

About the OxCam Local Natural Capital Project

The **Oxford to Cambridge (OxCam) Arc** is the name given to a cross-Government initiative that supports planning for the future of the 5 ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire up until 2050. It aims to ensure a harmonious delivery of improved connectivity, productivity and place-making, whilst ensuring pioneering environmental standards and enhancements are delivered. Because of the commitments to **green growth, its governance and scale**, the Arc represents a unique opportunity to put the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan into action. The creation of a Local Natural Capital Plan for the Arc is an essential first step to ensure a natural capital baseline and framework is provided that helps to monitor environmental change and de-risk growth'.

The **LNCP project** is the first project delivering under the Arc Environment pillar. It is a Defra Group-led project (cross-Defra, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency), with a team hosted by the Environment Agency. It was conceived to **develop a local natural capital plan (LNCP) for the OxCam Arc** in order to support the **delivery of environmental protection and enhancement** as part of the planned growth and investment within the Arc. Within the 25 Year Environment Plan, the government committed to LNCPs, with the aim of embedding natural capital thinking into growth plans. However there was no detailed framework for what these should encompass, aside from setting out that they should be locally owned and co-designed strategic place-based plans that provide a mechanism to prioritise environmental improvements, ensure effective coordination of planning & delivery and stimulate investment.

A secondary aim of the OxCam LNCP project is to provide a **scalable and replicable framework** for local natural capital plans elsewhere.

Defining our approach - Stakeholder Engagement

The **first phase** of the project is centred on **developing an approach** to take to build a natural capital plan for the Arc. Key to the success is working collaboratively with partners who will ultimately input to, or use and promote the LNCP. Over the past 12 months the project has run 6 workshops with over 80 organisations from sectors across the Arc such as planning and development, infrastructure and land management. In addition, many areas of good work around natural capital planning and valuation have been trialled already, including through the Defra Pioneer Projects and at a local level within the Arc by groups such as Local Nature Partnerships. At every opportunity we are speaking with these teams and building on their experiences and understanding - and augmenting their work wherever we can. To ensure the project is a success we are continuing to shape it at every stage with reviews and comments from our stakeholder user groups, other projects, policy makers and technical experts.

"We have defined and managed **stakeholder engagement groups and forums** to scope and refine approaches and outcomes for our project"

Ongoing activities

- **6 large Stakeholder group events** with representation from 80 organisations across the Arc and sectors to steer and shape our approach
- **Monthly Technical groups** to develop mapping and technical approaches with specialists
- **User specific workshops** with utilities, infrastructure, planning and development and land management sectors - to ensure tools are fit for purpose



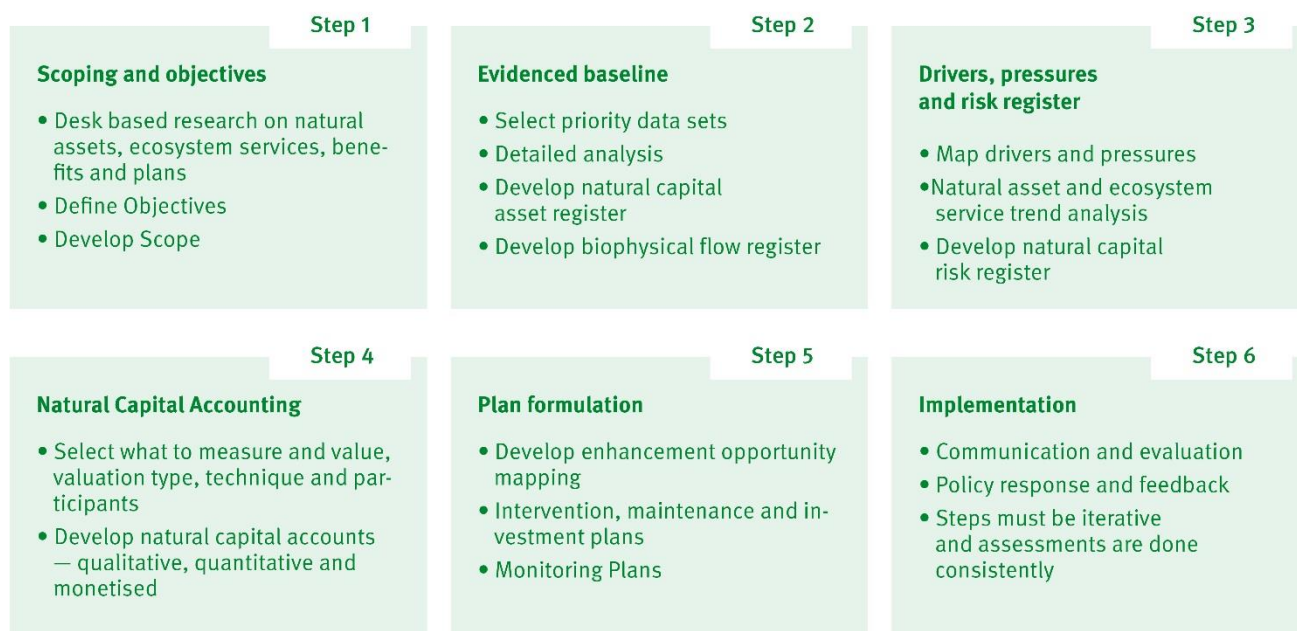
Defining our approach – specialist reviews

Natural capital planning is a new and developing area and it became apparent from initial conversations with stakeholders and experts that a number of approaches were being taken forward in the OxCam Arc already, as well as elsewhere, and there was no single recognised approach to taking forward a project like this. Therefore we commissioned an **independent specialist** to undertake a **review into the best approaches and tools for a local natural capital plan**. This will inform our work in the Arc and outlines the key steps and elements that will support the creation of local natural capital plans elsewhere.

The review looked at over 80 different natural capital approaches and tools and was steered by the LNCP Technical Group of experts from across consultancies, universities and government bodies. Throughout the review, the LNCP team fed in **outputs from our user workshops** and our continued stakeholder engagement.

The [detailed review](#) and [summary](#) can be found by clicking on the links, however the review provided three key findings:

- We should **follow a six step** approach to developing and delivering a local natural capital plan for the OxCam Arc as shown below.
- The **LNCP should use a matrix-based tool with inherent logic evidence chains to determine ecosystem services across the Arc**.
- A LNCP should engage and involve stakeholders throughout the different steps. This recommendation supports our existing **co-design and development approach**, and our continuous stakeholder engagement - something we will continue to do and advocate as we develop the LNCP.



The six step approach to developing an LNCP and all the elements within each step

Creating an evidence base

With a **6 step approach** recommended by the review and endorsed by partners, the project is now set to develop the foundation of a LNCP - an open, accessible and consistent evidence base that utilises the best available data. We have **provided direction and leadership** by working with data owners, to challenge assumptions and existing ways of working to facilitate creating an evidence base that meets these objectives. We are also providing an account and valuation to demonstrate the benefits of the natural environment in the Arc, whilst clearly outlining the gaps and limitations in an economic approach to assessing environmental values in isolation.

We are taking forward a small number of collaborative projects with partners across the Arc to explore specific aspects relating to a natural capital approach in more detail and at the more local scale. We have chosen projects that can deliver within our timescales, and add to the work of the LNCP and other local natural capital approaches and provide evidence for use in the Arc and beyond

The simple diagram on the next page outlines our work to date against the natural capital logic chain - making it easy to see the correlation between pieces of work and the type of evidence or information they provide.

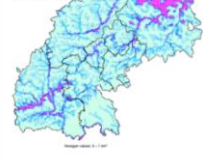


"We have produced a **Natural Capital Baseline** for the whole of the Arc- this shows the location and extent of Natural capital across the Arc" **Spring 2020**

Freshwater Habitat

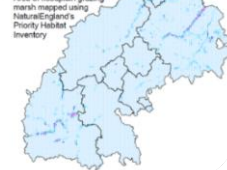
Active Floodplain

Areas at risk of flooding from EAs
Risk of flooding from Rivers
and Sea (high & Medium risk)



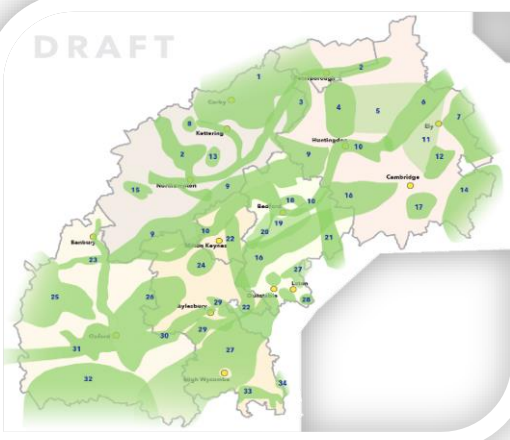
Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Area of floodplain grazing marsh mapped using Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory



"We have created **Natural Capital Indicator Maps** for the Arc" - These maps are based on the Natural England Atlas mapping approach and give an overview of the amount and type of natural capital within the Arc."
Published

"We will use our baseline, using a **matrix based tool** to assess the Arc's **Ecosystem Services** - we are aiming to produce a visual map of where there are relatively high and low levels of these services present." **Summer 2020**

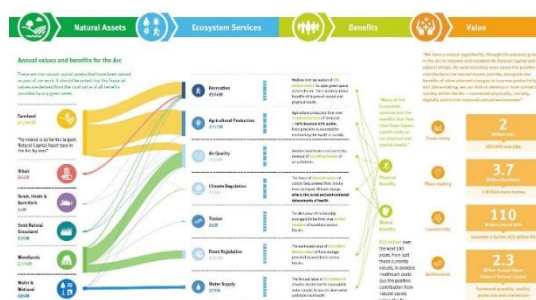


"We are working with our partners and stakeholders to map existing environmental **opportunity areas** for the Arc. As part of this we are working to develop an online platform that supports people to easily see where disparate opportunities could be joined together, or reconsidered, to ensure the most impactful net gain and environmental enhancement opportunities are delivered across the Arc" **Report Spring 2020, mapping platform summer 2020**



"We are developing a **Natural Capital Account** for the Arc, using the method trialled in the Bristol and Avon area which will provide us with a figure for the value of the Ecosystem Services provided by the Natural Capital within the Arc" **Spring 2020**

"We are developing an **Investment Toolkit** that supports the use of our evidence baseline and accounts. We are taking forward a **small number of collaborative projects** with partners across the Arc to explore and develop specific aspects relating to natural capital, such as investment planning and asset condition assessments." **Summer 2020**



Delivering and embedding

The next stage of the project will focus on ensuring that our physical "plan" (or set of products) is accessible, easy to use, plus integrated into existing frameworks and work where possible i.e. steps 5 and 6 on the approach diagram. We are already looking into other pieces of work, such as a mapping portal and interactive guidance and support, which will help the various users to build a natural capital approach into their work in line with their objectives. We will continue to work with all our stakeholders to deliver a useable LNCP for the Arc and a framework or blueprint that can be replicated across the country for local natural capital planning.

Want to know more or get in touch?

Should you want to know more visit our website www.oxcamlncp.org, or get in touch by sending an email to OxCamLNCP@environment-agency.gov.uk