

LINK Statement on Valuing Nature's Services

Developed by members of LINK's Economics Group for internal understanding and approved at the meeting held on 31 August 2017.

The motivations to protect nature and the environment are wide ranging, from intrinsic, deep rooted or moral drivers to material, anthropocentric and economic concerns. It is rare for an individual, business, government or organisation to protect the environment for one reason alone and it is often a mixture of drivers that contribute to the desire to protect nature and the environment.

In the 21st century the acceleration of biodiversity loss and depletion of the earth's natural resources has encouraged environmental and conservation organisations to consider broadening their approach to protecting the natural world.

Amongst a range of activities, Scottish Environment LINK and its member organisations champion the importance of looking after the natural world in order to protect vital services, such as nutrient cycling or flood mitigation, upon which we depend as a species. This has led to the debate opening up around valuing services that nature provides. By valuing nature, we mean ascribing a non-monetary or monetary value to aspects of nature which demonstrates the contribution made to society¹. For example, it would cost farmers £1.8bn/yr to replace the pollination provided by bees.

Scottish Environment LINK and its member organisations believe that there is merit in using this approach, in parallel with other approaches, in order to ensure that the importance of nature is better reflected in decision-making by citizens, governments and business. LINK and its member organisations also support and use other approaches such as environmental limits, environmental justice and the use of protected areas and species.

There are numerous methodologies and approaches that can be applied to the valuation of nature's services and it is important that the correct approaches are taken on a case by case basis.

¹ It is not the same as a market value or a price which usually depends on levels of supply and demand and requires property rights.