

The National Nature Service

Summary briefing, October 2020

Introduction

- The concept of a National Nature Service (NNS) is based on the Civilian Conservation Corps from the Great Depression, which transformed the USA's tourist and natural infrastructure, creating 700 national parks and planting 3 billion trees.
- If implemented in the UK, the NNS will rapidly provide a wide range of entry-level year-long paid jobs and training, across the country.
- A [proposal](#) has been submitted to Government to create 15,000 jobs.
- The scheme has been designed to particularly support young people and people from BAME backgrounds into lasting employment in the nature sector, furthering the Government's levelling up agenda.
- NNS work would deliver significant natural capital benefits, including:
 - 4.5 million trees planted
 - Urban green spaces, focused on the 155 most deprived communities
 - Communities protected from flooding
 - Farmers supported in a transition to agroecology, including agroforestry, and environmental stewardship
 - 200,000 hectares of priority landscapes created or enhanced.
- The NNS concept has significant public support. [YouGov research](#), carried out for Wildlife & Countryside Link in September 2020 found 83% of respondents supportive of Government funding to allow unemployed people to take up jobs to improve nature.

Q: What problems does the NNS solve?

A: Two problems at once – nature's decline and rising unemployment

The National Nature Service will provide a boost for the nature sector, helping it to restore the natural infrastructure that underpins our economy.

- Without repairing the UK's damaged natural infrastructure, lack of clean water, soil damage, fisheries depletion, flood risk and climate risk will all conspire to [undermine](#) any long-term economic recovery from Covid.
- The Government is looking to the nature sector to be crucial delivery partners for the 25 Year Environmental Plan, to restore our natural infrastructure. While the Government has helpfully put aside an emergency [£40 million](#) for nature through the Green Recovery Fund, this does not come close to meeting the overall need, especially given the impact of Covid on the nature sector. All the major nature NGOs have seen [substantial hits](#) to their income.

- Without further support, delivery of 25 Year Environmental Plan commitments will stall, the UK's natural infrastructure will continue to decline, and long-term economic recovery will be threatened.

Unemployment is rising and few other programmes offer such a well thought thorough on-the-job training programme that will prepare people for the green economy.

- Unemployment now stands at 4.5%, its highest level for three years.
- The rate of unemployment is expected to rise further, particularly amongst younger people. The lifetime cost of each young person not in education or training is estimated to be £56k
- Whilst the Kickstart fund is most welcome and could contribute to nature's restoration, on its own is insufficient. Experience has shown it takes a year to fully embed the transferable skills, employability skills and environmental skills a person needs. , it is not yet clear how it will lead to lasting employment for those on the scheme.

The National Nature Service will provide thousands of jobs at pace, to people who need them.

Q: How will the NNS further the Government's levelling up agenda?

A: By providing new employment all around the country and by creating new green space in areas of high deprivation

- NNS jobs would be targeted to areas of highest multiple deprivation and where tangible improvements to nature can be made, a significant number of these jobs will be in rural and coastal communities.
- There could be projects in nearly every constituency in the country. Examples from the "shovel ready" pipeline of projects identified for NNS work include:
 - Rother Valley, Yorkshire - Nature-based flooding protection work. Protecting homes, businesses and key infrastructure such as the A61 from flooding.
 - Durham North West, North East - Creating a 'North East treescape' through 100 ha of new woodland.
 - Copeland, Cumbria– planting 4 km of hedges, to create new wildlife corridors and to protect crops.
 - Weaver Vale, Cheshire – creating over 1 km of new green space in the town of Northwich, for residents to enjoy and wildlife to thrive in.
- The projects would cover 18 key Landscapes across England including Sherwood Forest, Purbeck Heaths, The Broads, The Fens, Morecombe Bay, The Forest of Bowland, The New Forest, The Greater Thames, The Humber Estuary, The Wash, Somerset Levels, Wiltshire Chalk Country, Suffolk Coast, The Brecks, The Tamar to the Teign, The Dark Peaks, and The North Pennines and Dales.
- As regions with high accumulations of natural assets, the North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber would benefit in particular from National Nature Service work. Around 50% of NNS projects would take place in those three regions, bringing new jobs and opportunities for people living there.

- The appendix presents a map, with yellow dots representing NNS projects that are ready to go.

Q: How will the NNS lead to lasting employment for young people?

A: By training people up in the nature skills that are in growing economic demand

- Based on the Government's current commitments, there is potential for at least 70,000 additional jobs to be created in nature over the coming years, including
 - 46,000 forestry jobs created to deliver the Government's Tree Strategy
 - Up to 3,000 jobs from developers and net gain
 - Up to 14,000 jobs as a result of Environmental Land Management, depending on its final shape
- A year's employment in the NNS would train people up to access these jobs, as well as providing transferable skills to equip NNS graduates to find employment across all sectors.
- The NNS scheme has been designed up to provide focussed support for young people taking part in it, who may not have been in employment before. The scheme will give young people both specific qualifications, and transferable skills in project management and problem solving, to equip them for lasting employment. The scheme design has been informed by the Our Bright Future "Support for young people to work in the environmental sector" [research review](#).

Q: How will the NNS open-up access to nature?

A: By increasing diversity in the nature sector, and creating new green spaces for communities

- In areas where over 40% of residents are from ethnic minorities, there is [11 times less](#) public green space than in areas where residents are largely white, and it is also likely to be of poorer quality. Meanwhile, black people are four times less likely than white people to have a private garden.
- 71% of children from ethnic minority backgrounds spent less time outside as a result of Covid, compared to 57% of white children.
- Black and Asian people visit natural settings 60% less than white people, despite the fact that ethnic minority communities statistically value parks more than their white counterparts.
- This lack of diversity is reflected in the nature sector. Just 3% of environment sector professionals are from non-white minority communities.
- The National Nature Service would connect people from minority communities to jobs in nature – we have proposed that BAME groups be given the ability to directly refer people to the scheme. As well as helping to diversify the sector, NNS work would create new green spaces for minority communities, increasing access to nature.

Q: How much will the scheme cost?

A: Up to £741 million, with the cost reducing over time

- The scale of the NNS can match the scale of political ambition. From 2021, we have proposed £741 million to create 15,000 NNS year-long jobs, paid the living wage and accompanied by a carefully thought through on-the-job training programme
- The Kickstart Fund in particular offers real potential for nature. If a portion of Kickstart could be ring-fenced for nature jobs, the nature sector could promote a coordinated offer to young people under the banner of a National Nature Service. This would also require extra flexibility in the Kickstart system to enable placements to last a year – this is how long it takes to support the skills young people need to deliver the projects that need to happen.

By working up public-private partnerships, the cost can drop further over time:

We would recommend starting the programme as a unit in Natural England, then spinning out it out into a social enterprise, on the model of Teach First. Starting in Natural England would allow the team to focus on rapid job delivery and setting up the programme, as well as ensuring full alignment to Government objectives

Once spun out, the grant funder Esmee Fairbairn have expressed interest in being an early and supporting funder. In year two, the NNS management team could work on bringing on board other philanthropic and business funders. There are real opportunities for public private partnerships and joint funding to extend NNS operations. For example:

- Carbon offsetting payments – a tree planting project could be funded 70% by the NNS and 30% by an organisation like Tesco, to offset its emission
- Clean water payments – water companies could contribute to labour and project costs of the NNS, along the lines of South West Water’s ‘Upstream Thinking’ project
- Development offsets – As part the Environment bill and the “net gain” obligation, housing and other developers will have to offset damage and they could fund projects for the NNS.

Lastly, a smaller scale programme would still deliver substantial environmental and employment benefits. We estimate a cost per trainee of £43,936 (including all management and overheads costs, along with the targeted training), so a smaller cohort of 3,000 NNS ‘rangers’ in a year-long programme would come to a total cost of £131 million. £30 million could come from the Kickstart fund (for wages) and a further £30 million from the Nature for Climate Fund (for capital), requiring a new spend of around £70 million for the NNS.

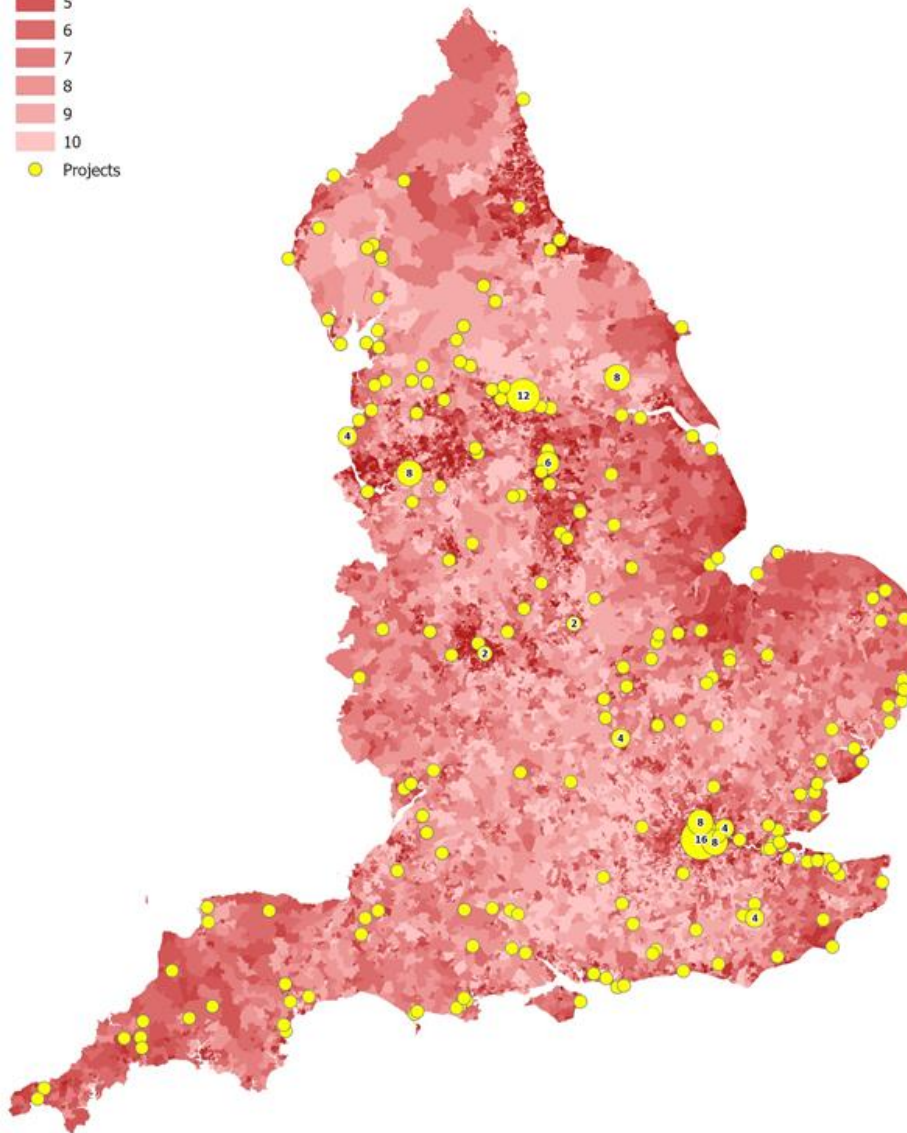
Conclusion

The National Nature Service is a smart way
to build a more employable workforce fit for a green economy,
to secure healthier and more cohesive communities
and to deliver strong ecosystems.

Can our country afford not to invest?

Appendix – projects already identified for NNS to work on

Income Decile (where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)



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