

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	CPPB/8/25



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd

na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – 6 June 2025

Integrating NatureScot’s Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool into the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan

Report by: Graham Neville, NatureScot (Board Member)

Summary

This briefing outlines how NatureScot’s Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool, underpinning a Natural Capital approach, can support the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in delivering the against the 2024–2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP).

The inclusion of the natural capital approach features within the 2024 – 2027 HOIP Delivery Plan under the cross-cutting theme Whole Family and Community-Based Approaches. The Deliverable outlines: Apply a natural capital approach by mapping and quantifying natural capital assets to identify existing provision of benefits and mapping where there is ‘demand’ for more benefits from nature to identify opportunities which have multiple benefits for both people and nature.

It is intended to guide a short-life working group in exploring the tool’s application across strategic priorities and local delivery mechanisms.

The CPP Board is asked to:

- i) Note progress to establish the agreed Short-Life Working Group.
- ii) Note draft Terms of Reference for the Short-Life Working Group which will be refined in the first group meeting.
- iii) Confirm membership of the Short-Life Working Group.

1. Overview of the Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool

NatureScot, in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University, has developed an innovative tool to facilitate decision-makers in adopting a natural capital approach for managing land at the landscape scale in Scotland. The tool enables users to:

- Map and quantify natural capital assets.
- Identify existing provision of ecosystem services.
- Assess areas where there is demand for enhanced benefits from nature.
- Support internal decision-making to prioritise actions and resource to target policy responses to secure enhanced benefits.
- Support and evidence funding bids.

- Foster collaboration with neighboring landowners across the landscape.

The tool has been piloted with seven landscape-scale partnerships, demonstrating its utility in various decision-making contexts. It is proposed to use the tool to support the Highland Community Planning Partnership.

2. Alignment with HOIP Themes

The HOIP emphasises the importance of maximising natural capital and attracting investment as a means to build a thriving Highlands for all. The natural capital approach aligns with the three HOIP strategic priorities and associated Outcomes:

1. Prosperity

Maximising Natural Capital: By identifying and enhancing natural assets, the tool can help attract investment and promote sustainable economic growth.

Community Wealth Building: Mapping natural capital can inform strategies to embed community wealth building approaches into partnership activities.

2. Place

Resilient Communities: The tool supports communities in becoming more resilient by, identify natural solutions to alleviating emerging issues such as flooding or other hazards, identifying opportunities to adapt to climate change and manage natural resources sustainably.

Infrastructure Planning: Integrating natural capital assessments into infrastructure planning can ensure that developments consider ecosystem services and biodiversity.

3. People

Health and Wellbeing: Enhancing natural environments contributes to improved health and social wellbeing opportunities for people in Highland. Linking to the Green Health Partnership, the identification of natural capital assets to support Green Health activities can widen the scope, scale and access to greenspace suitable for wellbeing and health outcomes; it can further identify areas where natural capital is low creating issues of inequality and multiple deprivation through lack of access to greenspace and natural capital.

Access to Services: By understanding the distribution of natural assets, some services can be better aligned with community needs.

3. Recommendations for the Short-Life Working Group

- **Pilot Implementation:** Selection of pilot area(s) within Highland to demonstrate and test the applicability of the tool in support of HOIP outcomes, involving local stakeholders and Community Partnerships.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide training for CPP members and partners on the use of the tool and interpretation of its outputs.
- **Integration into Planning Processes:** Incorporate natural capital assessments into existing planning and decision-making frameworks, at varying scales from the

Local Development Plan through to place plans to ensure sustainability considerations are embedded.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish metrics to assess the impact of natural capital-informed decisions on HOIP outcomes.

4. **Proposal**

Integrating NatureScot's Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool and the natural capital approach into the CPP's strategic framework offers a robust approach to achieving the priorities of the HOIP. The Short-Life Working Group, agreed to be explored by the February Board, is tasked to develop Highland's natural capital approach and pilot the use of the tool to support rollout in delivery of the cross-cutting themes of the HOIP.

Through an approach which values, manages and enhances natural assets effectively, we can support sustainable prosperity, resilient communities, and enhanced wellbeing for its people.

References:

NatureScot. Developing a Landscape Scale Natural Capital Tool for Scotland.

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/social-and-economic-benefits-nature/natural-capital/farming-nature/natural-capital-tool-scotland>

Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2024–2027. <https://highlandcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024-2027-HOIP-Finalised-Format-1.pdf>

Davidson, D. (2024). Developing a Landscape Scale Natural Capital Tool for Scotland.

PDF. <https://csfl.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-05/Donya%20Davidson%26%23039%3Bs%20EFLN%20presentation.pdf>

Recommendation

The CPP Board is asked to:

- i) Note progress to establish the agreed Short-Life Working Group.
- ii) Note draft Terms of Reference for the Short-Life Working Group which will be refined in the first group meeting.
- iii) Confirm membership of the Short-Life Working Group.

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Date: 28th May 2025

Appendices: Proposed SLWG Terms of Reference



Proposed Terms of Reference for the Highland CPP Short Life Working Group (SLWG) on Natural Capital	
1.	Introduction
1.1	These Terms of Reference provide a framework for collaboration and joint working between partners of the Highland Community Planning Partnership to develop an approach to understand and tackle inequalities across Highland with a natural capital focus.
2.	Purpose and Aims
2.1	The purpose of the SLWG is to develop an approach to tackling inequalities for the Highland Community Planning Partnership by exploring opportunities to maximise natural capital through the built environment lens.
2.1.1	<p>The utilisation of the natural capital tool being developed by NatureScot will support action planning and decision making locally.</p> <p>The natural capital tool is an innovative new tool that will facilitate decision makers to take a natural capital approach for managing land at the landscape scale in Scotland. A natural capital approach is when the full range of benefits that we receive from nature are taken into consideration within the decision making process. Adopting a natural capital approach enables us to understand the role of our natural environment, alongside its intrinsic value, as an asset that underpins both our economy and society.</p> <p>By mapping and modelling how certain land use changes might impact the ecosystem services they provide, decision makers can identify the scenarios and opportunities that provide the most benefits for both people. The benefits from nature can be divided into four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provisioning• Regulating• Supporting• Cultural <p>The natural capital tool will be a free and easy to use geospatial web application.</p>
2.1.2	Apply a natural capital approach by mapping and quantifying natural capital assets to identify existing provision of benefits and mapping where there is 'demand' for more benefits from nature to identify opportunities which have multiple benefits for both people and nature.
2.1.3	Develop support for communities to adapt to climate change and benefit from maximising our natural capital when promoting sustainability and resilience.
2.2	The purpose and aims of the SLWG will be achieved by:

2.2.1	Working with, and co-operating with, CPP partners and Community Partnerships locally to implement the natural capital approach.
2.2.2	Agreeing an approach to tackling inequalities and developing mechanisms for embedding these into communities ways of working.
2.2.3	Agreeing and promoting use of the natural capital tool to help the various structures within the CPP and locally within communities to embed natural capital approaches within delivery plans.
2.2.4	Develop a mechanism to monitor of implementation of the natural capital tool across the CPP.
3.	Membership and Organisation of the SLWG
3.1	The SLWG will bring together officers and local Community Partnership representatives with a remit in tackling inequalities and an interest in developing the natural capital approach.
3.1.1	<p>Core Membership</p> <p>Core membership will consist of representatives from across the CPP Board, including the five named statutory organisations within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 that share a statutory duty to facilitate community planning in the Highland. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highland Council • Highland Third Sector Interface • NHS Highland • Highlands and Islands Enterprise • NatureScot • Police Scotland • Scottish Fire and Rescue Service • High Life Highland • University of the Highlands and Islands <p>Depending on the location(s) chosen, the relevant Community Partnerships will be invited to nominate a representative to join the core membership of the SLWG, from the list below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caithness • Easter Ross • Lochaber • Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross • Mid Ross • Sutherland • Nairn and Nairnshire • Badenoch & Strathspey • Inverness <p>The Highland Green Health Partnership (Dan Jenkins/ Ailsa Villegas) have already confirmed interest in participating.</p>
3.1.2	<p>Additional Partners</p> <p>Can be any public or third sector organisation with an interest in tackling inequalities while adopting the natural capital approach across the CPP area. Proposed additional partners:</p>

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3.1.3	Member representatives will participate fully in the purpose of the SLWG, and will be empowered by their organisation to commit time and resources to the achievement of the aims of the SLWG.
3.1.4	The SLWG will be Chaired by the Head of Operations – North, Nature Scot
3.1.5	An action note of the SLWG meetings, decisions and actions will be drawn up and submitted to the next SLWG meeting for review and agreement.
3.1.6	The secretariat will be provided by the Partnership Development Team. Action notes of meetings will be circulated in draft within 10 working days.
3.1.7	Meetings will generally be held online via Teams.
3.1.8	Meetings will be held TBC over a period of 12-14 months from August 2025 to September 2026.
3.1.9	The Chair will provide the CPP Board with regular progress reports, and a final report for the next HOIP Annual Report cycle in September 2026.