



Committee Report

To: Councillor Steve Hammell, Chair and
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: February 17, 2022

Re: Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Discussion Paper

Staff Recommendation:

That the Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Discussion Paper be endorsed as a foundation for developing policies and mapping in the new Official Plan

Background:

The Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Discussion Paper is one of eight Discussion Papers that will be completed through the Plan the Bruce project. The image below shows the steps from policy directions in interim reports, to discussion papers, and the new Official Plan.



Community engagement:

The community was invited to be involved with the Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Discussion Paper and offer meaningful input through a general survey and a more detailed stakeholder workbook. Engagement outreach for the project included a social media campaign, Radio ads, Newspaper advertisements, and direct outreach to stakeholders and municipalities as well as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and Historic Saugeen Metis. Community engagement highlights include:

- 1100 visitors to the project web site
- 149 general survey responses
- 15 responses to an in-depth stakeholder survey

Responses came from 15 organizations (local municipality, conservation organization or business) and 145 individuals.

Two strong themes came through in the responses and comments:

- Protection and preservation of Natural Heritage through a robust and resilient NHS and policies to address existing concerns, future pressures and climate change; and
- Private property rights and concerns about restrictions that may be imposed as a result of the N.H.S.

Evaluation of Options and Directions

Options were evaluated based on the results of community engagement and criteria that were set out in the Interim Report.

Theme	Directions
Natural Heritage System Mapping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identify a robust N.H.S. that will protect and preserve the existing features and functions of Bruce County, address future pressures and support resilience to climate change.<li>2. Implement the core areas-based approach for Northern Bruce County and the Features-based system approach for Southern Bruce County.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Develop refined criteria for components of the N.H.S. that reflect both the differences in physical geography and directions heard through consultation: Southern Bruce County: A blended Option between Option 3 and 2 is recommended. Consideration to be given to some elements of Option 1 based on further analysis and directions heard.<li>b. Northern Bruce County: Option 2, with elements of Option 3 and 1 informed by further analysis and directions heard. Through the refinement process, specific consideration will be given to supporting the stated system targets, flexibility for landowners and municipalities, and policy implementation tools.

3. Consider some specific elements of Option 1 based on feedback from municipalities and the need to balance protection with flexibility. Reflect key messages and feedback received (e.g., Large Core Areas, slightly less restrictive 'supporting feature' woodland criteria).
4. Integrate some elements across the spectrum of Options in the final refined criteria. Two initial directions include:
 - a. Conservation Oriented Lands: do not include participation in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program and/or Conservation Land Tax Incentive Programs as a criterion for including privately owned lands within the system. These areas may however be included if other criteria are met, such as Key Feature Woodland or Wetland, depending on the size and feature designation.
 - b. Enhancements: consider additional or refined direction re: criteria for ecologically based opportunities, shorelines (e.g., Huron Fringe).
5. Map the N.H.S. to the extent possible to provide clear information to residents, businesses, agencies, stakeholders, and local municipalities. This should include mapping of enhancement opportunities.
6. Develop clear policies, guidelines, and tools to support implementation, enforcement, stewardship, and enhancement. These should include direction and tools for streamlining simple activities that do not inherently conflict with or negatively impact the N.H.S. (e.g., screening tool[s] and process(es)). This approach will support the goals and objectives, and permit the identification of a robust N.H.S., while not adding 'red tape'. This should be done in consultation with local municipalities which lead implementation through administration of zoning and building permits.
7. Consideration should be given to flexibility that will permit a balanced approach to land use planning.

Theme	Directions
Water Resource System	<p>8. W.R.S. Option 2 is the preferred system.</p> <p>9. Ground the concept of the W.R.S. as occurring everywhere on the landscape in policy development and/or supporting information</p> <p>10. Include Headwater Drainage Features (H.D.F.s) that receive a management recommendation of ‘Protection’ or ‘Conservation’ within the W.R.S. and that consideration further if features designated ‘Mitigation’ should be included within the W.R.S. Responses received did not provide support for inclusion / exclusion.</p> <p>11. Develop clear direction for features, areas and functions of the W.R.S. and how these are used to inform or guide land use planning (e.g., as a physical constraint, through management, or conceptually represented and how this informs land use planning).</p> <p>12. Map the W.R.S. to the extent possible, with policies and guidance for identifying and mapping features and functions that cannot be mapped at this time to support future identification and mapping.</p>
Focus Policy on Overall Direction and Use Guidelines for Detailed Direction	<p>13. Develop policy that clearly defines the vision, goal(s), objectives for the N.E.S. and its component systems (W.R.S., N.H.S.).</p> <p>14. Include system targets (where appropriate) in accordance with the Targets Discussion Paper.</p> <p>15. Clearly define components of the system (e.g., N.H.S. Key and Supporting Features) and how they are protected and/or managed.</p> <p>16. Provide clear direction in policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct most development towards existing settlement areas. b. Direct development away from the N.H.S., and Key Hydrologic Features and Key Hydrologic Areas of the W.R.S. c. Protect and manage the N.E.S. and its component systems in a way that meets or exceeds provincial direction. d. Protect and manage the N.E.S. and its component systems in a way that supports the vision, goals, objectives and (where applicable) targets of the N.E.S. e. Permit refinements to the system to reflect study outcomes that improve understanding of features and functions. This may include both additions to and removals from the system

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	<p>f. Supports, encourages and, where appropriate, requires the implementation of linkages and enhancement areas of the N.H.S.</p> <p>g. Continue to permit agricultural uses within the N.H.S. / W.R.S. Neither the N.H.S. nor W.R.S. are intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue.</p> <p>h. Continue to permit wise use of resources in resource-based industries by providing policy direction that supports best practices, restoration / rehabilitation.</p> <p>17. Permit appropriate development that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Avoids the most sensitive features, functions & areas b. Minimizes impacts to the N.H.S. / W.R.S. c. Has no negative impact to the system(s), features and functions. <p>18. Clearly link Policy to Guidance Documents for detailed direction and guidance on implementation of policy.</p>
<p>Avoid Duplicating or Creating Conflicting Policies and Directions</p>	<p>19. Use the O.P. as a platform to educate & link residents, stakeholders, etc. to applicable policies and legislation that affect land uses.</p> <p>20. Refer to appropriate regulating bodies / agencies / authorities, where applicable / appropriate</p> <p>21. Provide clear direction on responsibilities, and</p> <p>22. To the extent possible, create a coordinated approach to land use planning to streamline the process and support good land use planning, smart economic growth, align with other pillars & overall support a healthy & vibrant Bruce County.</p>
<p>Link Policy to System Mapping</p>	<p>23. Map the N.E.S. (comprised of the N.H.S. and W.R.S.) to the extent possible. Mapping should clearly identify that not all features are mapped, and that mapping may be refined from time-to-time as additional information becomes available.</p> <p>24. Permit minor refinements to mapping without an Official Plan Amendment. The O.P. will need to identify what constitutes a 'minor' refinement(s) and ensure that sufficient flexibility is provided to permit these refinements. Clear guidance should also be provided to clearly identify what is not considered a minor refinement and is to be addressed through a formal amendment.</p>

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	<p>25. Make N.E.S. mapping publicly available through an interactive mapping tool. Some sensitive information may be assigned restricted access (e.g., sensitive Species at Risk data) or be otherwise obscured to ensure protection of sensitive species / features, as appropriate.</p> <p>26. Include relevant information to a specific feature or area of the N.E.S. (e.g., feature type and designation, applicable policies) within the interactive mapping tool.</p> <p>27. Permit downloading (e.g., as a .pdf) and/or printing of maps from the interactive mapping tool, for general use.</p> <p>28. Explore linked ‘information sheets’ or documents from the mapping platform that help users navigate policy, permitting, and approvals related to the N.E.S., which includes identifying applicable approval agencies.</p> <p>29. Include disclaimers / clear ‘user guidelines’ in all mapping formats (hardcopy and interactive, online) that very clearly state limitations of the data and that refinements to the system may occur from time-to-time in accordance with policies of the plan. Disclaimers or other information provided on mapping should also indicate what features are not mapped.</p> <p>30. Policies of the plan should clearly state that features not mapped, but that are identified through other study or work are subject to policies of the plan, as appropriate.</p>
<p>Prepare Accessible Guidelines and Tools to Support Implementation</p>	<p>31. Review and update E.I.S. Guideline</p> <p>32. Develop screening tool(s) to streamline low- and no-risk projects (e.g., clear, and specific criteria to identify qualified activities / projects, list of mitigation measures required).</p> <p>33. Use scoping tool(s) to avoid unnecessary work effort and costs, but also as a way to ensure a consistent approach and that the appropriate studies to assess significance and sensitivity are not missed.</p> <p>34. Include a user-guide within documents / tools to support a user-focused approach</p> <p>35. Clarify roles & responsibilities for agencies / stakeholders / proponents</p>

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	<p>36. Acknowledge indigenous interests and review processes as they relate to natural legacy.</p> <p>37. Provide tools & templates to improve overall consistency in the preparation and review processes</p> <p>38. Develop or provide direction for the assessment and consideration of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. This may require preparation of a new guideline to specifically address the W.R.S., or other method of directing assessment and consideration of this system.</p>
Provide Essential Materials in Accessible Format(s)	<p>39. Focus on plain language throughout the plan development process, and in the new Official Plan</p> <p>40. Prepare information sheets to support communications around common land-use planning questions</p>
Consider a Community Planning Development Permit System (C.P.P.S.)	<p>41. The Official Plan should include enabling policies that permit local Municipalities that are interested in this system to develop a C.P.P.S. Engagement on the C.P.P.S. policies through the plan development process can provide good high-level guidance, with details addressed through further engagement with local Municipalities that wish to use a C.P.P.S.</p>
Use Different Forestry Practices for Different Areas	<p>42. Provide additional high-level information with respect to good forestry practices in Core Areas or Key Feature Areas in the Official Plan; when the system is mapped, Transportation and Environmental Services can initiate an amendment to the Forest Conservation By-law to include a schedule showing locations of Core Areas and Key Features where permit applications would need to be consistent with Good Forestry Practices.</p> <p>43. Include specific consideration for areas of increased sensitivity to forestry related practices to ensure that forestry is undertaken in a manner that is compatible with the natural environment system in the long-term.</p>
Progressive Rehabilitation Following Aggregate Extraction	<p>44. Include policies that require enhanced phasing and progressive rehabilitation planning for pit and quarry operations within the natural legacy system that meet criteria which could include size of extraction area, expected duration of operations (based on amount of resource divided by annual tonnage), and/or number of licenses in an area.</p> <p>45. Consult with Provincial staff, S.O.N., and industry stakeholders to ensure that criteria support the objective of managing total disturbed areas while supporting viable extraction operations.</p>

Theme	Directions
<p>Include Conceptual Natural Legacy Mapping in Settlement Areas</p>	<p>46. Identify conceptual natural legacy mapping in settlement areas, particularly where these areas include key features, through the Official Plan.</p> <p>47. Include policy direction noting that local Municipalities may identify additional features that are significant within the community and may include a finer level of detail regarding feature limits in settlement areas, or may take customized approaches that meet provincial requirements and the direction outlined in the County Official Plan</p> <p>48. Upload approved mapping within settlement areas to the County Official Plan to maintain consistent mapping at both the County-scale and the local-scale.</p>
<p>Plan for Sustainable Public Access to Natural Legacy Features</p>	<p>49. Recognize through the plan the need to work with all levels of government, public organizations, landowners, businesses, and organizations that promote or provide access to nature in order to manage public access to natural areas throughout Bruce County.</p> <p>50. Where new resource-based tourism is proposed, consideration should be given to the type and compatibility of the proposed use with the features and functions present on the lands. Policies should provide direction on how the N.E.S. will be preserved in the long-term with respect to these industries.</p>
<p>Continue to Build Relationships with and Learn from Indigenous Communities</p>	<p>51. Continue to develop meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities to hear their views and learn from their knowledge.</p> <p>52. Recognize in the Official Plan the P.P.S. (2020) direction to engage with Indigenous communities and coordinate on land use planning matters, and the expressed interests of local Indigenous communities related to the Natural Environment System.</p> <p>53. Look for opportunities to include Indigenous Traditional Knowledge in studies and land use planning processes.</p> <p>54. Support the continuation of traditional spiritual and cultural uses within the N.H.S. and W.R.S.</p> <p>55. Seek opportunities to reflect Indigenous views and knowledge.</p>

Next Steps

The North South Environmental Consultants will proceed to mapping the Natural Legacy System, and work with Staff and WSP Global to develop draft policies for public engagement.

Community engagement will continue through the Official Plan Project through engagement on proposed Natural Environment System mapping and policies.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

Transportation and Environmental Services - TES has been involved in the Technical Advisory Committee for the project. The Corporate Strategic Initiatives Specialist was consulted in finalizing the directions.

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Plan the Bruce was identified as a major initiative and Council priority in the 2021 Planning and Development Business Plan.

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Departmental Approval:

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