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HOW DATA4NATURE CAN SUPPORT THE UK LAND USE FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLAND

FROM MAPPING TO DECISIONS.
RISK AND OPPORTUNITY AT SCALE.



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FORWARD

The UK Land Use Framework sets a clear direction: England's land must deliver more across housing, infrastructure, food, nature, water and climate, within a system that is finite, interconnected and under increasing pressure.

The challenge is not ambition. It is delivery.

For too long, land use decisions have been constrained by fragmented data, disconnected systems and limited visibility of trade-offs. This has made it difficult to prioritise, coordinate and act with confidence.

This document sets out a practical solution.

DATA4NATURE (D4N) provides the delivery capability the Framework calls for bringing together environmental, spatial and economic data into a single, decision-ready system. It moves beyond mapping to provide clear insight into where land can deliver the greatest value, where risks are emerging and how competing priorities can be balanced.

Built on internationally recognised standards, including the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), D4N enables consistent, transparent and repeatable decision-making. It allows government to understand land through ecosystem extent, condition and services—linking environmental outcomes directly to economic and policy decisions.

Critically, it enables action.

D4N provides a single, shared spatial picture of land use. It identifies where multiple outcomes can be achieved together. It supports scenario testing, investment prioritisation and long-term monitoring. And it works across scales—from national strategy to local delivery.

In short, it gives decision-makers the tools to move faster, with greater confidence and clarity.

Where the Framework sets direction, DATA4NATURE enables delivery.

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WHAT IS DATA4NATURE?

DATA4NATURE (D4N) is a unique, purpose-built digital platform that transforms how organisations measure, manage and report on natural capital. It is redefining the way fragmented land, environmental and economic data is transformed into standardised, actionable spatial insights, enabling users to power smarter policy, scenario planning and national-scale monitoring aligned with SEEA and TNFD

TURNING LAND USE DATA INTO DECISION-READY ACTION

D4N is the digital infrastructure needed to help deliver the ambitions of the UK Land Use Framework for England. The Framework is explicit that England needs better coordination, a shared spatial picture of land use, more accessible data and better tools for understanding trade-offs across housing, infrastructure, food, nature, water and climate.

D4N is well suited to this challenge because it integrates environmental, spatial and economic information into one coherent platform and turns that information into clear, decision-ready outputs.

In practical terms, D4N can support the Framework in four major ways. First, it can create a single source of truth for land use evidence by integrating data from different sectors into a common spatial and analytical structure. Second, it can support better land use decisions by combining mapping, natural capital accounting and scenario modelling to show where land is best suited to different uses and where multiple benefits can be delivered together. Third, it can help implement the Framework's commitment to 'make land digital' by improving access to interoperable land datasets, dashboards and reporting tools. Fourth, it can support transparency, stewardship and long-term monitoring by giving national and local decision-makers a repeatable system for tracking land condition, land use change, ecosystem services and policy outcomes over time.

Taken together, this means D4N is not just a software platform; it is a practical policy delivery tool that can help move the Land Use Framework from high-level ambition to consistent, evidence-based implementation. D4N moves the Land Use Framework from vision to action, providing a practical, evidence-based tool, not just software, for policy delivery.



DIRECT ALIGNMENT WITH IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

CONSISTENT SPATIAL PLANNING ACROSS SECTORS AND SCALES

D4N can underpin a single spatial evidence environment that brings together land use priorities across housing, energy, water, food, climate and nature. This directly supports the Framework's aim of giving planners, developers, investors and authorities a clearer picture of where trade-offs occur and where multiple benefits can be secured.

UNLOCKING MULTIFUNCTIONAL AND EFFICIENT LAND USE

D4N can identify where land can deliver more than one outcome at once, such as farming with biodiversity gain, woodland for water management, or infrastructure with lower ecological impact. This makes it useful for targeting the places where multifunctionality is realistic and valuable, rather than applying broad assumptions uniformly across the country.

OPERATIONALISING 'MAKE LAND DIGITAL'

D4N directly addresses this section of the Framework by improving access to interoperable spatial data, linking foundational and thematic datasets, and turning them into usable maps, indicators, reports and dashboards. It can also support more consistent digital workflows for ongoing updates and evidence sharing.

ENABLING SHARED STEWARDSHIP THROUGH TRANSPARENT DATA

D4N can support transparency and collaboration by making data available to different user groups in appropriate formats. That means communities, major landowners, government bodies, partnerships and delivery organisations can all work from a common evidence base while still applying local knowledge and priorities.





A FOUR LAYER SYSTEM FOR POLICY DELIVERY

DATA4NATURE is the operational backbone of modern land use policy. It is a four-layer digital system connecting data, decisions and delivery.

- **Data integration layer** – brings together land cover, habitat, soils, water, agricultural capability, biodiversity, infrastructure, climate and economic data.
- **Spatial intelligence layer** – maps the interface between land uses, ecological sensitivity, constraints and opportunity areas.
- **Decision layer** – produces prioritisation outputs, risk and opportunity insights, scenario results and policy-ready summaries.
- **Monitoring and reporting layer** – tracks change through time and supports updates, transparency and long-term accountability.

This framing makes D4N easier to explain to government audiences because it shows that the system helps with evidence assembly, analysis, decision support and monitoring in one coherent workflow.



HOW DATA4NATURE ENABLES IMPLEMENTATION

1. A single, integrated source of truth for land use evidence

A central theme of the Framework is that land use decision-making is currently slowed and weakened by fragmented data, disconnected mapping systems and limited interoperability. D4N addresses this by integrating environmental, spatial and economic datasets into one consistent platform. This allows government agencies, local authorities, land managers, investors and delivery partners to work from a common evidence base rather than separate, incompatible datasets.

This is important because the Framework is trying to join up decisions across infrastructure, housing, food, nature and climate. D4N can bring those perspectives together through a shared spatial data structure, standardised classifications and dashboard-based outputs. In effect, D4N can function as the operational layer beneath the Framework's call for a more coherent national land use evidence base.

2. Policy-ready land use accounting aligned to international standards

The Framework is fundamentally about better decisions, but good decisions require information that is consistent and comparable over time. D4N is built on the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which means land use and environmental information can be organised in a way that is compatible with policy analysis, natural capital accounting and long-term reporting.

This matters because the UK is not only trying to improve spatial planning; it is also trying to link land use to resilience, productivity, nature recovery and investment. D4N can structure information through ecosystem extent, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services, allowing the Framework's ambitions to be expressed in measurable and repeatable terms. This gives government a stronger basis for monitoring outcomes, comparing places, evaluating trade-offs and linking environmental change to economic decision-making.

3. Enabling joined-up spatial planning and cross-sector decisions

The Framework repeatedly returns to the need for a cross-government spatial approach. D4N can support this by mapping land cover, habitats, water systems, biodiversity priorities, agricultural land capability, climate risk and development constraints in one environment. This allows planners and policymakers to assess where competing land demands overlap, where conflicts are likely to arise, and where multiple benefits can be achieved together.

For example, D4N can support analysis of where renewable energy can coexist with farming, where habitat restoration can reduce flood risk, where development pressure intersects with sensitive ecological areas, and where the most productive agricultural land should be safeguarded. That makes the platform particularly relevant to the Framework's emphasis on multifunctional landscapes and better-coordinated spatial plans.



4. Delivering the ‘make land digital’ commitment

One of the clearest implementation themes in the Framework is the commitment to make land digital. D4N aligns directly with this agenda because it is designed to ingest, organise, visualise and report on spatial land data in digital form. It can help move land information from scattered files and sector-specific tools into a usable, interoperable system.

In practice, D4N can support digital land use delivery by linking foundational datasets, hosting map-based dashboards, supporting digital submission and updating information, and making outputs available to different user groups in a structured format. This gives policymakers and delivery bodies a practical way to operationalise the Framework’s commitment to richer data accessibility, interoperability and better land use tools.

5. From mapping to decisions. Risk and opportunity at scale

Although the Land Use Framework is not a TNFD document, it is highly compatible with TNFD logic because it is concerned with dependencies, impacts, risks, opportunities and the spatial interface between land use and nature. D4N can use a structured workflow similar to the LEAP approach: locate where activities interact with nature, evaluate dependencies and impacts, assess risks and opportunities, and prepare outputs for decision-making.

That means D4N can help government and delivery partners move beyond descriptive mapping into a more decision-oriented model. Instead of simply showing what land looks like, D4N can help show why particular places matter, what risks are emerging, what opportunities exist, and where intervention is likely to produce the greatest benefit.

6. Testing trade-offs through scenario modelling and future land use pathways

The Framework is explicit that land use decisions must look ahead, not just describe the present. D4N can support this through scenario modelling that compares different land use futures under different policy, climate, infrastructure, restoration or investment assumptions.

This is particularly valuable where the Framework needs to test how England can deliver enough housing, infrastructure, food production and nature recovery without treating them as mutually exclusive. D4N can compare alternative spatial strategies and generate outputs showing likely consequences for biodiversity, water, soil, resilience, agricultural productivity and potential financial implications.

By enabling this foresight, D4N becomes a powerful tool not only for planning, but also for strategy, prioritisation and investment design.

7. Monitoring change, tracking outcomes and strengthening accountability

The Framework is intended to be updated every five years and supported by evolving data, analysis and implementation evidence. D4N can provide the monitoring backbone for that approach. It can maintain time series of land condition, land cover, ecosystem services and management activity, allowing change to be tracked consistently across time and geography.

This makes D4N useful for reporting against policy goals, showing progress to stakeholders, supporting transparency of land use change, and improving accountability for public and private investment. It can also support reporting linked to natural capital accounts, environmental outcomes, government dashboards and disclosure-style outputs where required.

8. Linking land use to economic value and investment decisions

A major strength of D4N is that it does not stop at environmental mapping. It is built to connect environmental and spatial information with economic logic. That means land use change can be evaluated not only in ecological terms, but also in terms of productivity, resilience, avoided risk, ecosystem service value and investment opportunity.

This is highly relevant to the Framework because the document is ultimately concerned with growth as well as environmental recovery. D4N can help identify where changes in land use strengthen long-term productivity, where restoration creates value, and where public and private capital can be directed more effectively.



9. One system, multiple scales. From national strategy to local delivery

The Framework needs tools that work across scales: national strategy, regional planning, catchment-scale coordination and site-level decisions. D4N is well suited to this because it can operate consistently at farm, asset, landscape, regional and national scales.

This allows one system to support both strategic policy questions and local implementation questions. National government can use it to build the big picture; regional and local users can use the same underlying data model to understand specific opportunities, constraints and trade-offs in their own places.





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