

## North Devon Biosphere Reserve: Exploring the potential of Natural Capital

→ Clean Water and Sanitation SDG 6; Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 8; Action on Climate Change SDG 13; Life Below Water SDG 14; Life on Land SDG 15; Partnerships SDG 17

The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in North Devon is at the centre of two groundbreaking projects, one land-based, one marine, which are seeking to find innovative ways to govern our environment. They are two of four 'pioneer projects' being carried out to help inform the implementation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) 25-year plan.

DEFRA's plan takes a longer-term approach and a more holistic view, aiming to make sustainable use and restoration of the environment central to all society's decisions. Its ultimate vision is to repair, improve and protect our environment, so it's in a better state for the next generation.<sup>164</sup>

Both three-year projects are investigating how natural capital (geology, soil, air, water and living things) can be best managed to benefit the environment, economy and people. Led by Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation, the projects involve multiple national and local partners, including government agencies, universities, NGOs and the private sector. The land-based project is trialling new approaches to manage farmland, natural habitats, watercourses, coasts and urban environments in a better way for people and nature. After mapping existing sources of funding, it will identify where investment in natural capital is most needed and take action to secure new investment.

A similar approach is being taken by the marine pioneer which is testing new tools and methods for applying a natural capital model; demonstrating integrated planning and delivery and seeking to trial and 'scale-up' the use of new funding opportunities.<sup>165</sup> Where possible the marine and landscape pioneer programmes are being brought together to demonstrate how the area can be managed as a single system. In addition to providing on-going changes to practice and funding for the pioneer area, the projects are hoping to offer lessons which can be applied nationally in other areas of the UK.

<sup>164</sup> GOV.UK. (2019). DEFRA 25-year Environment plan. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

<sup>165</sup> GOV.UK. (2019). MMO update on Marine Natural Capital projects. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-pioneer/marine-pioneer-achievements>





“Biosphere Reserves are all about innovating and testing new policy developments - it’s one of our key wider values to the UK. It’s a testament to North Devon’s history of powerful partnership working and our firm base in the local community that we were chosen to host two pioneer projects. I’m hopeful they will offer valuable lessons for the sustainable management of the environment and a tangible contribution to the SDGs.”

→ Andy Bell, North Devon Biosphere Reserve's Co-ordinator



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