ncpt

Natural Capital
Planning Tool

Briefing Note

March 2018

The Natural Capital Planning Tool (NCPT) is a free site assessment tool developed specifically for the planning context. The NCPT allows the indicative but systematic assessment of the likely impact of proposed plans and developments on Natural Capital and the ecosystem services it provides to people such as recreational opportunities, air quality regulation and climate regulation. The NCPT was designed as a fit-for-purpose Excel tool which can be applied by non-specialists and in a short period of time; acknowledging the time- and resource constrains planners and developers face in everyday practice. The tool developers believe that the NCPT will help developers and planners to create more sustainable places for people and wildlife, whilst at the same time delivering the housing and infrastructure the country needs.

In its recently published 25 Year Environment Plan, the Government makes a commitment *"…to put the environment at the heart of planning and development to create better places for people to live and work. We will seek to embed a 'net environmental gain' principle for development to deliver environmental improvements locally and nationally. […] That will enable us to achieve measurable improvements for the environment – 'environmental net gains'"* (HM Government 2018, p.32).

The NCPT was designed to enable planners and developers to effectively implement this commitment by the Government into practice.

The NCPT development was driven by the end-user demand from the very beginning; acknowledging the real-world circumstances in which planners and developers operate. It was essential to us to keep the NCPT transparent, simple, quick and applicable without requiring specific expertise from the tool user.

We hope that the NCPT will help not only to better mitigate negative effects of planning and development on the environment, but also to enable planning and development to play a more positive role in the provision and enhancement of multifunctional Green Infrastructure that works hard for people and wildlife alike - through smart and sustainable design.

Core project team & Partners:

Project/Case Study Partners & Supporters (in alphabetic order):

Funders:

How the NCPT Works

The NCPT has been designed to be applied by planning practitioners. The tool user has to enter spatial land-use information for the pre- and proposed post-development state of the site as well as some other indicators such as the local population density. All information required to run the NCPT is commonly available as part of the planning process and/or easily and freely accessible online.

The NCPT will then automatically calculate an impact score for each ecosystem service. The impact scores indicate the likely direction of change and magnitude of the impact the proposed plan or development will have on each of the 10 assessed ecosystem services over an assessment timescale of 25 years post-development. The NCPT also aggregates the scores to a single development impact score to give a broad overview of the overall performance of the proposed development. Furthermore, the NCPT calculates a theoretical min/max impact score for each ecosystem service. These scores indicate the potential of the site for ecosystem service enhancements (and loss). The NCPT also points to guidance and literature which can help to improve a plan/design to enhance ecosystem services on site.

Development Impact Score
Average Per-Hectare

Ecosystem Service Impact Scores	Max Possible	Adjusted Scores	Min Possible
1. Harvested Products	+0.51	-2.03	-3.00
2. Biodiversity	+4.57	+1.01	-0.43
3. Aesthetic Values	+4.67	+2.27	-2.33
4. Recreation	+7.00	+2.97	+0.00
5. Water Quality Regulation	+1.71	+0.49	-0.85
6. Flood Risk Regulation	+2.92	+0.07	-0.08
7. Air Quality Regulation	+1.63	+0.38	-0.81
8. Local Climate Regulation	+3.74	+0.86	-1.87
9. Global Climate Regulation	+4.39	-0.01	-0.61
10. Soil Contamination		+0.00	
Development Impact Score	+31.13	+6.02	-10.00

References:
DCLG, 2012. National Planning Policy Framework, London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
HM Government, 2018. A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, London: HM Government.

Ideally, the NCPT is applied at all stages of the planning/development process from site allocation to development design. The design can then be subsequently improved along the process.

Natural Capital & Ecosystem Services

"Natural capital is the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. They do this in many ways but chiefly by providing us with food, clean air and water, wildlife, energy, wood, recreation and protection from hazards." (HM Government 2018, p.19). Ecosystem services are the services people derive from Natural Capital which includes Green Infrastructure.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also states that *"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by [...] recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services."* (DCLG 2012, p.25).

NCPT Access, Support & Maintenance

NCPT software, guidance and case studies can be accessed via the official website:

NCPTool.com

The tool developer Oliver Hölzinger (CEEP) also offers a range of NCPT related consultancy services such as training workshops and NCPT assessments. Please visit the website or contact Oliver to find out more about the opportunities to use the NCPT and available assistance.

Oliver is intending to re-invest part of the income generated through NCPT related consultancy services into the maintenance and future development of the NCPT.

NCPT services and updates provided by

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Economics & Policy