

National Green Infrastructure Dataset and Mapping portal - West Yorkshire draft survey response

Question 1 – Please rate these following statements relating to maps, data and Geographical Information (GIS) skills

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree
The online mapping tool is easy to use		X		
The range of mapping datasets provided is good			X	
Local data is available which could enhance the data/maps provided		X		
Staff skilled in GIS are available to help integrate data ¹		X (to some extent)		
The maps are useful tools to communicate key messages on GI to decision makers		X		

Question 2. What elements of the database did you use (Story Maps, Data Tables, GIS data)?

Initial story maps provided as demonstration by Natural England and draft user manual.

Question 3. What sorts of uses would you potentially use the resources for once they are finalised?

Natural England should consider how the national data set and mapping portal can provide support for local authorities in preparing to changes in the planning system – in particular planning for net biodiversity gain and the development of nature recovery strategies – and providing clarity on which data sets should be used and how, in order to best prepare for new obligations on local planning authorities.

If sufficiently detailed, the national data set and mapping could also support development of a Green Infrastructure investment pipeline and planning for locally defined GI networks e.g. as part of inclusion in Local Plan.

Question 4. Did you encounter any technical problems using the data/products? What were these?

The current demonstration story map for ANGSt analyses is slow in loading and some buffers do not always load. This may need to be addressed when all of England is added and users could be accessing from across the country

Question 5. Which elements of the resource were most useful/least useful?

The Accessible Natural Greenspace layers are of particular interest as new data created by Natural England (in the rating of naturalness and accessibility).

Question 6. Did you supplement the resource with additional data in order to use? If so, what data? We would be interested in the range of local datasets you have available.

Partners have a range of local data available, to varying extents. These have not yet been combined into the national data sets made available but include locally identified Wildlife Habitat Network data, and relevant physical and mental health indicators beyond that currently included (population whose activities are limited by illness/disability) – for example obesity, type II diabetes rates at MSOA/LSOA level.

Question 7. What else would it be useful to include as a national data/analysis resource in order to expand the content of the database?

- National datasets relating to biodiversity/ecology are not included but would provide a more rounded understanding of the range
 - National habitat data (e.g. as included on DEFRA Magic Map)
 - Specific datasets relating to peatlands/upland habitat types – significant in relation to climate emergency and flood risk mitigation (including quality and quantity of habitat)
 - Woodland mapping – can results of any LIDAR mapping be incorporated?
 - Agricultural land designation would be useful as it still provides accessibility benefits as well as limited eco-system services
- Other landscape elements e.g. river catchments, topography – to help identify areas of opportunity (compare with EA mapping recently released)
- Health data relating to physical and mental health, that access to green space could influence for example obesity prevalence, could be expanded beyond data set currently those included.

Question 8. Do you have any views on the approaches taken in the analyses?

The approach to defining a network of green infrastructure on the basis of accessible natural greenspace – and using rule of thumb assessments to determine accessibility and naturalness based on habitat type – does suggest some potential issues with the usefulness and accuracy of the data.

Only polygons defined as greenspace in the OS Mastermap set have been assessed for naturalness – this might lead to gaps in our understanding of where natural greenspace is. For example a comparison against satellite data reveals that there are significantly larger areas of green space compared to the Mastermap set. For example some private land is included in the Mastermap set (e.g. parks and

gardens) that is also natural but may not be shown. See our response to question 7 on missing data.

We suggest that NE should start assessments from the perspective of naturalness—then accessibility should be an additional aspect. It would be useful if users can understand better what the naturalness ranking/factor applied by Natural England is.

National datasets are always going to be limited in terms of accuracy (in terms of quantity, quality, naturalness, accessibility and biodiversity) and many of these data sets will need checking against local data or by local organisations.

However the current data sets included in the data set seem too limited (see our response to question 7) and overly focussed on accessibility. It is important not to lose focus on the “natural” element of ANGSt – biodiversity/ecosystem should be a fundamental factor in the analysis. The application of a relatively crude “naturalness” factor risks undervaluing or not providing sufficient assessment of the multi-functionality of greenspace – predominant focus on naturalness and accessibility.

The mapping portal should be structured around a clear link between the different ecosystem and human benefits provided by green infrastructure and the different mapping layers.

Question 9. Any overall feedback and/or comments? Please provide any further information on maps, data and GIS.

The proposal to develop a nationally consistent dataset and map base is welcomed and useful, and the current story maps suggest that a powerful tool could be developed – but potential use and value at local level is less clear currently. Along with any implications for local authorities of development of a national dataset and application within the national planning policy framework.

We recognise that the online mapping and datasets offer useful potential to provide a consistent approach to planning for green infrastructure across the country, and could help to work towards a single concept of “Green Infrastructure” – helping to promote the concept of green infrastructure sitting alongside manmade infrastructure as essential for society.

Many local authorities in our area have access to the data sets proposed as part of the national dataset already – for example for development of mapping as part of Local Plan development. Some of the current maps and analyses – e.g. related to accessible natural greenspace – provide new data for local authorities but the limitations around ANGSt and the data sets used are noted above in our response on the Standards proposed as part of the national Framework.

However, for some authorities in our region, where GIS/mapping resource is limited, the online mapping portal offers useful potential as a foundation for analysis and basis to develop local policy.

Maintenance of data/updating is a key challenge – and consistency if different layers get out of date. Local authorities have limited resources to undertake local data collection to validate the national data sets – both as a baseline and for periodic updating. We understand the current National England work is based on adding new datasets but consideration of responsibilities and practical arrangements for updating data layers should be made at this stage. This applies to fundamental data sets such as the OS Mastermap data.

Quality of data is likely to be inconsistent between layers and between regions – this is a challenge for planning at local and regional/national level. Natural England and local authorities will have to consider at what point the data becomes out of date to the extent that it no longer can be considered functional.

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