

Going to where people are

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If you are reading *Ecosystems News* for the first time, welcome to the Ecosystems Knowledge Network. We also welcome the Scottish Government as a funder of the Network, alongside the continued support of Defra.

In this issue, we focus on how an ecosystems approach is being applied in some of the UK's largest population centres. UK cities and their regions are, in a very real sense, where the people are. These settlements are actively planning for the long term, each striving for prosperity and a place on the national and international stage. As they do so, there is huge potential for demonstrating lasting benefits from a holistic and inclusive approach to looking after the natural environment.

Since its launch in early 2012, the Network has served its members by providing opportunities to share good practice in how land and water environments are managed in accordance with the principles of an ecosystems approach. Many Network members are leaders in the approach. Most crucially, they are providing practical examples of projects that put equal emphasis on the following:

- valuing nature;
- understanding how nature works; and
- involving people.

Some of these leaders and the work they are championing feature in this issue of *Ecosystems News*. See, for example, the pioneering work of Nick Grayson within Birmingham City Council (see article on Page 4).

The Network also exists for those who are *not yet* members. (It even exists for those who will probably never be members.) This claim may sound unusual, so let me explain! It is all too often forgotten that the way landscapes and local environments evolve and are managed is influenced by a myriad of professions and so called 'sectors'. These range from brewers to building technicians, from farmers to fund managers. As representatives of public and private interests, these people form an important part of a systems approach to managing our natural environment. They influence people's relationship with that environment. Many of them are responsible for budgets far larger than those deployed in the name of nature conservation or catchment management.

These people will be an increasingly important focus for the Network. Practical projects can (and do) engage these sectors, as demonstrated by the work of the Mersey Forest (see the articles starting on Page 10). The Network would like to hear your ideas for how an ecosystems approach can be better recognised in the working practices, mindsets and actions of people for whom care for the natural environment is not their primary goal.

Read on to be inspired by what other members are doing, and don't forget to make use of the Network website - <http://ecosystemsknowledge.net> (note the change of domain). As always, the Network team is keen to hear from Members and others with suggestions for activities and resources to share. Do get in touch at info@ecosystemsknowledge.net.



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