

Reframing the existing Biodiversity Offsetting Metric to Improve Ecosystem Protection through Public Participation

Critical evaluation of the ecological ramifications of High Speed Rail 2 demonstrated that DEFRA's (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) current biodiversity offsetting metric does not achieve equitable environmental justice. The New Fair Metric has been designed to take into account all ecosystem services through the inclusion of public participation. It is the aim of the New Fair Metric to incentivise developers to seek mitigation and adaptation strategies and to achieve greater biodiversity protection.



Problem

What doesn't work with the current metric?

- Based on only **habitat distinctiveness & habitat condition**
- Overlooks **cultural and social ecosystem services**
- Acts as a **'license to trash'** ¹
- Considers nature as a **commodity**
- Neglects **ecosystem complexity** ²



Methodology

How do you incorporate socio-cultural values into the metric?

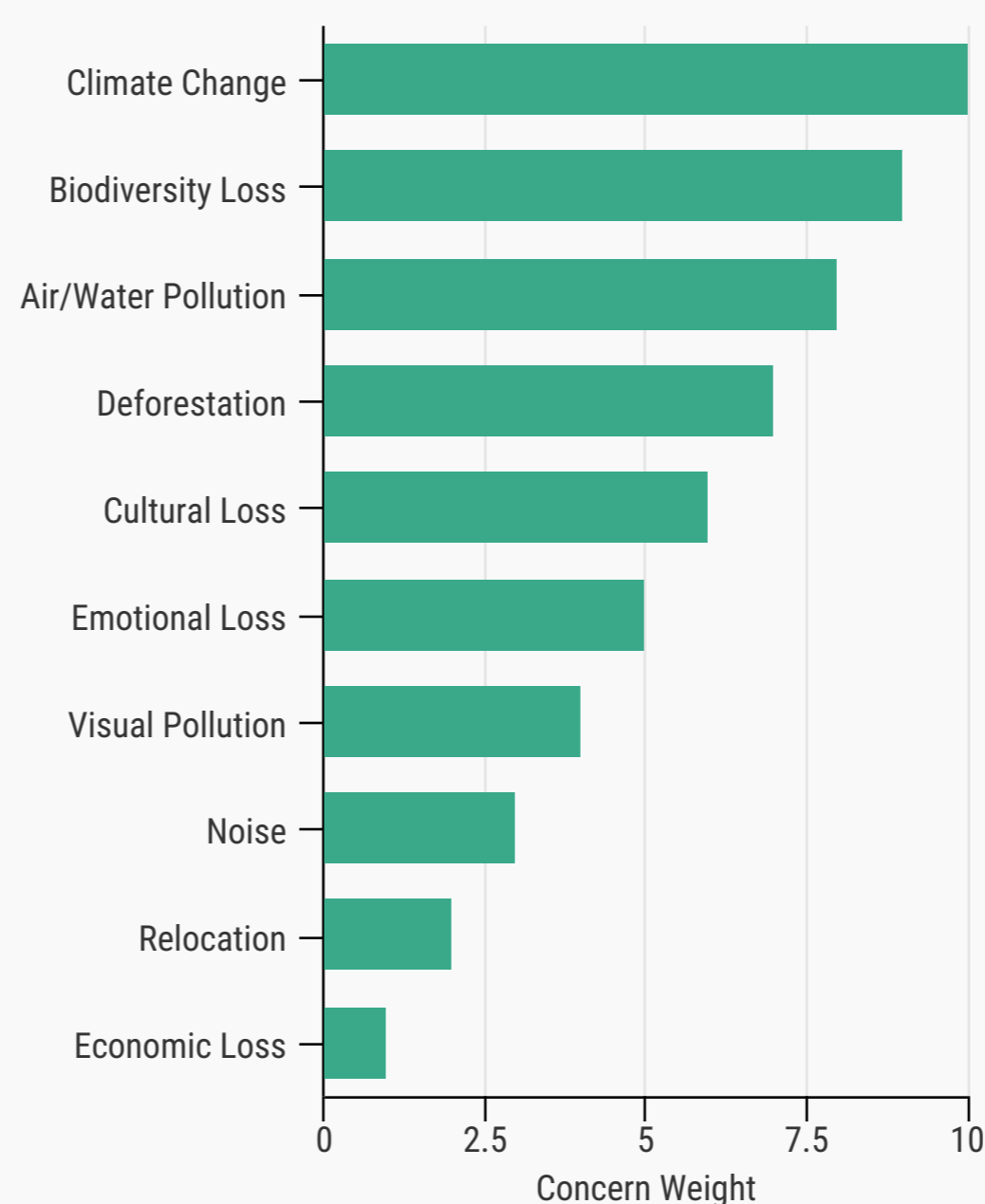
Focus Group

To quantify socio-cultural value a focus group was used to determine:

- A general definition of what makes a place "natural"
- How would one express the emotional link they have with an area of nature ³
- The type of concerns one would have should a natural place they know be destroyed

The results of the focus group informed our choice of which concerns to include in our **PESCV** (Public Evaluation on Socio-Cultural Value) and our method of using a ranking system to quantify concerns.

The focus group was also responsible for ranking the concerns from the one that serves their own interests the most (e.g. potential economic loss) to that which considers the environment the most (e.g. damages to biodiversity and wildlife). This provided us with each concerns 'weight'.



The Public Evaluation on Socio-Cultural Value

The finalised categories form part of the **PESCV**; a survey provided to eligible local residents during the planning stages of a proposed development.

An independent body should be set up whose role it is to;

- determine respondent eligibility, based on the scale of the project and a resident's distance from it
- distribute the surveys to all eligible
- collect and analyse survey data
- determine the required Biodiversity Offset Units
- pass survey data on to developers

Outcome



The New Fair Metric

Value of 1 hectare in 'Biodiversity Units'		HABITAT DISTINCTIVENESS (D)		
		Low (2)	Medium (4)	High (6)
HABITAT QUALITY (Q)	Good (3)	6	12	18
	Moderate (2)	4	8	12
	Poor (1)	2	4	6
PESCV SCORE:				
Q X D SCORE:				
PESCV X SC SCORE:		**value of 1 hectare in biodiversity units**		

What can The New Fair Metric Achieve?

- Improve the level of **public participation** in the planning process
- Enhance the presence of **socio-environmental justice** by increasing the required number of 'biodiversity units'
- **Disincentivising developers** from seeking biodiversity offsetting strategies as a form of immediate solution

Sources

- ¹ Apostolopoulou, E. (2015). Biodiversity offsetting in England: Governance rescaling, socio-spatial injustices, and the neoliberalization of nature. *Ecology*, 16, 67-71.
- ² Jacob et al. (2016). Investigating the inclusion of ecosystem services in biodiversity offsetting. *Ecosystem Services*, 21 A, 92-102.
- ³ Banks, J. (1957). The Group Discussion as an Interview Technique. *The Sociological Review*, 5, pp.75-84

