Natural Capital

An overview of the Office for National Statistics and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs natural capital project and all related publications.

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1 . Overview

- In brief, UK Natural Capital is comprised by all the ecosystem services which UK natural assets provide. Natural assets include soil, air, water and all living things.

- Accounting for natural capital is important as many of the most valuable services it provides are intangible so they’re often overlooked. Therefore, prior to creating natural capital accounts decisions can frequently be made without best representing the environment.

- We are constantly expanding and developing our work to stay on path with our 2020 Roadmap. We welcome all those with expertise in any area of future work to contact us at environment.accounts@ons.gov.uk

2 . Publications

Roadmaps:

- **2020 Roadmap**  
  Released: 12 July 2018  
  Article

- **2015 Roadmap**  
  Released: 20th March 2015  
  Article

- **2012 Roadmap**  
  Released: October 2012  
  Article

Natural Capital monetary estimates:

- **UK natural capital accounts: 2019**  
  Released: 18 October 2019  
  Statistical bulletin

- **Scottish natural capital: Ecosystem Service Accounts, 2019**  
  Released: 22 March 2019  
  Statistical bulletin

- **UK natural capital: Ecosystem service accounts 1997 to 2015**  
  Released: 30th January 2018  
  Statistical bulletin

- **UK Natural Capital: Monetary Estimates, 2016**  
  Released: 30th November 2016  
  Statistical Bulletin

- **UK Natural Capital: Monetary Estimates, 2014**  
  Released: 2nd May 2014  
  Statistical Bulletin

Habitat accounts include:
Cross-cutting accounts include:

- **UK natural capital: peatlands**
  Released: 22 July 2019
  Statistical Bulletin

- **Carbon Stock**
  Released: 28 June 2016
  Statistical Bulletin

- **Protected Areas**
  Released: September 2015
  Report

- **Land Cover**
  Released: 17 March 2015
  Statistical Bulletin

- **Land Use**
  Released: 2013
  Statistical Bulletin

Scoping studies include:

- **Semi-natural Grassland**
  Released: 19 April 2018

- **Urban**
  Released: October 2017

- **Mountains, Moorlands and Heathlands**
  Released: 21st July 2017

- **Coastal Margins**
  Released: 28th June 2016

- **Peatlands**
  Released: March 2015

- **Spatially Disaggregated Woodland and Marine**
  Released: September 2014
3. Why it’s important to measure natural capital

Natural assets provide a wide range of ecosystem services that make human life possible: the food we eat, the water we drink and the plant materials we use for fuel, building materials and medicines, to name a few. They also provide less visible services such as climate regulation, the natural flood defences provided by forests, removal of air pollutants by vegetation, and the pollination of crops by insects. Then there’s the inspiration we take from wildlife and the natural environment. Yet despite nature being priceless, it is not valueless.
We take a balanced approach to producing natural capital accounts; which entails creating stock and flow accounts of specific habitats or services. This means we are able to focus development on key accounts where the policy interest lies. All these specific accounts are then amalgamated into a national UK natural capital account which provides a “quick overview” of UK natural capital. The ultimate goal of the ONS-Defra project is to incorporate UK natural capital into the UK Environmental Accounts by 2020.

Natural Capital is predominantly hidden, partial or missing from the nation’s balance sheet. However, by providing valuations of the UK’s natural capital, decision makers can better include the environment in their plans to allocate resources to develop, and promote the growth of, the economy.