

Wilder Visions:

Call for support, papers, partnerships and more.....



When: feeder events in 2017, major symposium 2018

Where: feeder events **2017 @ Sherwood, Doncaster, Sheffield; major 2018 symposium in Sheffield plus regional site visits – Sherwood, Humberhead Levels NNR, Pennine Moors, Dearne Valley, National Forest.**

Partners so far: BES, IUFRO, Ancient Tree Forum, Natural England, JBA Consulting, Environment agency, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts (various), Landlife, RSPB, Society for Ecological Restoration (hopefully), International Union of Forest Research Organisations, European Society for Environmental History, International Peat Society, IUCN, Sheffield Hallam University, SYBRG, The Landscape Conservation Forum, The National Forest, the Sherwood Forest Trust, Moors for the Future, The Shropshire & Cheshire Meres & Mosses, Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, 3-Haggis Wood, *etc.* & various local authorities.

We already have a list of individuals interested in taking these ideas forwards – about 45 key players from universities, agencies, NGOs, and local authorities etc.

The Vision: With major challenges for the future in terms of climate change, land-use, biodiversity, heritage, economy and community, we are bringing together a unique group of experts, academics, researchers and practitioners to debate the issues.



The focus will be on a wilder and more connected future to halt the decline of species and environmental quality, yet recognising the cultural nature and heritage value of many landscapes. This series of meetings emerges from over 30 years of seminars and conferences organised by our team and partners.

Context of the event: The Humberhead Levels NIA & the Dearne Valley NIA were two top scoring locations from 78 applications submitted nationally. The Sherwood Forest area, having come second to Leicestershire in the 1900s as the New National Forest site, has proposals for a Regional Park development. North of the Humberhead Levels, the Yorkshire Wolds and Holderness link to the east coast, the Derwent, to North Yorkshire and beyond. South, the Rivers Dearne and Don extend to the South Pennines and the Dark Peak. The latter is developing a funded programme of environmental improvement works. On the eastern edge of the Levels, the River Trent forms a major corridor linking former floodlands and restored gravel workings, to Sherwood and associated areas with ancient forest and restored heaths, and reclaimed coal-mining sites. Immediately east are the Lincolnshire Marshes, Wolds and the Coversands. At the heart of this complex web of sites and connecting rivers, lies the massive Humberhead Levels with Europe's biggest wetland restoration project. To the west are the Rivers Don, Sheaf and Rother catchments and Peak District, to the east, the Humber Estuary.

The idea & concept: By 2018, the first phase NIA funding has ended, with Government money ceasing in 2015. This concept and vision take these innovative projects to the next level: ***bigger, better and more joined-up, becoming larger, bolder, more interconnected.***

Through recognition and support for existing sites and projects, and by identifying critical, areas to create and connect key habitats as landscape—level necklaces, this new vision develops **ecological stepping stones** and **critical environmental nodes** in the landscape through which ecological gain can be delivered.

The exemplar of this unconstrained vision extends across a region of approximately 160 square miles, encompassing two UK Government regions and seven local authorities: true landscape-scale conservation. Importantly, the event will stress the need to set the context for re-construction – to understand the past, to inform the present, and to guide the future.

Some emerging themes:

1. Wilding & culture
2. Considering the past, to understand the present and inform the future
3. Landscape characterisation
4. The need for cross-disciplinary approaches
5. The potential for re-wetting landscapes such as peatlands
6. Mopping up water & holding carbon
7. Re-constructing new nature sites
8. New nature networks - re-connecting nature
9. Recombinant ecologies & future feral
10. Managing the uplands
11. Sustaining biodiversity
12. Growing resilience
13. Mitigating climate change
14. Pop-up or flat-pack wilding with pick & mix ecologies
15. Transforming landscapes & farming
16. Regional economic impacts
17. Growing tourism & leisure & wildlife spectacles
18. Growing the skills base
19. Engaging local people
20. Engaging wider stakeholders
21. Working with the media
22. Educating the educators
23. Transforming rural economies
24. Delivering ecosystem services
25. The need for demonstration projects
26. Wilding the city

2017: Feeder meetings of researchers and stakeholders across the demonstration areas. Some funding bids are already in place for specific projects but these events provide focus for discussion and individual plans within an agreed over-arching conceptual context. Further funding bids will develop as part of this process with a planned launch in 2018.

2018: MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE / SYMPOSIUM CENTRED on the Humberhead Levels and a larger, unconstrained vision. The international context is through speakers and presentations on re-construction projects and lessons learned from around the world.

Outputs from this event will form a valuable resource of best practice guidance, conference volumes, and a major book. This resource will form an invaluable repository for the knowledge gained in developing landscape-scale conservation in the Humberhead Levels and similar projects worldwide that can support future funding bids.

The Vision: the event itself will take a *hugely positive view of the role of ecology in guiding re-construction and re-creation projects in the face of global environmental change and other challenges.*

However, the event will **not merely consider ecology and landscape heritage**, but also aspects of *resource economics, politics, community engagement and involvement, and intimately related issues such as leisure and tourism and the provision of ecosystem services.*

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