



VALUING NATURE PROGRAMME

Valuing Nature Programme Report No. 3



Identifying Priorities for the Health & Wellbeing Funding Call: Pathways to Impact with Business

May 2015

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The Valuing Nature Programme aims to better understand and represent the complexities of the natural environment in valuation analyses and decision making, by considering the economic, societal and cultural value of ecosystem services. A Programme Coordination Team is running events and activities to help build an interdisciplinary research community capable of working across the natural, biological and social sciences, and the arts and humanities, and to build strong links with research users through the Valuing Nature Network.

1. Introduction

This report provides guidance on delivering research impact with business, to assist research teams in preparing their proposals in response to the Valuing Nature Programme (VNP) Health and Wellbeing Announcement of Opportunity (H&W AO). Research teams should read this report alongside the H&W AO, particularly in considering the AO expectations for impact.

This report:

1. offers suggestions on measures that research teams can take to enhance business impact (section 2);
2. provides some examples, as seen through a business lens, of research and innovation priorities related to the call (both specific to each of the three research areas addressed by the call, and some more generic needs) (Section 3);
3. outlines specific opportunities to engage with business (Section 4);
4. provides links to some relevant business impact initiatives in the UK and internationally (Section 5 and *Annex A*).

This report has been prepared by the VNP Business Interest Group (BIG) as guidance for research teams responding to the VNP Health and Wellbeing Call. The membership of the BIG is given at *Annex B*.

2. Measures to enhance business impact

The BIG considers that research teams can and should enhance business impact at each stage of the project process, from design to implementation to dissemination.

Features of a good proposal that is likely to deliver significant business impact, include:

- the presence of one or more business partners in the proposal, and/or secondments to business;
- research objectives and activities that have been explicitly designed in dialogue with business(es) and with reference to business needs;
- activities and expected outcomes which extend research through innovation and towards market application, e.g. through demonstration of tools/methods in a relevant business environment;
- evidence that the project team includes appropriate skills/capacities to present the business case, in business-friendly language, for the business uptake of research outcomes;
- activities aimed at engaging business throughout the course of the research programme and at delivering business impact;
- explicit synergies with business R&D programmes;
- evidence that VNP funding for the proposed project will ‘crowd in’ private sector funding and/or in-kind support.

Building in business impact at the research design state

The BIG offers the following suggestions to research teams to enhance the building in of business impact at the research design (proposal preparation) stage:

- Research teams need to take a business ‘reality-check’ in order to have business impact. They need to understand real-world complexity and that business decisions are dominated by considerations of profit, cost, compliance, etc. The best way to achieve this is through having one or more business partners engaged in the design of the research. In particular, research teams can enhance the business impact part of their proposals by engaging business people in writing or reviewing this.
- Research teams should give consideration to: which businesses could potentially benefit from the research, over different timescales; how might the potential business beneficiaries benefit; and what will be done during and after the project to increase the likelihood of the research reaching the intended business beneficiaries and maximise the likelihood of the identified benefits being achieved? This should then be reflected in the Pathways to Impact Statement.
- Business experience of working with the research community is often that the outcomes are not the outcomes that were hoped for; research teams and business partners should write down and recognise their mutual expectations of outcomes at the proposal stage.
- Research proposals should show awareness of what business is doing in the valuing nature arena and avoid replicating work already done.

Project implementation stage

- Research teams can enhance business impact as the project progresses by arranging for mentoring of relevant workstreams by one or more business partners, including face-to-face meetings at regular intervals to adjust the research as necessary to ensure business relevance.
- Research teams can also enhance business impact through secondments of researchers to business and vice versa. Secondments should be to/from both the sustainability and the commercial sides of business to build understanding of how to inform and influence business decisions at CEO/board level, and how to operationally embed these decisions.
- Research teams need to take account of the reality that ‘valuing nature’ is ‘miles away’ from the typical CEO focus on capital and operational expenditures (CAPEX, OPEX). They could work with business partners to map how CEOs and other decision-makers use information, what information they are using, what information they are not using but should be, and the links in the decision-making chain. Researchers can work with business sustainability managers to better understand how CEO’s take decisions and how to operationally embed these decisions.
- Once research projects have been funded, the VNP Business Interest Group can assist by making relevant additional business linkages.

Communication/dissemination of research findings

- Research teams can enhance business impact by communicating research findings in plain, business-friendly language and making the business case for uptake of these findings.
- Research teams should make sure to capture the research data and make it readily available to businesses; teams should include data management expertise.

3. Business risks and opportunities and related priorities for research and innovation

Generic points

BIG offers a number of generic points on promising areas for research and innovation under the H&W AO, as seen through a business lens:

- VNP research could usefully aim to demonstrate good practice in how to do research for business impact. This requires a collaborative process between the academic community and businesses.
- Risks and opportunities will vary considerably between business sectors. It will be important for research to differentiate/disaggregate between sectors when working on business impact.
- Research could look at what has worked well and what hasn't worked well with respect to valuing nature (in relation to health and wellbeing) in business contexts.
- Research could usefully focus on better design of business processes, procurement of goods and services and physical assets; if design itself values nature, then this delivers significant gains in relation to maintenance, risk, etc. Integrating 'valuing nature' in procurement, for example, could do more for nature than new legislation as, for businesses, taking account of the value of nature is then 'all about winning work' rather than legal compliance. At present, the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services have not filtered through in to procurement, in particular in the public sector; one constraint may be slow regulatory progress on sustainable procurement across government.¹
- New research should connect to and build on the body of relevant previous and on-going research without duplicating effort. Businesses are struggling to use existing concepts, tools and methods relating to natural capital and ecosystem services. To enhance impact with business, research outcomes should work with the existing natural capital and ecosystem services approach and avoid introducing new concepts.

Points relating to the specific research areas

BIG offers a few (non-exhaustive) suggestions on promising areas for research and innovation in relation to each of the three specific research areas addressed by the H&W AO, as seen through a business lens. These are not intended to be an exhaustive list of research priorities but rather a selection of priorities identified by BIG member companies.

Research Area 1: Natural hazards and extreme weather events

- Priorities for business under this theme include: attention to temperature extremes (heat waves and cold spells) and the impact on water supply, including links to the occurrence of aquatic toxins (research area 2); work on 'rainscapes' (to prevent surface water entering sewage systems leading to enhanced risks of sewage flooding) and on drinking water; research on the public perception of the value of nature and the need to get people to recognise the values of various ecosystem services (related to health and wellbeing) provided by water catchments; work on the business risks posed by water catchment

¹ As an example, Interserve has recently bid on a tender to manage MoD land, for which the specifications made no mention of natural capital and ecosystem services; in such circumstances, there is little leeway for the business services provider to address these issues, particularly given the way performance measures are set for the contract lifetime based on the tendered specification.

management (as opposed to conventional engineered ‘concrete’ solutions) in the context of Ofwat requirements for 100% compliance on water quality by 2020.

Research Area 2: Marine/aquatic toxins and vector-borne/pathogenic diseases

- Algal blooms in reservoirs are a major issue for water companies.

Research Area 3: Urban green space

- Research could help to connect work on green and blue corridors in flood control and management. For example, despite the Somerset floods, the value of green and blue corridors, including for health and wellbeing, has not carried through in to policy.
- Research could examine the meaning of green space; does it mean just green, or space having useful ecological diversity and functions? How can green space deliver multiple benefits (including health and wellbeing) and how can this be integrated into design and management? Consistent and comprehensive measures for the quality of urban green space are lacking. How can designers and maintenance be influenced to deliver multiple ecological services? Where is the ‘golden spot’ in urban landscaping that delivers ecological value but is also socially accepted?

4. Specific opportunities to engage with business

The BIG is happy to provide specific opportunities for engagement with business. Details of specific opportunities will be made available from the Valuing Nature website (valuing-nature.net) following publication of the H&W AO.

BIG members and other business representatives will be invited to meet with research teams at the H&W Call Event in Birmingham on 14 July 2015.

Research teams are encouraged to make use of VNP PCT business engagement mechanisms (BIG, business seminars and webinars, business presence at other VNP events) and outputs (such as this report) in developing and implementing the business impact aspects of their projects.

5. Links with relevant business initiatives

The BIG encourages research teams to make links to relevant initiatives on valuing nature in business. A non-exhaustive list of such initiatives is given in *Annex A*.

Annex A Other relevant business initiatives (a non-exhaustive list)

UK

- Forthcoming study on the effects of biodiversity and ecosystem services on the water industry.
- Office of National Statistics and Treasury work on including natural capital in the UK's environmental accounts.
- Natural Capital Committee reports and studies.
- DCLG work on transposing the revised EIA directive and linked changes to the planning framework.
- National Trust's new strategy on urban greenspace.
- Natural Capital Coalition work on a natural capital protocol.
- Business in the Community's Water Task Force work on flooding issues.
- Accounting for Sustainability.
- Defra evaluations of offset pilots and PES.
- ADAS/Cascade consulting study on nutrient offsetting pilot in the Milford Haven catchment, Pembrokeshire.
- Green Construction Board.
- Work of the Wildlife Trusts on Health and Wellbeing.
- UK Contractors Group Biodiversity Task Group – working with UCL on measuring biodiversity.
- Other relevant Innovate UK Catapults, e.g. Future Cities Catapult.
- Landscape Institute – have data on green infrastructure.
- Imperial College London work on wellbeing.
- Relevant work of the UCL Centre for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research.

International

- EU Business @ Biodiversity Platform
- CBD work on business and biodiversity
- OPERAs & OpenNESS (EU FP7 projects on operationalizing natural capital and ecosystem services)

Annex B Members of the VNP Business Interest Group @ 1/6/15

Business representatives

- **Peter Young**, Chairman, **Aldersgate Group** (CHAIR)
- **Stuart Bailey**, Group Head of Sustainability & Climate Change, **National Grid**
- **Julia Baker**, Biodiversity Team Leader, **WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff**
- **Martin Ballard**, Group Environment Manager, **Willmott Dixon**
- **Ruth Barden**, Environmental Regulation Manager, **Wessex Water**
- **Jonathan Dobson**, Sustainability Adviser, **United Utilities**
- **Richard Ellis**, Vice President CSR, **Walgreens Boots Alliance**
- **Olivia Gray**, Chief Operating Officer, Capital Science and Policy Practice, **Willis**
- **Andrew Griffiths**, Sustainability Manager, **Nestlé**
- **Tony Juniper**, Sustainability Advisor, **Tony Juniper Ltd**
- **Ian McAulay**, Chief Executive, **Viridor**
- **Louise Newport**, Scientific Policy Manager, Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Extreme Weather, **Department of Health**
- **Phillippa Pearson**, Source Protection Manager, **Welsh Water**
- **Christopher Price**, Director of Policy & Advice, **Country Land and Business Association**
- **Mat Roberts**, Director of Sustainability Strategy, **Interserve**
- **Nick Veck**, Head of CEO Office, **Satellite Applications Catapult**
- **Fiona Wheatley**, Sustainable Development Manager, **Marks and Spencer**
- **Stuart Wilson**, Midlands & West Team Leader & Ecological Adviser, **Highways England**

VNP Programme Coordination Team (*ex officio*)

- **Rosie Hails**, Head of Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team (VNPCT), **Centre for Ecology & Hydrology**
- **Guy Duke**, Business Champion, VNPCT, **Independent consultant**
- **Anita Weatherby** Programme Manager, VNPCT, **Centre for Ecology & Hydrology**



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