

October 2022

Report of Online Lunchtime Seminar with European Commission Participants

## Embedding Large-Scale freshwater Nature-based Solutions into Economic Sectors

There is a need for **large-scale Nature-based Solutions** (NbS) to complement the existing expertise on urban NbS and support the Commission's push to restore Nature across Europe. H2020 MERLIN joins other projects to work across the Commission DGs, to share knowledge on mainstreaming NbS.

An online lunchtime seminar was held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 to introduce the [H2020 MERLIN](#) project and discuss our approach with colleagues in the European Commission. Participants from DG Research and Innovation, European Research Executive Agency, DG International Partnerships and DG Environment attended. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project and how we are working with economic sectors, and then learn from the Commission about potential ways to progress these relationships. The slides and recording can be found [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

### Introduction to Nature-based Solutions

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Mr Gilles Doignon (DG RTD) opened the meeting, observing the increase in scientific knowledge about NbS and the number of projects being implemented across the EU. However, many of these are urban focussed and there remains a gap between the need for NbS and the funding available. H2020 MERLIN can contribute to, and learn from, the ongoing network of people interested in how to promote and finance NbS.

### Introduction to H2020 MERLIN Economic Sectors

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Our project considers mainstreaming ecological restoration of freshwater-related ecosystems in a Landscape context- using innovation, upscaling and transformation. As part of this, we are building a community of practice with six economic sectors (Agriculture, Hydropower, Insurance, Navigation, Peat Extraction and Water Supply) who can implement, influence and/or benefit from adopting large-scale upstream NbS. Our first year has been focussed on learning about the sectors' perceptions of NbS and restoration, existing good practice, and challenges of mainstreaming NbS in their sectors. We asked the participants to help us finalise the 'cooperation' points to build upon over the rest of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/merlin-mainstreaming-ecological-restoration-freshwater-related-ecosystems>

## Discussion

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The participants selected agriculture, insurance and peat extraction to discuss.

The discussion about agriculture confirmed that farmers (and forestry) are interested in NbS but need more evidence of the benefits. The discussion also highlighted the need to generate ‘implementation momentum’ and work beyond individual small on-farm projects. Supporting a network of farmers to build momentum from grassroots is advised.

The discussion about the insurance sector was mainly focussed on explaining the structure of the industry and the heterogeneity of how risk insurance is implemented across the EU. Participants confirmed the focus on sharing insurance data to advance understanding of NbS at scale, and the influence of the EU Taxonomy on Sustainable Finance.

The discussion about peat extraction sector confirmed that rewetting is still more prevalent than revegetation and there may be old licences that allow poor practice. However, the sector wishes to improve their reputation, so some are open to change. As with insurance, the specific national policies are important, and we should focus on addressing policy incoherence.

Overall, the discussions agreed that more work is needed to mainstream NbS within policy as well as the business sectors; and more focus is needed on the NbS beyond urban green-blue infrastructure. Working at a landscape (or catchment) scale connects sectors and habitats.

## Next Steps

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Insights from the discussion and feedback will be used to finalise the six sector and one cross-sector briefings available from December 2022. Policy analysis will begin in November, building to a briefing in September 2023, and we will convene the next set of roundtables during Spring/summer 2023. By 2025 we will produce a ‘route-map’ to describe potential ways to allow NbS to flourish. For information please contact [Kirsty.Blackstock@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:Kirsty.Blackstock@hutton.ac.uk) and [Anna.Berczi-Siket@wwf.hu](mailto:Anna.Berczi-Siket@wwf.hu).

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The meeting materials were prepared by, and the meeting moderated by, the following MERLIN partners: WWF – Anna Berczi-Siket, Eva Hernandez, Fanni Nyiro, Tamas Gruber, Sanja Pokrajac, Mia Ebeltoft, James Hutton Institute: Kirsty Blackstock, Alhassan Ibrahim, Esther Carmen and I-Catalist: Audrey Vion Loisel.