it is recognised as a resource -aim to change perceptions of other farm resource s

Targets	Outputs
• Agricultural industry needs to promote positive messages • Politicians need to get the best CAP system for farmers and the public • Delivery mechanism needs to be improved for giving farmers the latest information eg fertiliser application rates • Cooperation between DARD and NIEA not always appreciated by general public • There must be a clear benefit for the taxpayer – find ways to communicate these benefits effectively	• Farmers must understand the importance of soils • Efficient production of food is better for the climate change agenda **Other notes:** • Farmland <u>is</u> an ecosystem and provides essential services • Loss of biodiversity is forced upon farmers, such as removal of scrub and penalties for non-compliance • Mixed messages for farmers lead to unintended consequences • Ecosystems approach moves the discourse on from farming vs conservation

Freshwater

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Sustainable Catchment Management Plans – ScaMP - Successful and on-going Sustainable Catchment Management requires all stakeholders to continue to work closely together. • Need for Stakeholders at Department level. • Schematic drawing of all waterways to make it clear who owns what, agencies involved – names and contact details. • Buffer zones needed for rivers and lakes – dependent on CAP Reform. • Proper funding of Water Framework Directive in NI – plastic bag levy is not adequate funding for projects! • Community involvement to promote 'bottom up' approach – forums for communication. • Get health and wellbeing on the agenda for local people as well as businesses and let people see how the environment will impact on their health/pocket. • Catchment management officers could be utilised to promote health and wellbeing. • Communicate clearly the benefits of clean	• Implement Sustainable Catchment Management - ScaMP • Incentivise farmers through agri-environment schemes to encouragement good stewardship and maintenance of biodiversity. • Promote for opportunities for tourism. • Water charges. • Independent EPA.	• Good Ecological Status. • Legislation to create habitats that have been lost.

water as it is used for public services – drinking, washing and bathing. • Increase business involvement – Arena Network already doing some work on this. • Promote 'Blue Flag' for inland water designations as for beaches. • Develop a Landuse Strategy. • DSD Action Plan – include community engagement on freshwater work in this plan. • Control invasive species. • Look more closely at penalties and costs of actions. • Need for Marine and Freshwater bodies to be better linked. • Greater awareness of septic tank issues and impacts on clean water.		

Targets	Outputs
• Policy and decision makers • Landowners • Businesses • Education institutions • Public in general	

Marine

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• The launch of the NEA report marks a line in the sand – now we have the chance to demonstrate its true value we should no longer have to plead for government attention and resources to be directed towards the marine environment. • The Marine environment has been seen only as a cash cow • Marine environment is seen as separate to the terrestrial environment but is not it is all part of the joined ecosystem approach e.g. every drain goes to the sea. • Lack of marine data is a major issue and a major failure by government. • The marine environment remains the 'Hidden Environment'. Communication, education and awareness strategies are required at political, governmental, and general public level to gain buy-in to this vital ecosystem. • Management of marine areas should consider 'need' rather than 'demand' e.g. look at reducing our carbon usage first rather than compromising our marine ecosystem for renewable energy. • Dialogue is required with all key players and stakeholders in designing and agreeing a	• Designation not enough MPAs need to be properly managed and protection enforced • Greater will is required by government to protect our marine environment including continuity in policy and approach (4 Ministers in 5 Years) to ensure effective marine legislation. • Those wishing to exploit marine environment should have to pay for the survey work required to access applicability. • Nagoya conclusions that: 'By 2020, at least 10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services are conserved through …… well connected systems of protected areas ……and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes', is not enough.	• Marine planning should have at least a 25yr shelf life to allow for long term planning and continuity of approach and less vulnerable to political alignment. • To allow for long term planning we need to begin by benchmarking where we are and then develop a long term plan similar to the Regional Development Strategy, which can also allow for adaptation to meet new or emerging evidence.

strategy both locally and on a GB and all-island level. • A MMO is urgently required to oversee enforcement of this legislation • Marine Spatial planning based on sustainable development principles needs to be addressed urgently. • A precautionary principle needs to be enforced in terms of marine planning and development. • The current Marine Planning Policy Statement indicates a presumption for development and types of development not yet seen in N. Ireland (if it's not appropriate here why include the presumption). • The lack of marine baseline data must be addressed. This data should be based on more that fish numbers given that many are transitory species. • Historical marine data must be considered when considering applications for development. e.g. the amount of fish landed decades ago compared to more recent data. • Greater synergy is required across NI government departments and with English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh government. • The issue of Climate Change and its impact on the marine environment must be addressed. • Need to learn from past mistakes and put ecological foundation first.		

• We are not managing and safeguarding the Marine Protected Areas we already have so designation alone is not enough. Can we actually say that Marine 10.9% of NI Waters are protected through their SACs/SPA designation? • There has been a lack of synergy to date in terms of protecting the marine environment. A MMO is therefore urgently required. This MMO should oversee a number of functions such as enforcement and data collection. • Government needs to ensure we have effective marine legislation for the MMO to enforce.		

Mountains, Moors and Heaths

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• A 'valuation' should be put on the ecosystem services provided by provided by mountains etc • Use the Mournes as a brand to sell Mourne produce – we are not marketing our ecosystem products to best effect • Get people to understand the value of bogs – education • An integrated approach is required for ecosystems management. Examples include Mourne Heritage Trust having to deal with eleven departments and an angling club dealing with 16 government departments or agencies. We urgently require joined up government • Short term opportunity to influence CAP reform and link to Single Farm Payment • Sell the importance of ecosystem relationships to health – people will pay attention to health issues • opportunity to put ecosystems services into new Biodiversity Strategy	• Land Use Policy/Strategy – dependent on spatial mapping of habitats and their ecosystems services • There will have to be trade-offs – wind farms/climate change vs visual perception of landscape. Note everyone is going to be totally happy • Mountains, topographically, sit above other habitat types and influence most things that happen at a lower altitude. We need an integrated approach due this relationship with other ecosystems • keeping people out of forests is a regressive step – right of access to land is vital to engaging public • linking single farm payment to ecosystem services outcomes - public money to deliver a public good • Celebrate ecosystems services – make it clear that they are life support systems	• Spatial planning to map habitats and value – what matters most to whom and where. This will be difficult

Targets	Outputs
• NEA is an opportunity to involve grassroots/community – need ways of engaging with communities – forums suggested. • We should target areas with benefits/grants, such as DARD to deliver ecosystems that function better • Fire Service - during wildfire outbreak the Fire Service did not have information to prioritise forests and heathland • interconnectedness is a key message to communicate to land managers and farmers	• An ecosystems approach should 'increase' the value of the upland that is not in designated sites • Importance of quality of habitats • More cost effective and logical to manage holistically, moving on from integrated management • Introduce concepts for signing up to Nagoya • Ecosystem services are in everyone's interests – the final outcome must be that ecosystem services must function

Semi Natural Grasslands

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Selling value of service provided by semi-natural grasslands – to all sectors (horizontal and vertical), not just flowers and bugs but carbon, amenity conservation beef etc • Simplification of messages so no confusion. • Large complexes of grasslands need joined-up approaches (integration of Departments – not just DOE and DARD - and of people) • Education via demonstration farms ("focus farms") of ecosystem approach and services provided – build what is already there. • Training for DARD advisors, understanding of subtleties of biodiversity gains in ecosystem • Education/training needs to be ongoing not one off "box tick". • Policy and delivery need aligned, especially between NIEA (MOSS and cross compliance) and DARD (SFP etc) but also broader drivers e.g. economics, tourism, health (DETI, DENI, DHSS) The same person advising on both aspects. • Do we know how to restore? Evidence requirement? • How do you deal with private verses pubic good? "Top down" facilitation with guidance and resources not "top down" control to achieve "bottom up" results. Linkage between	• Changes of financial drivers – how do you persuade not to fertilise? Philosophy changes; organic approaches • Education needed re drainage, rush control, scrubbing up, long term view needed as takes a while to see benefits (good exemplars would be useful) • Targeting policy reform to improve targeting of ecosystem service outcomes • Marketing and promotion of outputs of good ecosystem service delivery e.g. conservation beef • Alignment of monitoring between departments – could NICS be a delivery mechanism? • Ecosystem education – targeting farming colleges and young education sector (not just what is it but why is it important?)	• Understanding that ecosystem approaches and semi-natural grassland restoration need longer term view. Short term funding less beneficial.

tax paying "urbanites" and farmers e.g. flood alleviation, carbon storage. • Results should produce new grasslands. verges, amenity present good opportunities. Education of DRD, Local Government, support for new equipment e.g. mechanical scythes		

Urban

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Explore ways for non-political leaders to change political opinion • Target voters to influence politicians • Develop incentives and disincentives for ecosystem management • Language must be normalised, need to create terms that people will understand • Grant aid for temporary sites could be considered – pop up gardens etc • Change understanding of 'urban'- urban areas constitute more than just cities	• 4th document could be developed for primary or high schools • Link universities with government departments, allow students in relevant disciplines to provide input into decision making process • A holistic systems approach • A full cost analysis of developments • Developments should demonstrate how they arrived at development plan • Brownfield development – destruction of green field sites should be factored into the economics of brownfield sites • Better research and evidence base needed • Connswater Greenway plan is an example of trying to reinsert ecosystem services to a place where they were stripped out – reinsertion of ecosystem services into urban areas	• Funding and planning needs to be focused on long term – long term must be seen in decades or centuries, not just electoral or ministerial cycles

Targets	Outputs
• Voters • Politicians - Planning is important, but political will is essential • Commuters • Schools should be a long term target - environmental education is essential • Business • Encourage ownership of urban green spaces – need ways to encourage people to regularly use parks • Developers – there is a 15% average increase in real estate value with green space – the economics of ecosystems should be promoted • Urban dwellers should be viewed as consumers of ecosystem services • Insurance companies have a role to play – explore role in more detail and involve them – particularly relevant considering increased frequency of flooding events. Flooding is a consequence of ecosystem mismanagement – this will get worse as climate change related events become more common • Planners - Economic benefits of ecosystems should be factored into planning process	• Case studies should be used in policy development – study examples of where polices have been successful (or unsuccessful) and use best practice. • Behaviour must be incentivized • Planning process should involve the restoration of ecosystems • Parks & Leisure department on Belfast City Council should be partly responsible for land – currently land is viewed purely in economic terms rather than something that can benefit the population • Green space should be viewed as a method for flood alleviation

Woodland

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Support for owners of small woodland areas • Consider more urban opportunities and better access • Effective messaging and communication: make it simple for government / clear, succinct facts and message • highlight 'market'/economic benefits • understanding of long term costs and benefits • Review of current incentives (farmer/non-farmer – grants only given to those >20% income from farming) • Put health higher up the agenda • Importance of design – use of trees/forest/woodland – integration • Ensure effective implementation of Forestry Bill (short – long term)	• Land Use Policy / Strategy – integrated catchment plan to consider ecosystem services • Greater policy focus on sustainable development model (inclusive in long term plans) • Communication and working between government departments – can this happen more effectively within council structures? • Implementation of health education plan • Independent Environment Agency • Use exemplars/pilot studies	• Longer term vision (implemented asap) – eg Scotland, Wales, NZ. • Much of current stock rotation/replacement should be effectively planned with core long term objectives

Targets	Outputs
• Small woodland owners • Education – schools (from early age), landowners, public, local planning. • Policy and decision makers • Business sector • Communities and general public • Health sector (health service)	• Consider outcome rather than process – links to longer term strategic planning. • Political/Electoral timescales don't match • Plant forestry where appropriate to link with other land uses (sitka planting surrounded by other types of woodland) • We are good at designation – we need to improve conservation and protection • Need for cultural change – some do not value indigenous trees or realise benefits • Clear distinction/understanding of woodland v forestry • Educate people to understand the connection between the source and the end product? • 'Can't see the wood for the trees'

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

What are the priorities for taking things forward?

- Overall vision and long term strategic plan – recognise where we are / utilise communities better / change future mechanisms, data collection and usage.
- Ecosystems services concept has not found its way to policy – can we address the terminology we use eg land capability, life support system?
- Need for engagement with communities – message isn't reaching the general public. People need to be given information to allow them to make the right decisions eg SPAM project.
- People do value the environment and we need to utilise this better in terms of using community manpower and expertise as well as providing opportunity for active contribution
- Possibility of a land use strategy?
    - Land capability
    - Trajectory of change/Scenarios
    - Alternative futures
    - Multiple use economic development
- Ned to communicate and meet outside the sector – engage in joint planning
    - Health
    - Education (DEL) - need to focus on good ecology
    - Finance (eg Natural Capital launch in London – the treasury haven't grasped concept)

Key Themes

- **Engagement** with all sorts of groups with both top-down and bottom-up strategy (facilitation and explanation). Need for government adoption at top level
- How can we best communicate the **Ecosystems Service** concept? Ecosystem services is a confusing name for non-experts, it will not engage the people we need to target.
- **Natural Capital** suggests a finite resource which is very important
- **Multi-functionality** creates a picture of landscape with many different uses.
- **Resilience** of effective Ecosystem Services
- **Timescales –** completely different ecosystem timescales to political timescales. Long term could mean centuries, not just an electoral cycle
- NEA should be recognised as a **process** not a product. Knowledge gaps must not be a barrier to action but an objective for further development.
- An **integrated approach** both horizontally and vertically across NI, UK and RoI.
- Importance of assessing and assigning **value** - change cultures of how we view the environment
- NEA provides a foundation for decision making which needs to find its way into **government policy**.
- **Accessibility** of data is a problem – possibility of online data publishing could be explored
- The **public** are an undervalued source of knowledge
- A **Land-Use strategy and Land Capability Assessments** exist in Scotland – these should be explored as possible examples of good practice
- **Department of Health and Department of Finance and Personnel** should be engaged as a matter of urgency