

# Identifying Priorities for the Health & Wellbeing Funding Call: Scoping Meeting Summary



## Introduction

This is an extract from the full report<sup>1</sup> which is available from [valuing-nature.net](http://valuing-nature.net).

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.

The Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team (VNPCT) organised a one day meeting at the Royal Society on 20 March 2015 to help define research priorities for the upcoming 'Health & Wellbeing' funding call. The 48 attendees represented a diverse range of academic disciplines and included end-users of research from policy and practice.

The focus of the call was defined as improving understanding of the role biodiversity and ecosystem services play in human health & wellbeing for three specific topics: natural hazards & extreme events, vector borne disease and marine toxins, and urban ecosystems (greenspace). The funded projects would need to deliver a step change in understanding of valuation (monetary and / or non-monetary) and help develop interdisciplinary research capability.

The outputs of the workshop are summarised below. Recommendations and key research areas were identified for each of the three research themes, and for the cross cutting area of interdisciplinary research, along with general feedback about the call.

## Research Theme 1. Natural Hazards & Extreme Events

*Recommendation:* redefine scope to include extreme temperatures (heatwaves, cold)

*Key research areas/challenges identified:*

- Improving our understanding of health & wellbeing impacts from natural hazards & extreme events across time, space, & scale
- Understanding & valuing the impact natural hazards & extreme events on health & wellbeing impacts with monetary and non-monetary values (e.g. cost to NHS)
- What are the perceived risks of natural hazards and extreme events? How do these affect people's relationships with the natural environment?
- How do we integrate the management of the natural environment to mitigate against natural hazards and extreme events with management for other objectives? (i.e. multiple benefits including health & wellbeing, biodiversity)

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<sup>1</sup> Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team, 2015. Identifying Priorities for the Health & Wellbeing Funding Call: Results from Scoping Meeting, Valuing Nature Programme Report No. 2

## Research Theme 2. Vector Borne Disease & Marine Toxins

*Recommendation:* redefine scope to Pathogens & Aquatic Toxins

*Recommendation:* ensure medical scientists are included when the call is promoted (e.g. Medical Research Council, Wellcome Trust, National Institute Health Research)

*Key research areas/challenges identified:*

- Review / scoping (e.g. What do we know & where are the gaps? What is the significance? (health burden, economic costs / benefits); What existing monitoring could help and what is needed? What can we learn from international / historical experience?)
- Future forecasts (e.g. Risks in context of environmental change, underlying mechanisms, needs for evidence base for modelling, what are the implications of human behaviour?)
- Land and Water management (e.g. catchment management to reduce the risk of disease / toxins, understanding risk / mitigation, assessing pre-emptive vs reactive approaches)

## Research Theme 3. Urban Ecosystems (greenspace)

*Recommendation:* ensure scope includes bluespace

*Key research areas/challenges identified:*

- Scoping and describing what is already in place / being used
- Evaluating what works / what doesn't work (e.g. existing initiatives, international policies / design / management, green/blue health and wellbeing experience of different groups)
- Understanding why it works / doesn't (e.g. how to get impact on health & wellbeing, understanding mechanisms, characterising effect)
- Design & management (including social, cultural, historical)
- Mainstreaming (from research to decision makers, toolkits, governance issues)

## Cross-cutting issues & interdisciplinary research

*Recommendation:* also recognise the public as a major stakeholder in this research

*Key research areas/challenges identified:*

- Historical perspective (e.g. how the past informs present & future, historical contingencies)
- Temporal dimension (e.g. intra/inter-generational, interventions in the context of wider health, future planning, cumulative impacts of repeated exposure)
- Pluralistic methodologies, data, infrastructure & evidence (e.g. developing interdisciplinary capability, beyond monetary methods, potential for public evidence)
- Social and cultural dimension (e.g. inequality/environmental social justice, value of nature and health culturally defined, class/race/gender)
- Links to decision making (e.g. different models / scales of governance)

## Recommendations about the funding call

*What are the essential elements bids should include?*

A wide variety of viewpoints were expressed, including the following proposals:

- Projects should include direct involvement of end-users in planning and delivery.
- To develop interdisciplinary capability, projects should be across disciplines and institutions. They should define how they will develop “cross-disciplinary literacy”, recognising that time and resource will be needed for activities both within projects and as part of wider VNPCT-led activities.
- Funders need to define geographic scope (UK?), what is meant by valuation, and expectations from research.
- Projects should include case studies.
- Ideally projects should try to leverage funding from other sources.

*What should the distribution of projects be? How big, how many?*

- There were a range of responses, recognising that because of the breadth of the topic there would be a trade-off between how many projects were funded, and the extent to which research could be truly interdisciplinary.
- There was some supporting the suggestion that 2 to 4 large projects should be funded.
- Additional small projects could be included e.g. for early career researchers, to promote collaboration or for curiosity studies; if this was later these could fill gaps. However, this would reduce the main budget.

*How should projects address the call topics? Do all projects need to address all topics, how should the funders create a coherent programme?*

- Funders should define expectations on this.
- There are natural links between themes, but it is not necessary for every project to cover all themes.

*What can the Programme Coordination Team do to help the programme work?*

A variety of ideas were suggested included the following:

- Pursue additional funding (e.g. businesses, MRC, NIHR, BIS, EU directive implementation, local authorities, LEPs).
- Support projects and help them interact (e.g. interdisciplinary working, shared approach to metrics / definitions).
- Help develop broader interdisciplinary community beyond projects (shared terminology, meetings e.g. on case studies).
- Promote high level engagement e.g. national policy implementation.