

## **Green Infrastructure mapping tool launch, Natural England. December 2021**

Meeting attended by DCAF member Jo Burgess.

### **Meeting summary**

At a Natural England briefing the importance of green infrastructure (GI) to wellbeing and the resilience of nature to climate change was set out and this project aims to help inform nature-based solutions to these issues by identifying the quality and quantity of GI. Of greatest interest to DCAF is that the accessibility of GI is one factor Natural England is trying to quantify and map.

The 2021 Environment Act brings in the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). These are a flagship measure in the Act. They are a new system of spatial strategies for nature which will plan, map, and help drive more coordinated, practical, focussed action and investment in nature's recovery to build the national Nature Recovery Network.

The ability to require information regarding Green Infrastructure (GI) at the planning application stage will depend on the situation with Local Plans and GI Strategies (non-statutory guidance). Formal Guidance and Regulations in due course will give GI strategies a statutory footing but that is a way off.

Essex County Council was part of the GI trial of ten areas carried out by Natural England (NE) and has been actively consulting and working with its Districts and looking to embed guidance and strategies into a County Wide Design Guide in advance of any regulatory requirements.

In rural areas NE is looking to use nature-based solutions to the provision of GI and Blue Infrastructure. Sustainable access will be critical and Essex is working with the Rights of Way team to see where there are opportunities to provide this.

The information in the mapping tool will be vital to provide the necessary evidence to developers and planning authorities. Without it being correct any regulations and guidance will not have the necessary teeth, so ensuring it is accurate is critical. Some errors in Devon have already been identified so liaison with the GIS and Local Plan teams in the Districts will be very important.

Jo Burgess

### **Additional information**

A full explanation of the Green Infrastructure Framework, part of the Government's commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan, together with information on standards, mapping tools and the maps are available on

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/greeninfrastructure/home.aspx>

[Home \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk)

The maps include:

1. Green and blue infrastructure;
2. Proximity to green space of an appropriate size – ANGSt (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards) - 6 categories within defined walking and cycling distances;
3. Linear access – public rights of way;
4. Blue infrastructure;
5. Designated and defined areas such as open access and wildlife designated sites;
6. Access to Nature Close2Home;
7. Access to Natural Green Space – inequalities and deprivation;
8. Access to Natural Green Space – inequalities and population density; and
9. Socio-economic statistics.

The mapping will be tested during the early part of 2022 and feedback obtained from stakeholders. The main launch will be in autumn 2022, followed by public consultation, before rollout in early 2023. As well as Core Standards, there will be a Design Guide, case studies and a 'Process Journeys' document to help plan and deliver green infrastructure.