

European Commission Lunchtime Seminar

Weds 5th October 2022

12:30 – 14:00 CET (online)

Kirsty Blackstock & Anna Berczi-Siket

MERLIN

Mainstreaming **E**cological **R**estoration
of freshwater-related ecosystems
in a **L**andscape context:
INnovation, upscaling and transformation



Embedding large scale freshwater Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into economic sectors

Time	Content	Lead
12.30 (CET)	Welcome and Introductions	Gilles DOIGNON (DG RTD biodiversity team leader) Kirsty Blackstock – James Hutton Institute
12: 45	Overview of MERLIN & Embedding large scale freshwater Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into economic sectors	Kirsty Blackstock – James Hutton Institute Anna Bérczi-Siket- WWF
13.10	Q&A about the MERLIN project	All participants
13:20	Moderated discussion in break out rooms themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cooperation opportunities •Cross sectoral issues •Comments on DRAFT sectoral briefings 	Kirsty Blackstock Anna Bérczi-Siket (Water supply sectoral lead) Eva Hernandez (WWF) /Agriculture sectoral lead Esther Carmen (JHI), Fanni Nyíró (WWF) – Hydropower sectoral leads Tamás Gruber (WWF) – Navigation sectoral lead Alhassan Ibrahim (JHI) – Peat sectoral lead Audrey Vion Loisel (ICA) - Insurance sectoral lead Mia Ebeltøft (WWF) - Insurance sectoral lead
13.50	Wrap Up and Next Steps	Kirsty Blackstock
14:00	Meeting closes	

Purpose of Meeting

- Introduce Project
- Build our Community of Practice
- Share ideas whilst at early stage
- Benefit from your expertise
- **Begin our journey together**

Introductions

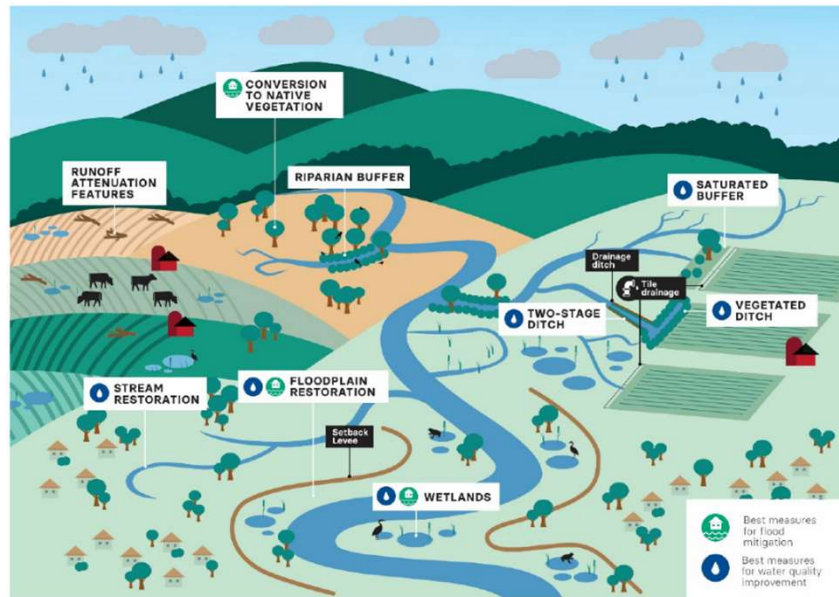
- Participants - please introduce yourselves in the chat
- Mr. Gilles Doignon will open the meeting...

The MERLIN project

- **H2020 “Green Deal” call**
- **45 partners** from academia, NGOs, water agencies, municipalities and practitioners
- **21 mio Euro**
(50% into restoration projects)
- Duration: **2021-2025**
- *Ambition:*
Contributing to **societal transformation**

MERLIN – sowing seeds of change

- Need to protect & restore in more places, faster
- Solutions that last – beyond traditional restoration to NbS



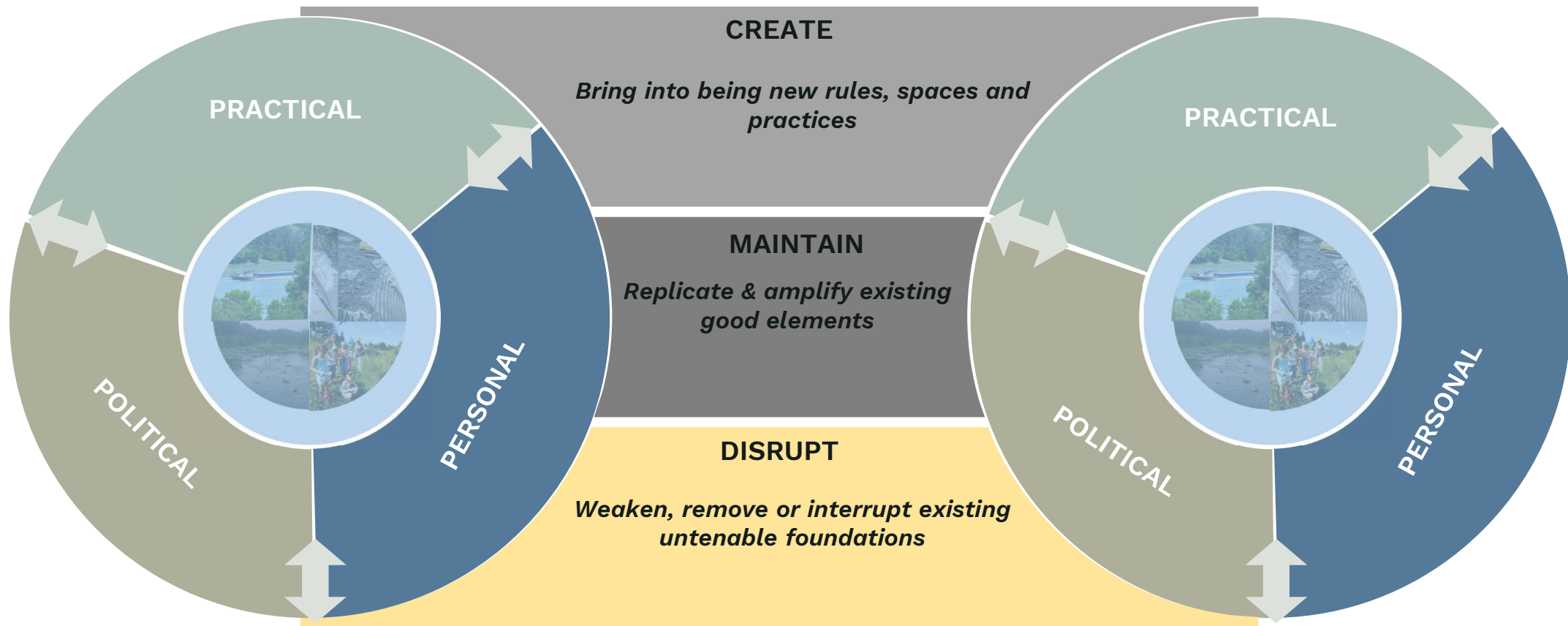
Modified from
Suttles et al. 2021.
Water, 13, 3579



Innovation, upscaling & transformation



How can we support transformation?



The MERLIN project

Top down
Sectors

Bottom Up
Cases

Sharing & shaping good practice in places

17 restoration case-studies



**PEATLANDS
AND WETLANDS**



**SMALL STREAMS
AND BASINS**



**LARGE TRANS-
BOUNDARY
RIVERS**

Sharing &
shaping
good-
practice in
business

6 Economic Sectors



Agriculture



Water
Supply



Inland
Navigation



Insurance



Peat
Extraction



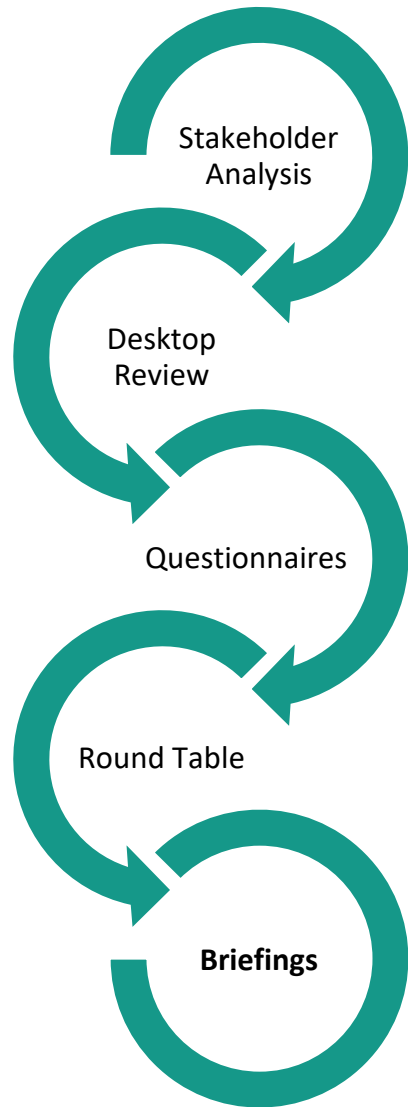
Hydropower



Economic
sectors

*Role in
landscape-scale
approach*





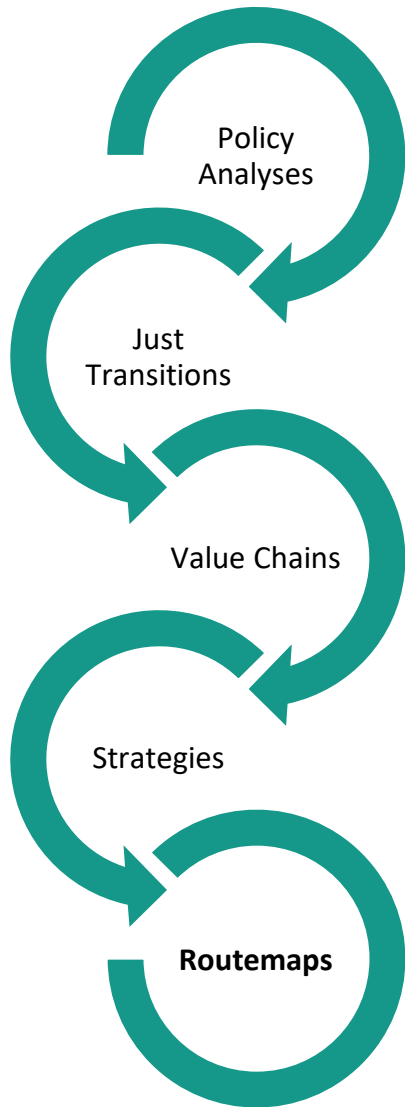
Main EU sector actors identified

Review official documents, scientific publications

Views of experts across the EU

Online meetings in Spring 2022

Sectoral & Cross-Sectoral briefings – Nov 2022



Policy coherence, barriers and opportunities –
Briefing(s) due September 2023

Selected Case Studies – Leaving No-one Behind

Role of value chains to reward NbS (Sept 24)

Sectoral Strategies (Dec 2024)

Selected Member State Routemaps (June 2025)
EU Routemaps (June 2025)

Routemaps for Transformation

Strategy = between objectives & plans



Starting point & destination – mainstreamed freshwater NbS by 2030 (and 2050)?



Routemap = recognition of multiple modes of transport



Sectoral briefings –cooperation slides

Agriculture - producing food

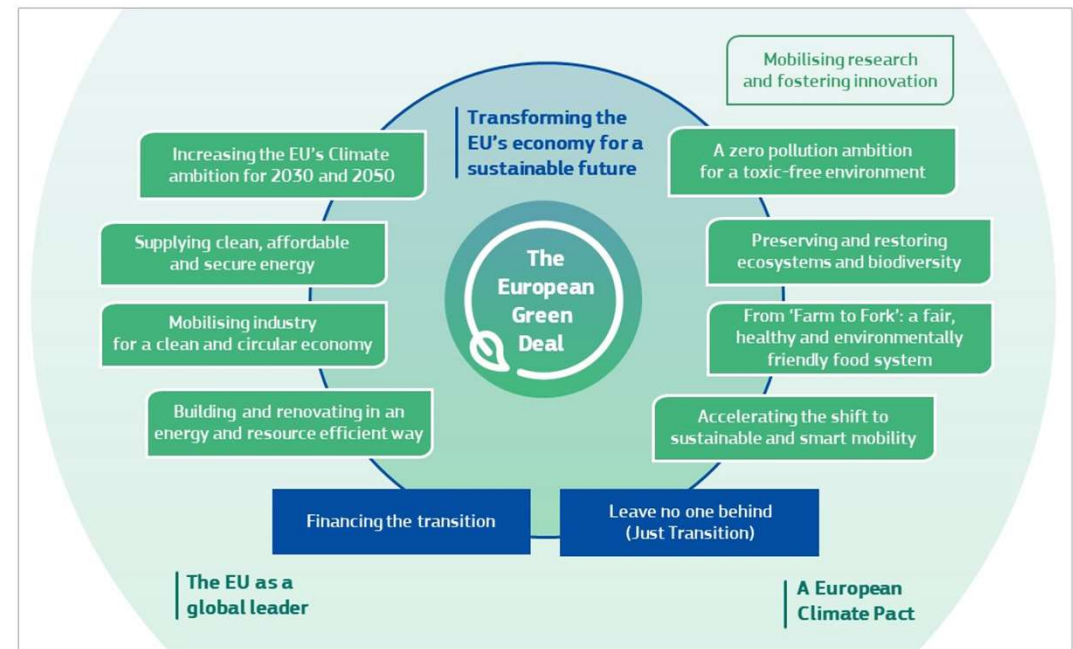
Hydropower - producing low carbon energy

Insurance - protecting people and property

Navigation - moving goods and people

Peat extraction - producing growing media and fuel

Water Supply - clean secure water for people and industry



Cooperation with Sectors

- Starting point: Relationship with NbS/restoration
- Destination: The main cooperation points
- Cross-sectoral relationships

Cooperation with Agriculture

- Resistance towards large scale NbS - something for nature but not solving farmers' problems.
- Focus on the **enabling environment** that can support coordinated or collective action across farms and help farmers benefit from adopting NbS
 - Illustrate the benefits of NbS (valuation of ecosystem services)
 - Build capacity and knowledge sharing opportunities (MERLIN case studies)
 - Adapt or create policies and products (NbS is well integrated into the CAP; NbS certification)

Cooperation with the Hydropower sector

→NbS is not a widely understood concept within the sector

- Ecosystem restoration through dam removal is seen as a **threat** to meeting **climate mitigation** objectives
- **Negative ecological consequences** of hydropower need to be reduced or mitigated (fish migration, sediments and nutrients flow)
- Make a **positive contribution to biodiversity and ecosystem services**.

→Dam removal within a wider catchment scale.

- Draw on **existing examples** of dam removal
- Develop an understanding of how to assess **'obsolete'**
- Focus on strategic action at the **catchment scale**
- Work to support the development of **cross sector partnerships** involving hydropower organisations
- Develop an understanding about key entry points into **decision making processes** about future economic viability of dams to ensure consideration of NbS as an option.
- Develop understanding and awareness of different **finance mechanisms** for supporting dam removal and NbS as a financially feasible path for the sector

Cooperation with the Insurance sector

- More aware of the term NbS than just 2-3 years ago, needs a widely accepted framework to describe and quantify the risk reduction efficiency of nature-based solutions.
- Data modelling: Connect risk models from insurance sector with data modelling done in Merlin
 - To understand the effects of NbS and include these (for example large scale floodplain restoration) in insurance NatCat models
- **Innovation in Insurance products and services:**
 - Create an increased understanding of how NbS can 'fit' in the insurance products
- Potential for **public-private investment**
- **Joint advocacy** meeting/workshops with the sector
- Collaboration to **revise regulatory framework** if required to facilitate action

Cooperation with Navigation

- Synergies between the sector and restoration/NbS are most likely infrastructure developments involving restoration measures, targeting physical river structures (e.g. riverbed, banks, etc.).
- Integrated river development (instead of planning) principles to be approved and applied – (cross sectoral)
 - To have a common agreement and understanding on minimum fairway conditions (international agreements and national legislation); where intervention is necessary, to provide navigation conditions with NbS;
 - to show and justify of benefits of NbS for the navigation and nature conservation sectors, but also to other sectors and stakeholders; (cross sectoral)
 - CBA on proposed measures – small and large scale (project and program level) (cross sectoral)

Cooperation with the Peat Extraction sector

- Peatlands have a strong natural potential to save carbon and play an important role in nature-based solutions for climate change
- Large-scale restoration beyond sites of peat extraction (revegetation after use)
 - **Enhanced cooperation** between peat extraction industry and other stakeholders including public agencies and other private organizations
 - **Innovative funding mechanisms** and business approach to mainstreaming NbS
 - **Research** on the area of peat from which peat is extracted, GHG emissions from extracted peatlands in relation to other drained peatlands; and achieving net zero emission in the sector
 - **Overcoming bureaucracies** where MERLIN could serve as an intermediary between the peat extraction companies and various states to facilitate the process

Cooperation with Water Supply & Sanitation sector

- NbS - “green” solutions, technologies to handle water overflows during intense rainfall events or use them instead of grey technologies
- Raising awareness of the importance of working upstream and on restoration;
 - **Sanitation** - NbS solutions are based on mitigation measures to treatment of wastewater
 - **NbS upstream to protect resources**
 - often large-scale ecosystem intervention difficult for water operators to deliver on their own
 - Instead, working in partnership with other stakeholders
 - This approach can increase the governance challenges
 - Need for renewed sector policies - Good examples - GEMAPI“ law in France

Mainstreaming & Transformation

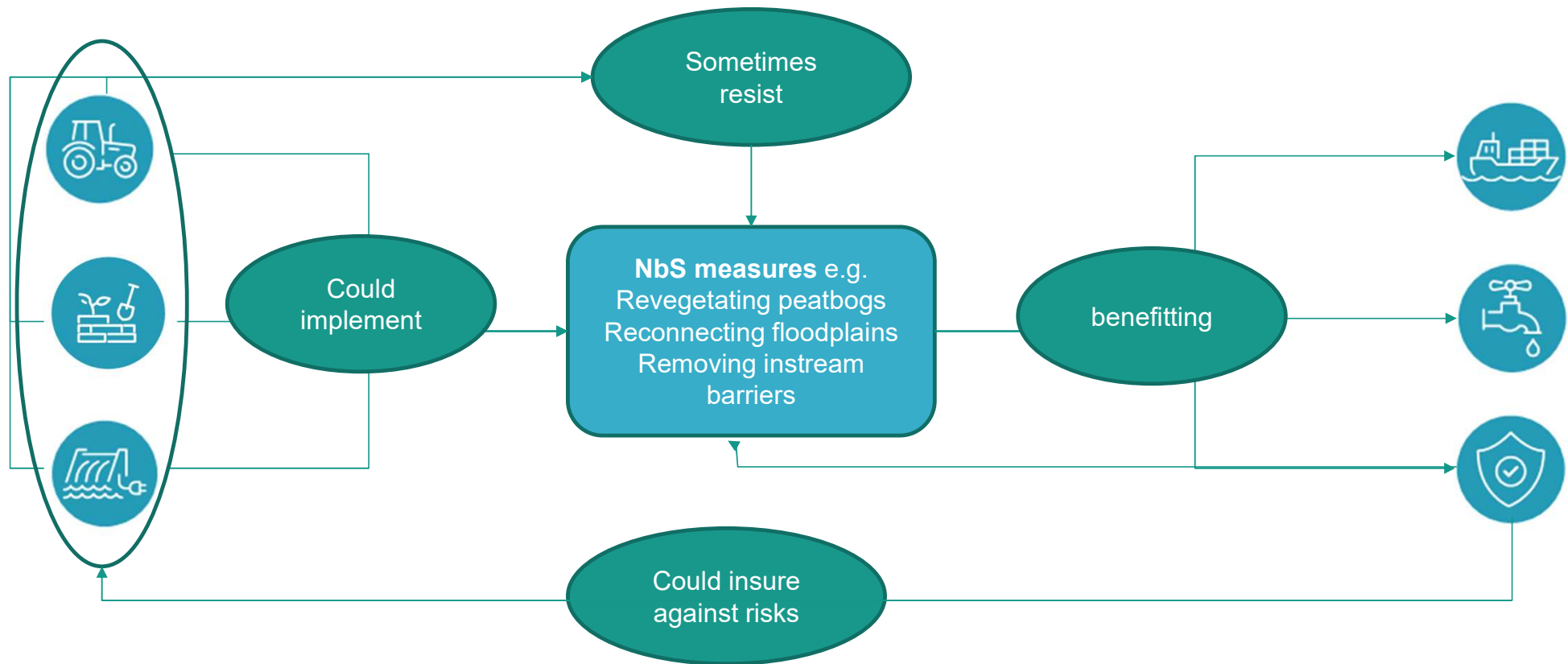
.... working at catchment scale with all relevant sectors



- many sectors share the same reliance on water resources
- some directly involved in MERLIN NbS measures
- others rely on the benefits from these measures



Cross Sectoral Interactions



Next Steps

- Will make slides available on our webpage:
<https://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/merlin-mainstreaming-ecological-restoration-freshwater-related-ecosystems>
- Short summary report emailed to those registered end of Oct 22
- Final briefings will be online from December 2022
- May follow up regarding policy analyses
- Next Roundtables in Spring 2023
- Share draft sectoral policy analyses in Summer 2023
- Climate & regional policy workshop in autumn/winter 2023

Thank you!

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