

# **A charter between the West of England Nature Partnership and the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Board that commits to joint action on improving health and wellbeing through natural capital assets in the West of England**

## **1. Background**

The UK's natural environment and healthcare systems are both under considerable pressure and need to adopt new ways of working to achieve their desired outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability. There is considerable strategic and operational cross-over between health and environment and in many parts of the UK these opportunities are not being acted upon.

Natural capital is the stock of natural assets, such as soil, air, water and wildlife, from which humans derive a wide range of services. The natural environment is a fantastic asset to healthcare, providing a wealth of places for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to be active and improve or manage their mental health and wellbeing. There is significant and growing evidence that access to and activity in natural spaces benefits physical and mental health and wellbeing and can produce a range of positive health outcomes. There is also peer-reviewed evidence that natural assets are a valuable tool for addressing health inequalities and air pollution.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing is a key objective of the government's 25-year environment plan. The plan specifically calls for the NHS, Local Authorities and environmental organisations to work together to help people to improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces; including through green prescribing and Green Infrastructure provision.

Across the South West, thousands of people regularly participate in nature-based activities and volunteering programmes provided by environmental VCSE organisations, Local Authorities and National Parks, who also maintain huge areas of publicly accessible natural space. Despite this, natural capital is a very underused tool in supporting delivery of Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

Environmental organisations rely on the input of people and public support to meet government objectives to restore, enhance and conserve the nations biodiversity. Therefore, joint working that creates more suitable opportunities for a wider range of people to reconnect with the natural environment would be beneficial.

## **2. Charter statement**

The charter commits the West of England Nature Partnership and the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Board to work together to achieve our shared vision. It also sets out the terms of the collaboration role and principles by which we will work.

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

**Local Nature Partnerships** - Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) were established following the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper. The UK Government gave LNPs broad objectives, although their work is also influenced by local priorities. LNPs are required to drive positive change in the local environment and influence decision-making related to the natural environment and its value to social and

economic outcomes. Engaging Health and Wellbeing Boards and integrating 'Nature's Health Services' were key objectives.

**Health and Wellbeing Board** – Health and wellbeing boards were established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to act as a forum in which key leaders from the local health and care system could work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population.

#### 4. Vision Statement

We believe that working together to enhance natural capital and improve access to the benefits it provides will support transformation to more sustainable health and care systems that focus on prevention and self-care, whilst delivering financial savings.

We will embed a culture of collaboration on health and environment priorities, work together on strategic planning and seek to develop joint projects. Integrating natural capital with sustainable healthcare outcomes and provision will become normal practice.

[Add locally agreed priorities]

#### 5. Guiding principals

The signatories will adhere to the following principles in how they work together.

*i. A place based approach*

- Work together through Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to set out a place-based approach to green space enhancement and provision that targets specific local health challenges.
- Work together to integrate natural capital into implementation of Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs).
- GPs and healthcare commissioners and providers will use and where appropriate invest in local natural assets to support improved healthcare outcomes.

*ii. Leadership*

- Support effective local political leadership in all Local Authorities for integrating enhancement and provision of natural capital to address healthcare challenges.
- Use the full range of opportunities to integrate enhancement and provision of natural capital and delivering sustainable healthcare system across the full portfolio of services and activities e.g. planning, regeneration, economic development.

- Strongly advocate the importance of collaboration on natural capital and healthcare to staff, central government and other partners. Emphasising that business as usual is not acceptable and embedding the new culture across policy agendas.
- Establish active South Region Sustainability and Health Network ambassadors in all STP areas in the South West, who will drive integration of a natural capital approach into STP implementation.

*iii. Investment and support*

- The signatories will share expertise to support each other to achieve the vision set out in this statement.
- The signatories will work together to identify investment and external funding opportunities that will enable natural capital to deliver transformation to a sustainable healthcare system.
- The signatories will review relevant local policies and strategies to identify where integration of natural capital and healthcare outcomes is currently omitted. These documents will be revised to incorporate collaboration on natural capital and healthcare outcomes.

## **6. Outcomes**

1. Establish or maintain reciprocal representation between HWBs and LNPs.
2. Collaborate with the South West LNP Health and Environment work wherever possible.
3. Identify and actively promote commissioning of nature-based solutions.
4. Revise relevant local policies and strategies to embed collaboration on natural capital and healthcare outcomes.
5. Train Community Connectors, or equivalents, in social prescribing systems about nature-based solutions and opportunities.

**Others to be determined locally**

## **7. Signatories**

Signature:  
 Printed name:  
 Organisation:  
 Position:

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 Printed name:  
 Organisation:  
 Position: