

Assessing future options for Little Don reservoirs: using an innovative capitals valuation tool

Aims

Yorkshire Water owns 28,000 ha of land, much of which is open to the public. Our goals are to open up our land to everyone, get more people outdoors, protect the environment, and inspire younger generations to enjoy nature and be active outdoors. To help achieve these goals, we are putting the 'capitals' — natural, social, human, intellectual, financial, and manufactured capital — at the heart of all our decision making. This capitals approach will enable us to quantify the environmental and social impacts of our actions and to make better decisions for the benefit of our customers.

Tool

AECOM have been working with us to develop a tool that allows us to compare the impacts of various land management decisions across the capitals. The tool was developed by a team of economists, ecologists, and social specialists, and draws on the latest scientific evidence to provide a cutting edge approach to measuring and valuing social and environmental impacts.

Site

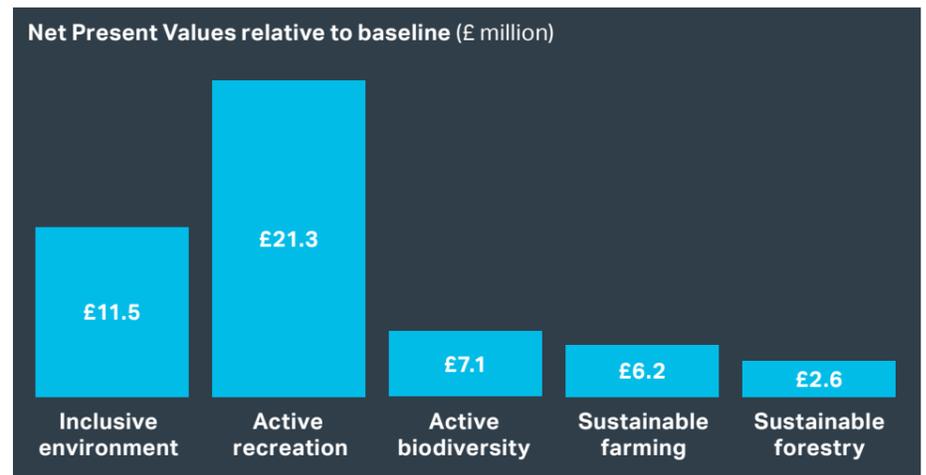
We piloted the tool on one of our sites in the 'Little Don' area which has a range of existing recreational uses — from water sports to nature watching — and we are using the tool to guide the development of the site into a recreational hub for the whole area. The overall aim of the Little Don scheme is to open up more land for recreation, create better quality recreational opportunities, increase diversity and inclusion, and improve the health and wellbeing of our customers and visitors to our land.

Results

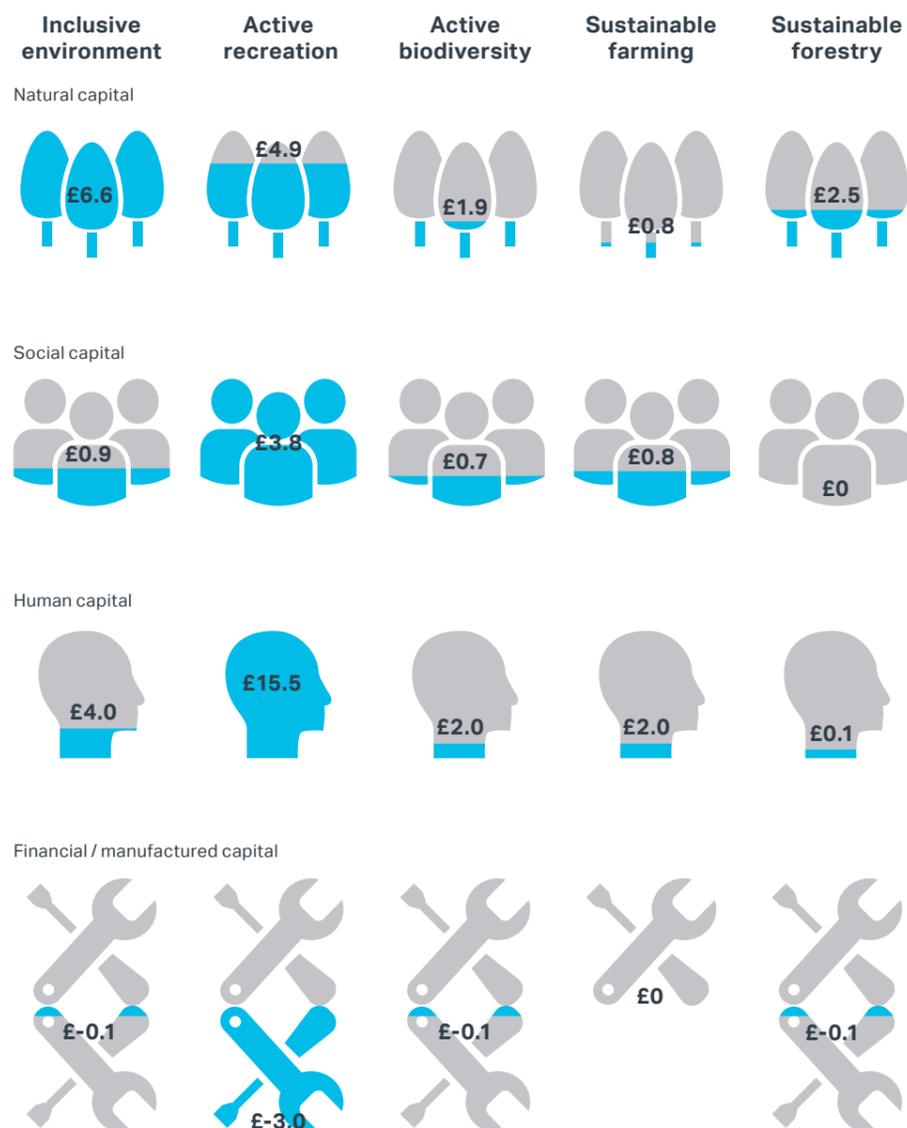
The pilot exercise looked at five scenarios for investing in the Little Don site:

- **Inclusive environment:** encouraging all groups to interact with the environment
- **Active recreation:** planting trees and encouraging sports such as mountain biking
- **Active biodiversity:** protecting and restoring nature
- **Sustainable farming:** working with farmers to better balance the needs of the environment
- **Sustainable forestry:** focusing on tree and hedgerow planting across the majority of the site

Compared against a 'do-nothing' scenario, over the next 40 years these options are estimated to generate net benefits of...



Value indicators (£ million)



Other indicators



Implications

The results suggest that encouraging active sports may have the greatest potential benefits, despite having the highest costs. The results also demonstrate that there are pros and cons to each of the options, and that there can be important trade-offs between goals of encouraging visitor diversity, protecting biodiversity, and creating employment opportunities. We will use these results to start a discussion with stakeholders in the Little Don area to decide on an approach to managing the site that meets everyone's goals. Beyond the Little Don site, the capitals tool will be used to help meet our goals across all of our land.