

Acknowledgments

Nature-Based Enterprises in Nature-based Solutions

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Glossary

Third sector organisations is a term used to describe the range of organisations that are neither public sector nor private sector. It includes voluntary and community organisations (registered charities and other organisations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives. (Source: National Audit Office, UK)



Introduction

What are Nature Based **Solutions?**

The European Commission defines Nature-Based Solutions as solutions to societal change that are

"inspired and supported by nature, which are costeffective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions. Hence, nature-based solutions • Even identifying where to start must benefit biodiversity and support the delivery of a range of ecosystem services."

What is the Connecting Nature Framework?

Designing and implementing Nature-Based Solutions on a scale that delivers economic, environmental and social co-benefits, while also building resilience and benefiting biodiversity is complex with many different issues to consider.

Many questions arise and need answers.

- What is the best solution for the area?
- Who will manage it?
- How will it be financed?
- Who needs to be involved in the design, implementation and maintenance?
- How to measure the economic, environmental and social impact?
- Will it support innovation and generate jobs?
- How can we manage change?
- can often be a challenge!

In response to this uncertainty, Connecting Nature has developed a process tool to help cities and other organisations navigate the path towards implementation of naturebased solutions on a large scale: the Connecting Nature Framework.

The Framework identifies three distinct phases of development for a nature-based solution: planning, delivery and stewardship.

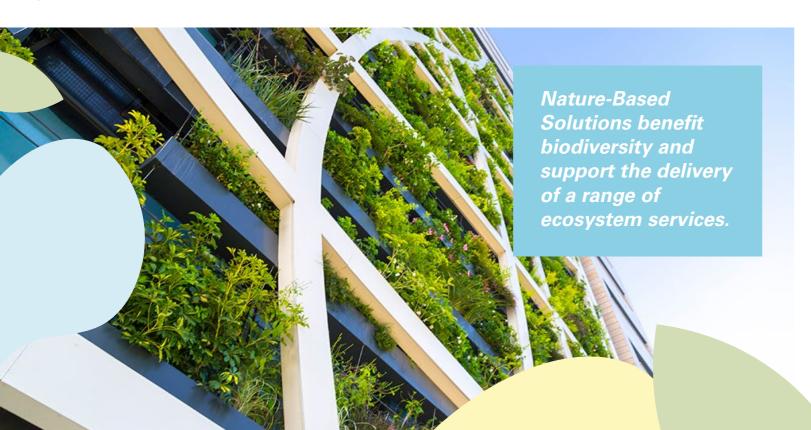
Throughout each phase there are seven separate elements that cities and other entities need to consider when shaping their individual nature-based solution: technical solutions, governance, impact assessment, finance, entrepreneurship, co-production and reflexive monitoring.

Cities may choose to start with any element of the Framework process and consider the others in the order that suits their context. What emerges from the Framework process is a comprehensive 360° overview of each stage of development of the nature-based solution.

Guidebooks

To assist you in developing your nature-based solution, Connecting Nature has produced a series of mini guidebooks. The overall Connecting Nature Framework Guidebook is a good starting point. There is also a guidebook for each element of the framework process describing the implementation steps and providing case studies to show how it works in practice. A step-by-step how-to manual on the Connecting Nature Framework process is also available.

All the Connecting Nature guidebooks and the manual may be downloaded from www.connectingnature.eu.



Connecting Nature Framework







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What is a Nature-Based Enterprise?

Demand for nature-based solutions has increased exponentially in recent years as the concept has become widely accepted and encouraged by organisations from the European Commission to the UN.

Nature-based solutions are complex, however, and most organisations do not have the capabilities in-house to design, deliver and manage them. Recent reports have shown that finding skilled and experienced suppliers is a major roadblock in the wider uptake of nature-based solutions.

Nature-based enterprises can help to meet this challenge. They support cities, private-sector and third-sector organisations in the planning, delivery and management or stewardship of nature-based solutions in urban, peri-urban (immediately adjacent to a city or urban area) and rural contexts. This guidebook helps to clarify what a nature-based enterprise is, how to find skilled and experienced nature-based enterprises and how to stimulate and support the start-up, financing and growth of nature-based enterprises.

Nature-based enterprises (NBEs) use nature as a core element of their product/service offering.

Nature may be used directly by growing, harnessing, harvesting or restoring natural resources in a sustainable way and/or indirectly by contributing to the planning, delivery or stewardship of sustainable nature-based solutions.



What is a nature-based enterprise?

We distinguish between naturebased enterprises and naturebased organisations. Drawing from the EC definition of a small or medium-sized enterprise, naturebased enterprises are independent entities which are engaged in an economic activity i.e. 'the sale of products or services at a given price, on a given/direct market'. Nature-based organisations are similar to nature-based enterprises in that they use nature directly or indirectly as a core element of their product service offering. They differ from nature-based enterprises in that they may not operate independently or have a trading income as is the case with nationally owned and operated parks or nature reserves for example.

Nature-based enterprises support the implementation of climate change and biodiversity policy while simultaneously generating spin-off benefits for local economies, communities and the wider environment.

Nature-based enterprises are highly varied in nature. Some examples include:

- To address climate-related challenges in urban environments such as urban heat islands, air pollution and floods, skilled professionals such as landscape architects and biodiversity experts help cities to design and plan the technical aspects of nature-based solutions to promote climate resilience and multifunctionality in their design and provide a range of ecosystem services. This ensures an optimal net gain for biodiversity, for communities and for the wider environment.
- Specialised gardeners and horticultural contractors customise living walls, roofs or green infrastructure solutions to bespoke planning requirements for indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Sustainable water and wastewater management enterprises use nature in the planning and delivery of cost-effective solutions such as sustainable drainage systems and phytoremediation wastewater treatment plants.

- Sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry and sustainable tourism enterprises use nature in a responsible, sustainable way to support new business models, often supporting new skill development and job creation in rural and suburban contexts.
- New models of governance are facilitating the emergence of community interest companies and other forms of social enterprise being set up to take over the long-term stewardship, management and maintenance of nature-based solutions such as community gardens and parks.
- A new wave of smart technology companies is using satellite data, sensors and modelling software to better plan and monitor nature-based solutions.

Based on research, Connecting Nature suggests the following typology for nature-based enterprises:

NBE types	Planning & Design	Implementation	Management	Supporting activities
Advisory services	х			
Biomaterials		X		
NBS for green buildings		x	x	
NBS for public and urban spaces		x	x	
Water management	х	x	x	
Ecosystem creation, restoration and management	x	x	x	
Sustainable agriculture & food production		x	x	
Sustainable forestry		x	x	
Financial services for ecosystem services and offsetting				x
Smart technology solutions for NBS	x	x	x	x
Monitoring and assessment of NBS	x	x	x	x
NBS for health & wellbeing				x
Tourism and recreation for NBS			x	x
Education, research & innovation activities				x

Connecting Nature research survey completed in 2020. Data and findings presented in Kooijman, McQuaid et al (2021) "Nature-based Enterprises: a new typology". Forthcoming.

For interim finding see our infographic at https://zenodo.org/record/3936820#.XxMZOy2ZPJw or visit our website for more publications.

How to find nature-based enterprises

As the concept of nature-based solutions, and consequently naturebased enterprises, is still relatively new, understanding what is and what isn't a nature-based enterprise can be difficult. Public and private sector organisations wanting to procure nature-based solutions often don't know where to start. There is a large degree of uncertainty about the levels of skills and experience required to plan, deliver and manage nature-based solutions and the standards in operation in this industry sector. The sector is highly fragmented and it can be difficult to reach nature-based enterprises. It can also be difficult for private and public sectors to implement nature-based solutions and make use of new opportunities. To respond to this challenge, the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform was developed with five key objectives:

1. Connect buyers with skilled and experienced suppliers of nature-based solutions.

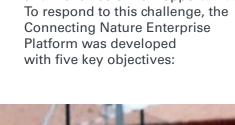
The Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform aims to encourage new ideas for nature-based solutions at an early stage of concept development, thus increasing the quality and variety of interventions. If you are a city council or a private company looking for nature-based inspiration at pre-tender stage, post an open challenge on the platform and get some ideas from the different communities of interest. If you already have a tender ready to go or a job opportunity or any other kind of clearly defined opportunity, post this in the opportunity section to receive one-to-one responses.



Case tudy of a nature-based enterprise: Helix Pflanzen

building facades, reducing the impact of noise and absorbing dust can be installed in the densely built

Photo credit: Helix Pflanzen GmbH



2. Connect with the latest industry developments and showcase industry leaders.

The Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform aims to showcase industry best practice. Nature-based enterprises are connected with academic and technology partners s as to raise general awareness and knowledge about innovations and existing quality standards across this industry sector.

3. Connect like-minded communities.

Bringing together specialised communities of nature-based enterprises is at the core of the platform. Each community is moderated by an industry leader, a kind of enterprise ambassador, who will seek to raise awareness of the benefits and risks of naturebased solutions and share sectorspecific training and opportunities.

4.Connect with funding opportunities

From grant funding opportunities to investment training and opportunities, the Connecting Enterprise Platform brings naturebased enterprise to the attention of potential partners and investors including non-conventional partners from other sectors. Many funding opportunities for naturebased solutions involve agencies and organisations from different sectors and different scales. Funding opportunities may combine businesses with local, regional and national administrations, as well as research partners and civil society. The platform encourages enterprises and policy makers to engage together and experiment with new, innovative business and financing models.

5. Connect offline too!

Connecting on-line is great but meeting face-to-face is even better! Communities of interest will be invited to come together in a series of offline awarenessbuilding, peer-to-peer learning, training and investment events.



Supporting Nature-Based Enterprises

Nature-based enterprises deliver economic value by developing new skills, stimulating innovation and creating new jobs in local economies. This part of the guidebook aims to:

- Increase understanding of the wider value of naturebased enterprises
- Raise awareness of the specific challenges and enablers faced by nature-based enterprises
- Propose steps that can be taken to stimulate the start-up and growth of nature-based enterprises

Why support nature-based enterprises?

In response to the increased market demand for products and services relating to nature-based solutions, we have seen an increase in the number of nature-based enterprises emerging to meet this demand (see Figure 1)

Nature-based enterprises contribute significant value to local economies. A Connecting Nature survey of over 100 nature-based enterprises shows that they typically employ more people than the average European SME (see Figure 3). Among survey respondents, there are significantly fewer micro enterprises employing fewer than 10 people and significantly more enterprises employing 10-49 employees than the EU average. Nature-based enterprises also create significant environmental and social value as summarised in Figure 2.

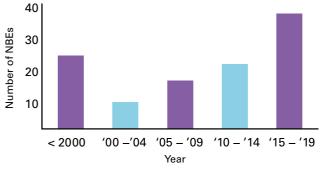
Case study: Malaga

The city of Malaga is traditionally reliant on low-skilled, unsustainable industry sectors such as conventional tourism and construction. Malaga is investing significantly in nature-based solutions to the many climate change and societal challenges it faces as a city. As part of this approach, the city is putting in place a nature-based entrepreneurship strategy via a cluster of local nature-based enterprises and actors to stimulate and support their further growth, to exchange information on

the wider public about products and services and create new jobs. This is a 'win-win' strategy for the city: it encourages the start-up and growth of sustainable enterprises which in turn are helping the city to plan, deliver and manage nature-based solutions. These nature-based enterprises not only create cleaner jobs but by their very nature they also contribute to a better environment and to the improved health and wellbeing of citizens.

Some research findings about nature-based enterprises:

The data for the figures in this section come from a Connecting Nature research survey completed in 2020



Nature-based enterprises (NBEs) are increasing year on year

Figure 1. The size of nature-based enterprises. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)



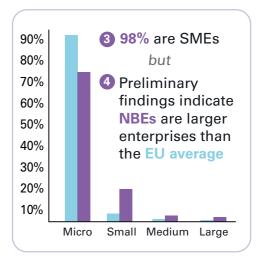


Figure 3. The size of nature-based enterprises. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)

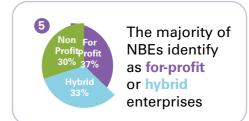


Figure 4 The business model of nature-based enterprises. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)

Figure 2. Value created by nature based enterprise. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)

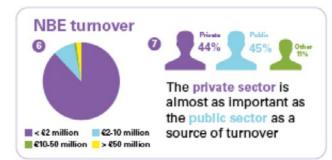


Figure 5. Nature-based enterprise customers. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)

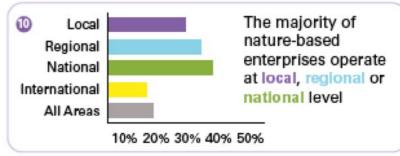


Figure 6. The scale of nature-based enterprises. Source: Connecting Nature (2020)

Specific challenges and enablers

Challenges

Nature-based enterprises face specific challenges to start up and growth not faced by other types of enterprise; for example they encounter a general lack of awareness of nature-based solutions and the multiple benefits they create which in turn leads to a lack of support and funding at decision-making level within both public and private organisations.

Public procurement processes may not yet adequately capture the multiple benefits of nature-based solutions. Conventional cost-benefit approaches can fail to take into account the non-monetary benefits of nature-based solutions, in particular their contribution to the environment, but also indirect benefits related to human health and well-being.

In order to realise the maximum impact of nature-based solutions, collaboration, and clear, consistent and credible policies are needed across multiple sectors and agencies such as those in the fields of health, environment, economic and social services to name a few. The lack of such common policies has been identified as a major external barrier to the formation and growth of nature-based enterprises.

Top 3 external barriers

Lack of awareness of nature-based solutions among decision makers

Lack of focus on environmental criteria in public procurement

Lack of common policies to support nature-based solutions across the public sector



Some of the internal barriers or challenges to start-up and growth faced within nature-based enterprises are similar to those faced by enterprises in other sectors, such as lack of finance for start up and growth. Some internal barriers are more specific to nature-based enterprises, such as the lack of knowledge of how to measure impact. This is particularly challenging when it comes to measuring the non-monetary impact of nature-based solutions, for example the contribution of a nature-based solution to health and well-being or to a reduction in air

pollution. The ability to measure impact is increasingly required by all types of investors – public, private and impact investors. In addition, nature-based enterprises identified the lack of capacity (in terms of both finance /knowledge) to undertake research and development.

Top 3 external barriers

Lack of finance

Lack of knowledge on how to measure impact

Lack of finance/knowledge for research and development



Connecting Nature partner cities

Enablers

Nature-based enterprises identified strong partnerships and networks within the sector as an enabler to growth along with access to education and skill development. Relating back to both internal and external barriers, a key enabler for success is the ability of an enterprise to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the nature-based solution it is providing.

Top 3 enablers

Strong partnerships/ networks in sector

Access to education, skill development

Evidence of the effectiveness of nature-based solutions

How to support nature-based enterprises

Combining what we know about the characteristics of nature-based enterprises with the barriers and enablers to growth, we propose a three-step, holistic approach to stimulating the start-up and growth of nature-based enterprises for cities or public-sector agencies. This approach is being piloted by the partner cities of Connecting Nature, namely Pozna (PL), Genk (BE), Glasgow (UK), Malaga (ES), A Coruña (ES), Ioannina (GR), Pavlos Melas (GR), Nicosia (CY), Bologna (IT), Burgas (BU) and Sarajevo (BA), and their experience is being widely shared through the UrbanByNature programme.

Case study: Hybrid public sector financing model for nature-based playgrounds in Poznań

The city of Genk in Belgium is developing a large-scale nature-based solution to address a neglected 8km river valley running through the city which suffers from poor water quality. Originally designed as a spatial solution, the goals of the Stiemer Valley were expanded to consider the potential of nature to inspire entrepreneurship.

To support this goal, the city of Genk piloted the Stiemer Deals programme, a collaborative funding and governance framework to stimulate and support new projects harnessing the nature-based potential of the Stiemer Valley. Stiemer Deals covers large projects such as multi-million euro collaborations with non-governmental conservation bodies to develop sites along the river valley and much smaller scale projects such as the collaboration with local food entrepreneurs and social enterprises to develop new ice-cream flavours and honey products featured here.

The Stiemer Deals programme is co-ordinated by a dedicated officer in the Department of Environment and Sustainable Development. This officer develops and implements an individual Stiemer Deal for each opportunity, aligning each opportunity with overall Stiemer goals, clarifying the inputs of both parties (such as, for example, funding or promotion to be delivered by the city and time investment to be delivered by the entrepreneurs)

and identifying and tracking expected outcomes such as, for example, product innovations.

The Stiemer Deal pilot was deemed a huge success with 16 deals agreed. As a result, an official Stiemer Deals programme is being launched in September 2020.



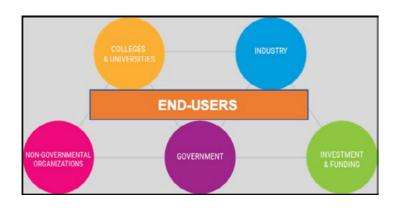
Spotlight: Crème Le Lis &

Nostalgie is a social enterprise employing people with autism in the development of innovative new ice-cream flavours for sale in their café and ice-cream parlour close to the Stiemer Valley walkway. The owner, Caat, was one of the first local businesses to sign a Stiemer Deal leading to the development of a traditional ice-cream based on yogurt, caramelized oatmeal and honey sourced directly from the Stiemer Valley. With support from the City of Genk in branding and promotion of the new ice-cream, and the increased footfall from tourists and locals coming to the area, the result will be new customers for this local business creating sustainable social and economic benefits.

Step 1 Awareness and strategic alignment

Lack of awareness of the multiple benefits of nature-based solutions leads to a lack of support and financing, which in turn limits demand for the products and services of nature-based enterprises. The converse is equally true; increased awareness leads to increased financing and increased demand. So how to raise awareness?

In the public sector, a good first step is to consider how nature-based solutions may support the strategic goals of your city or community as outlined in city plans or other strategic planning documents. It is common that nature-based solutions may align with multiple goals social, economic and environmental. Nature-based solutions also align with global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Connecting Nature Governance Guidebook provides an excellent introduction to making the case for nature-based solutions by aligning them with the wider goals of a city. Securing the awareness among and the support of political leaders and departmental heads for nature-based solutions in general, and more specifically the value nature-based enterprises can create in delivering these solutions, is of paramount importance. The Impact Assessment Guidebook is also helpful in terms of providing a list of nature-based solution benefits and the Technical Solutions Guidebook is useful in developing a thorough understanding of local context. Policy makers, practitioners, platforms such as the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform and industry bodies such as construction federations, can play an important role in raising wider awareness about naturebased solutions and nature-based enterprises among private and third-sector organisations.



Step 2 Building alliances

Addressing the external and internal barriers faced by nature-based enterprises will require support and expertise from a broad coalition of experts. Mapping the expertise required and building strategic alliances is an important step. It is important to include nature-based enterprises directly in this process to ensure the support measures planned meet their actual needs.

Connecting Nature recommends an open innovation approach engaging a wide variety of innovation ecosystem stakeholders in the development of a plan to support nature-based enterprises. The Connecting Nature Co-production Guidebook provides useful guidance on how to empower multiple actors to collaborate in building a common vision and plan including citizens and enterprises, academics, technicians, policy makers, local governments and NGOs.

Building public sector market demand for nature-based solutions

will require cross-departmental collaboration and changes to current public sector procurement procedures to place a greater emphasis on the non-monetary benefits of nature-based solutions. The time and political will required to effect such systemic change should not be underestimated.

Alliances with potential funders

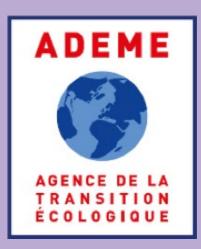
Addressing internal barriers such as lack of access to start-up or growth finance for nature-based enterprises may benefit from collaboration between public-sector agencies and existing financial institutions that are experienced in addressing this challenge in other sectors. Given the recent emergence of the nature-based enterprise sector, it is only to be expected that awareness levels among financial bodies will be low and specific actions to raise awareness and engagement will need to be undertaken. Particular attention should be focused on impact investors.

Twice as many
NBEs believe they
will be impacted
negatively rather
than positively by
Covid-19

It is also important to consider the impact of major market shocks such as Covid-19 on the nature-based enterprise sector. While this crisis led to an increased awareness of the value of nature-based solutions, many nature-based enterprises found that tenders and contracts were frozen in the short-term. Given the pressure on public financing arising from Covid-19, future financing of nature-based solutions Alliances to better measure the impacts

Case study: ADEME, early leader in supporting nature-based enterprises

In France, ADEME, the national agency for environment and energy with responsibility for ecological transition, has launched a call for studies on how to fulfil market demand for nature-based climate change adaptation solutions. ADEME has called for recommendations on measures that can be put in place to support the development of this sector. ADEME has a track record in supporting other sectors such as agriculture to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of climate change.



Alliances to better measure the impacts

To increase market demand and awareness, specific attention needs to be focused on measuring the impact of nature-based solutions. The Connecting Nature Impact Assessment Guidebook provides planners and decision-makers with support to build a solid evidence-based understanding of the impact of nature-based solutions. Expert training and support programmes need to be put in place for suppliers of naturebased solutions to ensure that they meet the demands of planners and decision-makers. Building communities of practice (groups of people who come together to build and share knowledge) at national and international level will help to facilitate knowledge exchange and development. Capacity-building and knowledge exchange programmes such as UrbanByNature and platforms such as the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform will also play an important role in forming alliances.

Step 3 Planning, implementing and monitoring a customised support programme

Who is going to lead on planning, implementing and monitoring a customised support programme for nature-based enterprises? This is an obvious question but not always an easy one to answer. Across the public sector, knowledge and responsibility for nature-based solutions usually lies with specific departments or agencies that often have expert technical knowledge. It is uncommon but not unknown for such departments or agencies to lead on supporting the development of nature-based enterprises to meet market demands (see the ADEME case study). More often, responsibility for enterprise support lies with other specialised business development agencies which often have little or no knowledge of the specificities of naturebased solutions. So, who should lead in supporting nature-based enterprises?

Regardless of which department or agency is assigned responsibility for supporting nature-based enterprises, it is clear that they will also need high-level support from other departments or agencies in order to ensure the multiple impacts of nature-based solutions are achieved. The level of funding and resources required to raise awareness, supply and demand in this new market sector should not be underestimated.

The importance of a customised support programme

The specific measures to be put in place to support nature-based enterprises will vary depending on each context. In the case of the city of Genk's Stiemer Deals, a broad-reaching support framework facilitated the development of smaller, more customised oneto-one deals with a large number of individual stakeholders. Key to the success of this framework was aligning the goals of stakeholders with the overall strategic goals of the city and clarifying what the city and stakeholder would each bring to the table. On the city side, a dedicated officer was put in place to help stakeholders to navigate the system and to customise existing financial and technical supports to meet the needs of the stakeholder. On the stakeholder side, they make a clear commitment to invest their own time and resources into the project.

The ARENA business support programme is an example of a business support programme with a very clear focus on supporting product and service innovations in the area of nature-based solutions and resource efficiency. Through collaboration with a university partner, this support programme is able to provide technical support and assistance in aspects such as impact measurement, which has been identified as a major barrier for naturebased enterprises (see Specific challenges and enablers, above).



Case study: ARENA business support programme for nature-based solutions

Building from the collaboration developed as part of the EU FP7 project TURAS (Transitioning towards Urban Resilience and Sustainability), ARENA is a three-year London European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) co-funded business support programme led by the Sustainable Research Institute at

the University of East London in partnership with Barking Riverside Ltd. ARENA supports London startups, spin-outs, SMEs and large enterprises seeking to develop and commercialise their innovative ideas, products and services in the areas of nature-based solutions and resource efficiency for urban resilience. ARENA beneficiaries receive free and bespoke expertise and advice. The ARENA team of subject area experts, researchers and innovation practitioners provide support with market knowledge and networks, research and development, demonstration trials and assessment, promotion and showcasing, market rollout, and procurement support. With over 20 businesses already signed up, support for nature-based enterprises has focused on the development of partnerships and

networks, supporting skills development and providing evidence of the effectiveness of nature-based solutions.

Spotlight: Green Roof Shelters Ltd is one of the businesses being supported by ARENA. This company is developing innovative ways to restore biodiversity in highdensity urban areas through the conversion of generic grey infrastructure, such as bin covers, bike, shelters, and shipping containers into nature-based solutions. The ARENA team is monitoring these products insitu to provide evidence of their effectiveness in generating net gains in biodiversity.

Impact measurement

Impact measurement needs to be considered at multiple levels – at the level of the individual nature-based enterprise in respect of the specific product or service it provides and at the level of the overall nature-based solution, which is likely to include multiple component parts provided by different internal and external suppliers.

It is also important to measure the success of the support programme being delivered. Impact indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, should be considered at planning stage and data gathered throughout the process on indicators such as number of enquiries, number of enterprises supported, outcomes in terms of product or service innovations, impact on business confidence, contribution to overall strategic goals and so on.

Guiding questions in planning a programme to support nature-based enterprises

What are the goals of a nature-based enterprise support plan? How do these align with broader strategic goals, in particular the large-scale implementation of nature-based solutions?

- 1. Who needs to be involved to deliver this plan? How will innovation ecosystem stakeholders be involved?
- 2. Who is going to lead on planning, development and monitoring? Have an adequate budget and resources for piloting or full-scale implementation been assigned?
- 3. What specific support measures will be put in place locally to address challenges and enablers? How will these connect with national or international support measures and platforms?
- 4. How will success be measured? What are the impact indicators?

3 Additional Resources

Nature-based enterprise is a new area of research and practice. Consequently, there is little in the way of resources. Some useful starting points are listed here:

Introductory webinars:

 UrbanByNature webinar on nature-based entrepreneurship https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=5g5OmEXinKw

Nature-based Enterprise Platform and other resources:

 The Connecting Nature Enterprise platform is available (from October 2020) on https://connectingnature.eu

Other useful documentation:

- Burch, S, Andrachuk, M, Carey,
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