

# Developing York & North Yorkshire’s Routemap to Carbon Negative

## Natural Capital Session

10<sup>th</sup> June 2022

### 1. Session purpose

- 1.1 Following the analysis of stakeholder feedback from York and North Yorkshire’s Routemap to Carbon Negative consultation, the session was focused on addressing key themes from the feedback in relation to Land Use and Agriculture (The Marine and Coastal section was managed separately in a session on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022).
- 1.2 The aims of the session were to:
  - (1) Agree a revised set of key principles and strategic priorities for the Land Use & Agriculture section of the Routemap, and;
  - (2) Agree further interventions required.

### 2. Key themes from consultation feedback

- 2.1 KT provided an overview of the key messages from the stakeholder consultation in relation to the Land Use & Agriculture section. This included:
  - How do we ensure the transition to net zero has a positive impact on **biodiversity**?
  - How do we ensure our **food security** is not compromised?
  - How to better incorporate the **circular economy** in the strategic priorities and interventions?
  - How we can ensure a **holistic “whole farm” approach**?
  - Concern that reductions in **meat and dairy productions** are omitted
  - How do recognise within the Routemap the impact of **current policy uncertainty**?

### 3. Strategic priorities: discussion around revising strategic priorities

- 3.1 The group discussed a series of questions arising from the stakeholder consultation, and whether the elements should be incorporated into the strategic priorities for the Land Use & Agriculture section. A summary of the discussion is included in the table below:

Topics/Summary of Key Discussion Points
<p><b>1. Overarching Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be further reference to the importance of biodiversity.</li> <li>• Circular economy approaches need to be integrated into the strategic priorities and interventions.</li> <li>• Concern that without a reduction in land use set aside for animal farming, it may be difficult to achieve significant changes in carbon emissions from the land.</li> <li>• Other stakeholders were concerned that the scale of ambition for 38,000 hectares of new woodland would reduce land for agricultural production, risking an increase in imported food with a high carbon footprint.</li> <li>• There is currently a significant amount of uncertainty in the agriculture sector with regards to future policy and funding mechanism.</li> <li>• Need more focus on the development of skills, particularly considering the introduction of ELMs.</li> </ul>

- Engagement and communication with farmers will be key, alongside improving knowledge transfer and exchange.
- The ‘whole farm’ approach mainly focuses on improving manure management – other approaches, such as crop rotation, green manures, and alternative fertilisers, should be better incorporated.
- The ambition to improve manure management is somewhat vague and needs to be described in more detail so it can be tracked and evidenced.
- Rural grid infrastructure was noted as a critical issue that needs to be addressed to enable rural areas to reach net zero.

## 2. Inclusion of Biodiversity

- Group agreed on the importance of biodiversity and that all priorities intersect with biodiversity. It was agreed we should weave biodiversity into the priorities.
- There was a suggestion that DEFRA may be introducing biodiversity policies, but these have not yet been published, so we to consider how best to incorporate it into the Routemap.
- Need to consider the potential for ‘holistic whole-countryside’ – the way that farmers use their land will impact on how the rest of the countryside is managed.
- Biodiversity net-gain – new policies will require biodiversity loss to be replaced and increased by 10%, but this will put further pressure on land use which needs to be recognised in the Routemap and Local Plans.
- We should be able to deliver biodiversity net gain in such a way that also reduces carbon – the two don’t need to be separate.
- High-nature-value farming can offer reduced carbon, increased biodiversity, and makes a farm more financially stable.
- The land is a business asset that is privately-owned – we need to incentivise the landowners to do the work on biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- The ecosystems referenced in the Routemap are only marine and coastal – there is perhaps a gap to reference improving terrestrial landscapes as well. The ways to achieve biodiversity are myriad – we need to reference this to make it more accessible and attractive (e.g. ELMS).
- We can reference enhancing ecosystems in the strategic priorities, using the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a key strategic document to deliver on this.
- Biodiversity element included the words ‘resilient landscapes’ – was uncomfortable about enhancing marine and coastal ecosystems to help them sequester carbon. We need resilient landscapes to ensure food security, among other things – without a strong, functional, landscape, we can’t adapt to the changing pressures of climate change.

## 3. Importance of Food Security

- Group agreed that food security was a significant concern for farmers, especially with so many pressures on land use.
- Reference to reducing meat and dairy consumption had been removed from the Routemap, but people are keen to reduce their consumption and associated emissions. It was felt that the NFU has recently addressed this well as they feel that GHG emissions can be reduced without reducing livestock numbers.
- NFU to be approached for further information on the subject of meat and dairy reduction for potential inclusion in the Routemap as a measured way of addressing the issue. The NFU is part of the GY steering group and provided extensive feedback on the Routemap.
- Concern raised regarding landowners allocating significant portions of agricultural land for solar development and with no mention of land classification in the Routemap it was suggested that more legislation around ‘best and most versatile’ farmland was needed in order to protect food supply in UK and to protect the landscape.
- Group discussed that landowners and farmers are not always the same people, and can be motivated by different factors.
- Group agreed that increasing renewable energy generation is important. However, planning policy must be improved to ensure appropriate use of land.

- Some concern was raised that meat and dairy production takes more space than growing crops and as land cannot be used twice controls need to be put in place to ensure land is used in the most effective way.

#### 4. Incorporating circular economy into strategic priorities

- As circular economy is referenced in other sections of the Routemap the group considered how do we better-represent this in Land Use & Agriculture.
- The Local Nature Partnership has been promoting how local landscapes can support local green energy (e.g. through AD) for a number of years and has the potential to create new jobs, improve biodiversity, and provide green energy.
- It was agreed that there may be CE elements within proposed interventions already in the Routemap, and that these may need to be drawn out more clearly.
- It was questioned whether to include terms like ‘agri-forestry’ within the Routemap, to signal these are potential opportunities alongside regenerative agriculture.
- There is a need to be realistic – most farmers want to do the best by the land they work with, but restricted by land boundaries/budgets, etc.
- Concerns raised that not every farmer will be able to move to a carbon-negative farming model and therefore what happens to the ones left behind.
- It was suggested that in terms of regenerative agriculture, the market will probably make the decision but with costs rising, farmers and landowners are having to consider new options to get same productivity from the land.
- Agri-forestry could be a good option for farmers to consider as it provides an option to effectively use the underproductive areas such as corners of land.
- There is a need to recognise the important role that farmers have in moving to net zero, and that communication is clear between landowners and the people actually working the land.
- A lot of conversations around the future of farming has focused on shortening supply chains but there is a lot of work to be done on changing attitudes and behaviours on both supply and demand.
- There needs to be more help and training for farmers to sell produce locally or into resilient supply chains.
- There needs to be clarity between ‘buying locally’ and ‘short supply chains’ to help enable better sourcing and choices. Sustainable public procurement could be an important tool in this.
- A whole-farm approach also offers chances for improved biodiversity. Meat and dairy is not necessarily bad, but we must look at maximum sustainable output/maximum sustainable consumption.

#### 5. Recognising policy uncertainties

- The lack of clarity around policies was considered a key issue by the group with rules and financial returns changing frequently, which makes future planning difficult.
- Financial reward for environmental management such as rewilding/landscape restoration is unclear, so farmers cannot commit to actions.
- Policy associated with wind and solar installation shouldn’t be easy when they’re being installed on good farmland and there needs to be a rigorous planning process put in place. Planning needs to be dealt with consistently across the UK.
- Carbon offsetting was also seen as an area of concern with no recognition of the existing biodiversity in the landscape being earmarked for carbon sequestration

#### 4. Developing further interventions

- Discussion included developing further interventions around the following areas:
  - More support required for on-farm renewables and solar as wind turbines on farms are very common in Europe, but not in the UK.
  - More skills support required around soil management (To be included in Regenerative Agriculture actions).
  - Land management skills require development to support future needs. Different sectors to collaborate to create the skills programmes needed.

**5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 The Y&NY LEP team will revise the Routemap's Land Use & Agriculture section following the feedback and outcomes from the workshop. Further stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to develop interventions as required.
- 5.2 Y&NY's Routemap to Carbon Negative will then be going to the main LEP Board in July for sign-off, followed by an official launch in October 2022.