

North West Natural Capital Account

United Utilities provides great water and more for the North West, an area that's rich in natural capital assets – air, geology, soil, water and all living things. But it's time to think about the world around us in a different way.

Giving nature a voice

This is a summary of the first North West Natural Capital Account. Created with stakeholders, it's an account that will let us benchmark changes to the region's natural assets with confidence.

It will help us make better decisions about what the environment means to us and how we should look after it. Air and water quality, climate change, our relationship with nature – it's going to help us improve the quality of life for all.

Establishing a valuable, usable benchmark

There's a climate emergency today. Nature is undergoing dramatic change. This natural capital account will mark a significant change in the way our business works.

We're sharing this information so that stakeholders in the region can access consistent data on natural capital.

We want to help foster partnerships, drive consistent understanding, and promote collaboration in the environmental improvements we all need. The North West Natural Capital Account will be an essential benchmark for use in long-term planning.

Our Natural Capital – Present Value (PV) in excess of £136 billion

This report quantifies the value of natural capital benefits available to us.

It shows a net present value of the North West's natural capital assets as:

- In excess of £136 billion over the next 60 years
- £51 billion total value to society
- £85 billion total value to business

What is the Natural Capital Account for?

- It shows what natural capital assets contribute to the region, their value and our impact on them.
- It provides a 'baseline' for testing theories, considering policy changes and exploring different scenarios.
- With this detail, we hope to encourage more sustainable management of the natural environment.
- It will drive consistency of direction and approach, and help us all to meet environmental challenges.

9%
Arable

11%
Woodland

51%
Grassland

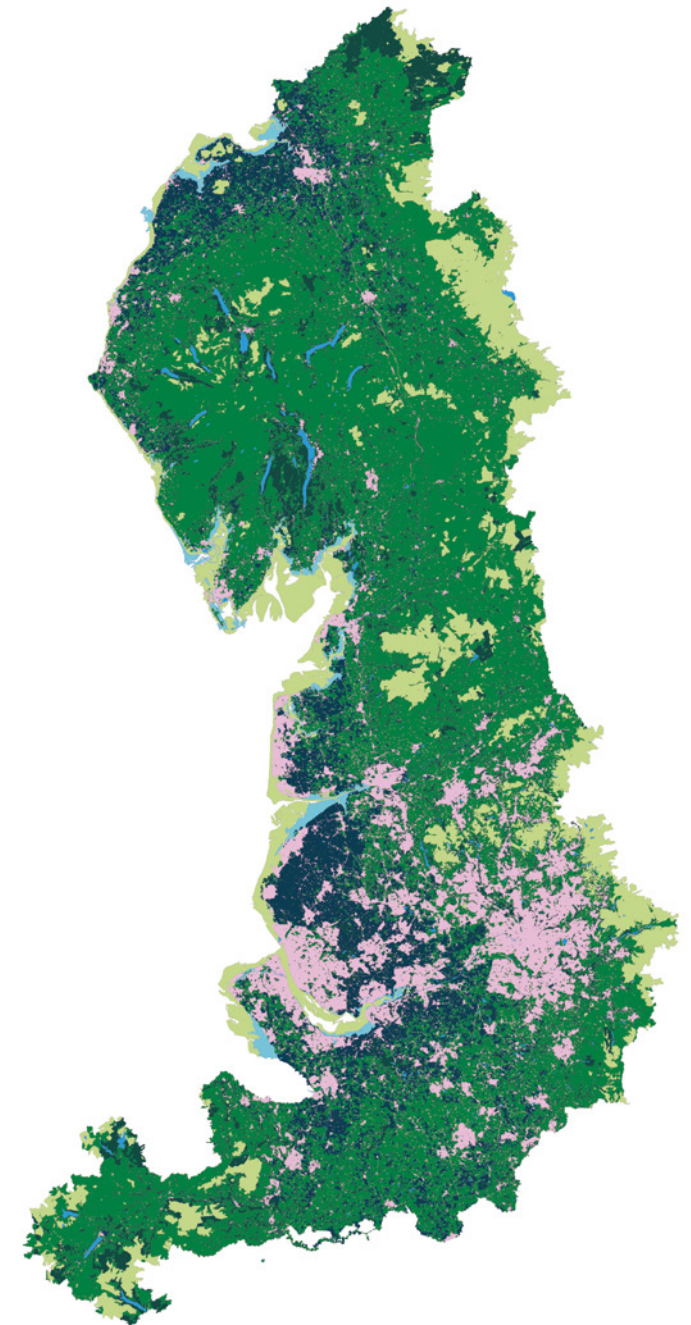
10%
Mountain, moorland and heath

4%
Freshwater

2%
Coastal margins

7%
Urban area

6%
Other



Monetised Benefits

Physical Flow (Unit/yr)	Monetary Value	Quality of Data	
1,053,704 kg PM2.5 removal by woodland	£173m	★★★★	
1,537,838 tCO ₂ e CO ₂ e sequestered in habitats	£115m	★★★★	
267,481,356 adult recreation visits <3 hours	£893m	★★★★	
137,752,898 active visits	£469m	★★★★	
8,015 km length of WFD* rivers	£146m	★★★★	
100 km ² area of WFD* lakes	£0.8m	★★★★	
934,939 tonnes arable food production	£92m	★★★★	
2,798,514 no. of heads livestock production	£293m	★★★★	
114 tonnes landings by vessels <10m	<£0.01m	★★★★	
483,885m ³ vol of softwood removals	£12m	★★★★	
31,491 MWh hydropower electricity	£0.3m	★★★★	
60,682,837m ³ tidal and surface water abstraction for public water supply	£25m	★★★★	
8,562,785m ³ groundwater abstraction for public and private water supply	£4m	★★★★	
3,863,000 tonnes vol of sand and gravel extracted	£54m	★★★★	
14,575,500 tonnes vol of crushed rock extracted	£177m	★★★★	
77,742,870 day visits and overnight trips attributed to natural capital	£2,673m	★★★★	

Value to Society

Value to Business



Non-Monetised Benefits

Flood Risk Management

37,184,896 m³/yr
Annual average additional
woodland soil water
storage capacity
★★★★

Water Supply

657,919,205 m³/yr
Total water
abstraction at source
★★★★

Recreation

67,817,370
Total children recreation
visits (under 3 hours)
★★★★

Biodiversity

217,451
Total SSSI* area (ha)
★★★★

*WFD: Water Framework Directive
^SSSI: Sites of Special Scientific Interest



Natural Capital provides over £385m pa of benefits to the North West farming sector. Our insights will enable us to work together for mutual benefits.



In 2020, we now know that woodland across the North West delivered £173m of benefit in the improvement of air quality, which helps us understand our impact in the future.



1,537,838 tonnes of CO₂ are sequestered across woodland, saltmarsh and improved grassland; we can monitor this figure now – a vital benchmark in tackling climate change.



We now know that by avoiding deterioration in rivers and lakes, we can realise a welfare benefit of £146.6m per year: this will be a formative figure in shaping our water management policies.



By benchmarking the value that recreation offers adults – £893m per year – we can help to shape policies that focus on improving physical and mental health.



In total, active, adult physical recreation (of under 3 hrs) could lead to avoiding medical treatment costs of £469m pa – an amount we can now use to benchmark progress.



Children made 68 million visits to the area (of under 3 hrs): this figure helps us to see how outdoor activities have an impact on physical and mental health.

To access the full report and a more in depth breakdown of natural capital assets, go to our Catchment Systems Thinking Collaboration Portal:
<https://collab-uu.co.uk/cast>

Or to find out how you can get involved with improving the North West's natural capital, get in touch:
✉ CatchmentSystemsThinking@uuplc.co.uk

Who should use the Natural Capital Account?

We'll be using the North West Natural Capital Account to inform our work on the environment. It's useful for any organisation working in our area – from Crewe to Carlisle, around the North West region, down into the Welsh catchment areas from which we abstract water.

Companies. Charities. Local authorities. Regulators, land managers, innovators of all kinds. By using this data, we can all ensure our teams consider the value of the North West's natural assets, and understand the impact of our work to protect and enhance them.

What will we find in the Natural Capital Account?

This natural capital account explores the nature and benefit of natural assets across the North West. This data will help us to understand how the natural assets of the North West help contribute to our daily lives.

The natural capital account helps us to identify where we can support and enhance these assets, and to ensure we maximise this value now, and for the future.