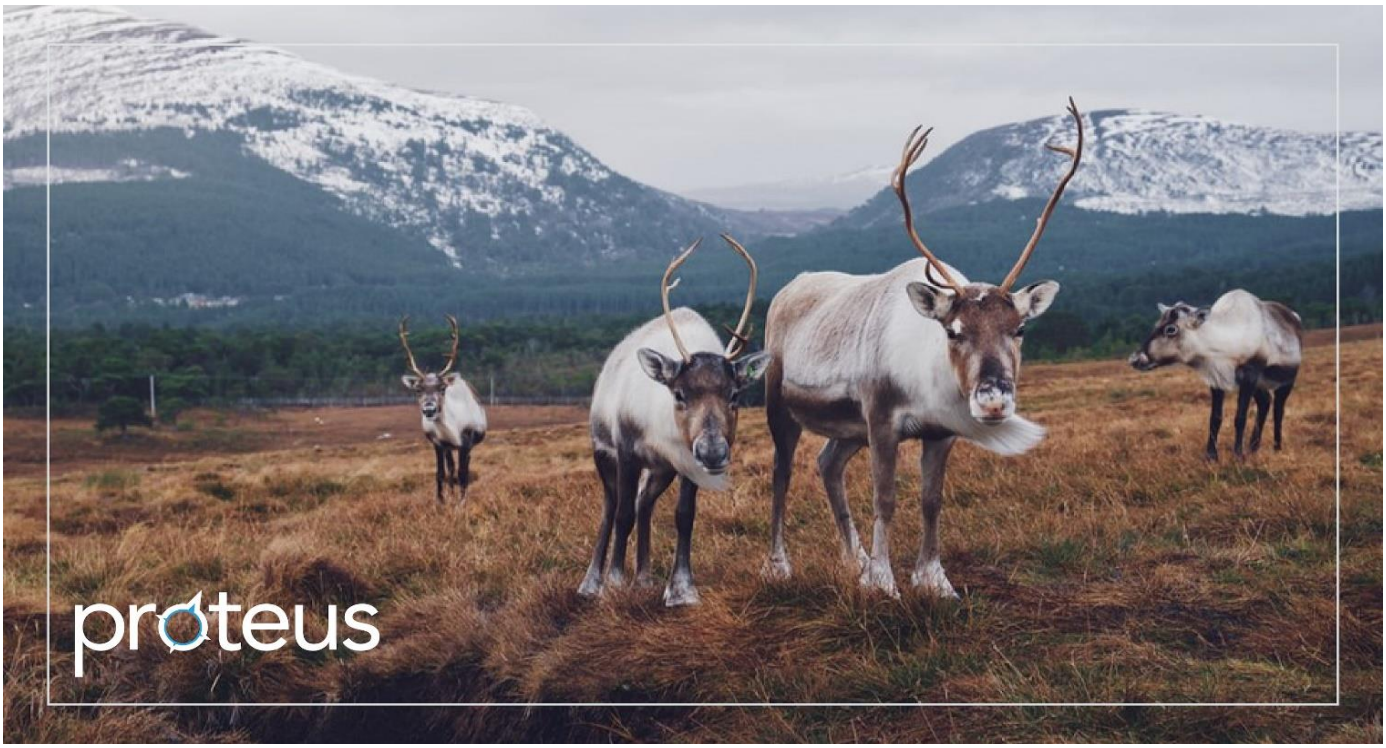
Proteus Annual Meeting 2021

Meeting Report



The Proteus Annual Meeting provides a space for Proteus Partners, observer businesses and the conservation community to come together and discuss the latest thinking around business and biodiversity. In 2021, the meeting:

- Highlighted and discussed emerging issues and trends in biodiversity conservation, science and policy of strategic relevance to Proteus Partners.
- Highlighted the expertise and tools available to Proteus Partners to tackle these emerging issues.
- Discussed action towards a sustainable and just energy transition.
- Explored the benefits of Nature-based Solutions and how they can help contribute to solving multiple challenges.
- Provided space for participants to share insights, updates and innovations that advance the nature-positive agenda.

Next steps

Through Proteus we will help Partners to:

- Engage with the Convention on Biological Biodiversity's Fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP15) and other climate and biodiversity meetings by providing information, guidance, and direction on the policy agenda through technical briefs, webinars and other outputs.
- Contribute to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Post-2020 GBF) targets by providing relevant tools and data, as well as communicating what metrics and indicators could be used for each Post-2020 GBF target.
- Access and keep abreast of the latest and best-available spatial data layers and tools and use them to support nature-positive strategies and decision making, through supporting continuous innovations and improvements to datasets, platforms and tools, convening webinars to share insight between organisations, and building technical capacity in companies through Proteus Partner technical assistance, training and data support.
- Implement Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to fulfil their commitments and tackle all three elements of the climate-biodiversity-social equity crisis by developing new restoration layers.
- Communicate the business case for nature-positive outcomes by developing a range of materials and training internal company 'nature champions' through Proteus Partner training and/or technical assistance.

Introduction

The 2021 Proteus Annual Meeting was the first in the 2021-2025 phase of the Proteus Partnership. The meeting was held remotely due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and was attended by Proteus Partners, observer companies, external experts and UNEP-WCMC colleagues (Box 1).

The meeting brought Partners together, discussed current biodiversity topics and explored exciting new tools and developments, catalysing action for transformation in the year ahead and beyond. It looked towards an emerging global policy landscape with more ambitious targets for nature and climate. Partners came together with experts to discuss the role of business in supporting these transitions and enabling benefits for nature, climate and people. This report summarises the key messages and outcomes of discussions. Recordings of presentations and other materials are available for Partners to revisit on the Proteus Partnership website.

Box 1: Proteus Annual Meeting in Numbers

- 10 hours of content
- 24 speakers, including 4 Partner presentations
- > 70 participants
- All 14 Proteus Partner companies represented
- 5 observer organisations and companies represented

Business Transformation and the Energy Transition

The three crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and social inequity necessitate transformative change towards a nature-positive economy. Business transformation is recognised as a challenging, but vital step towards reaching nature-positive by 2030. Energy transition in particular will be key to reaching the 2015 Paris Agreement target of limiting the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

A high-level panel (Janez Potočnik, International Resource Panel, Rohitesh Dhawan, International Council on Mining and Metals and Xavier Garcia Casals, International Renewable Energy Agency) offered insights into the implications of energy and other socioeconomic transformations on materials supply and renewable energy policy, and the role of business in these transitions, including:

- Transformational change will require holistic efforts by businesses, governments and individuals.
- The focus on maximising profits must shift towards achieving societal needs. 'Efficiency' across systems and supply chains will need to be re-evaluated, and well-being and economic growth must be decoupled from negative impacts on the environment.
- The responsibility is shared by all of society. Both the supply and the demand side are important.
- Systemic change does not occur at the country or regional level. A global vision is needed to achieve a sustainable and resilient energy transition. This global vision must be relevant and implementable at the country and regional level.
- The economy is embedded in nature and all organisations can play a role in change that reflects this.

Much of the discussion reflected the Proteus strategy, goals and commitment to support and accelerate the business transition. Proteus Partners have a pivotal role to play in achieving these transitions and many partners are making external commitments towards climate and nature goals. For example, the new biodiversity position recently launched by Equinor incorporates a net-positive approach with increased investments in Nature-based Solutions. These commitments must be followed up with action.

Nature Policy

This session explored reflections from the latest climate and biodiversity meetings and included insights from Bianca Brasil (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity) and Eva Zabey (Business for Nature), as well as contributions from Partners on their preparations for COP15, 2022 and beyond.

Nature focus at COP26

As the world gathered in the UK for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties (COP26) to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, the convergence between the climate and nature agendas was evident. Identifying solutions and synergies at the climate-biodiversity-society nexus is increasingly important as society and business strive towards the transitions necessary to meet global targets.

The Post-2020 GBF

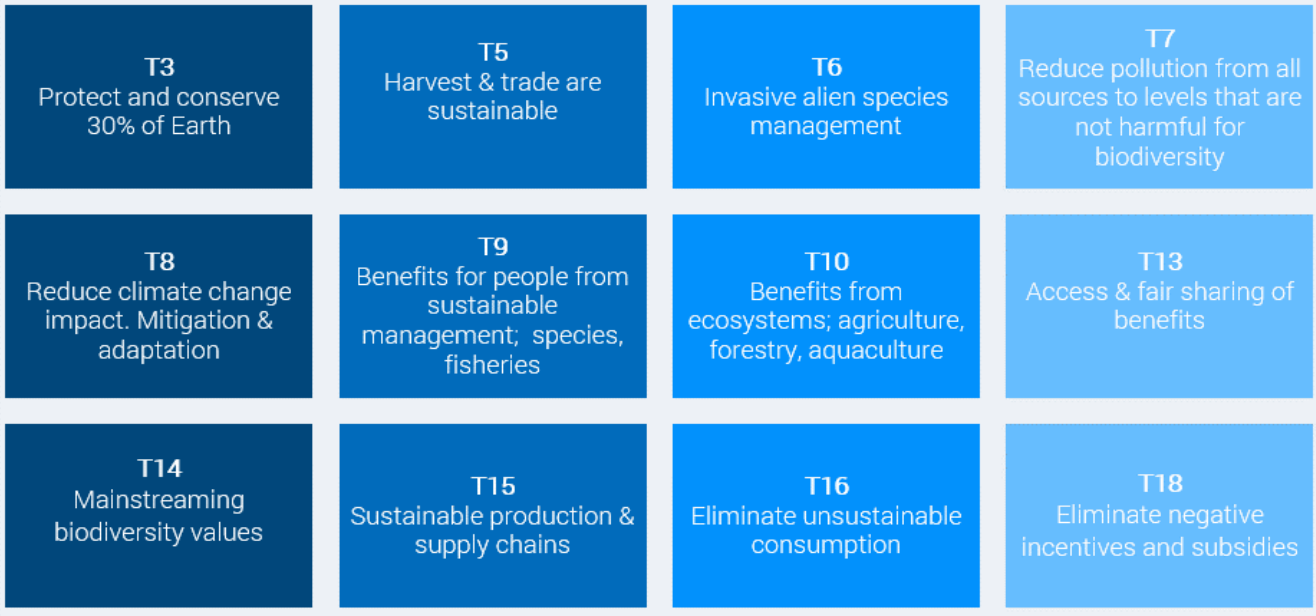
The eagerly awaited Post-2020 GBF will be negotiated and finalised at the second instalment of COP15 in Kunming in 2022. It is expected to provide a plan for transforming and aligning the whole of society's relationship with biodiversity. Businesses will have a key role to play, alongside governments and civil society, in the implementation of global biodiversity targets. Businesses are encouraged to engage in events and to start aligning their thinking with the draft Post-2020 GBF targets (Box 2).

Proteus and Policy – a roadmap for 2022

Supporting partners to engage with, navigate and support implementation of the global policy agenda remains a core goal of Proteus. Feedback obtained during the Proteus Annual Meeting will help guide efforts over the coming months to strengthen business engagement and understanding of the policy development process and the implications of adopted targets.

Discussions highlighted that there is growing interest in attending COPs and associated meetings. Partners require structured engagement plans and would like support to help them identify what events and discussions to prioritise and engage with.

Box 2: Draft Post-2020 Framework targets of relevance for business



In addition, Partners would like to be kept informed of the metrics and indicators being developed for each of the Post-2020 GBF targets. It was also noted that it can be challenging to navigate the interactions and differences between different policy processes, frameworks, initiatives and guidelines. Finally, Partners expressed a desire for more internal alignment among peers and a need to discuss the views of the collective.

Through Proteus, UNEP-WCMC is committed to supporting Partner engagement with the policy agenda and will support Partners in 2022 by:

- Providing opportunities for Partners to come together to discuss industry scale responses to the biodiversity, climate and social inequity crises.
- Providing regular updates, technical briefs and webinars to inform Partners of the latest policies, initiatives, guidelines, datasets and methodologies, and their relevance to business.
- Providing materials and training to help build the business case for setting targets and implementing the Post-2020 GBF.
- Helping Partners explore opportunities to demonstrate commitments. For example, user testing of an area-based commitments platform that showcases spatially explicit commitments to establish or improve area-based conservation efforts. Partners interested in supporting user testing are invited to get in touch.

Tools and Methodologies

Access to high quality data and information for better-informed decision making is one of the cornerstones of Proteus. This session explored new and upcoming tools and methodologies, and how they could help Proteus Partners improve biodiversity management.

Presentations and Partner reflections on upcoming tools and methodologies

Supply chain impacts: Supply chain impacts are directly tackled by targets 14 and 15 in the draft Post-2020 GBF. However, measuring biodiversity impacts associated with supply chains remains challenging, particularly as many companies lack detailed geospatial data for their sourcing. Tools under development to assist in supply chain tracing include Chatham House's Resource Trade platform and the Trase initiative. Work to date on supply chain impacts has predominantly focussed on agricultural products. However, there will be increasing expectations for other sectors to adopt and drive improvements in these approaches. Traceable and responsible sourcing of minerals and metals used in renewable energy technologies will be crucial for achieving a nature-positive energy transition.

Avian sensitivity mapping: While the need to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is widely recognised, renewables can still have significant negative impacts on wildlife. These impacts can be reduced by siting renewables infrastructure away from sensitive locations. The AVISTEP tool, under development by BirdLife International, provides avian sensitivity maps designed to be used to avoid conflict between birds and renewable energy. The tool is expected to be launched for its first regions in 2022, with more regions added over time. It will join the suite of data that companies can use to mitigate site-based impacts on nature associated with renewable energy developments.

Area of Influence: Quantitative guidance on estimating a site's Area of Influence (AoI) is lacking despite this being required in decision making processes. To start addressing this, UNEP-WCMC has developed a Technical Brief that collates the best available literature and datasets to suggest suitable AoIs for high-level

screening of mining and oil and gas operations. Potential for indirect impacts also drives variation in AoI, and this will be the topic of a subsequent Proteus Technical Brief in 2022. Together these briefs will assist Proteus Partners to determine AoI for use in biodiversity risk screening, including identifying contexts where precautionary buffers are required.

Discussion on data sharing

This part of the session began with Tim Hirsch (GBIF) and Joe Turner (UNEP-WCMC) presenting on the drivers for, progress towards and benefits of data sharing, and how Proteus Partners could contribute to these efforts. The Post-2020 GBF is likely to include data sharing as part of targets on monitoring and reporting. Alongside COP26 there was a statement from Multilateral Development Banks encouraging data sharing from the private sector, and the IUCN World Conservation Congress passed a motion calling for collectors of *in situ* biodiversity data to share it for the public good. GBIF – the Global Biodiversity Information Facility – collates biodiversity data in an open access platform, and there are opportunities to contribute biodiversity data collected by companies, for example as part of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). Proteus Partners can share data with GBIF through national nodes. Several training resources are available on the GBIF website, from formatting data correctly to applying embargos and licenses to data.

Partner data priorities

The session finished with an interactive discussion on the data available through Proteus and its current use by Partner companies. Input was collected from Partners on which datasets were most used, how data are accessed, and how data are analysed in Partner company workflows. This will help inform upcoming work in Proteus on biodiversity data (including the development of new layers) and the infrastructure needed to facilitate its use and interpretation by Partners in their analysis and company systems.

Nature-based Solutions Multiple Benefits

This session explored the multiple benefits of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and how they can be realised to help address challenges. A high level panel, comprising Val Kapos, Head of Nature-based Solutions at UNEP-WCMC, Ellis Penning from Deltares and Daisy Hessenberger from IUCN discussed the following topics with Partners.

Enablers and scaling up NbS

NbS are gaining traction in the international policy agendas for both nature and climate, and many businesses are increasingly exploring how NbS could help them contribute to their internal and external targets and commitments.

Discussions are now focusing on the practical aspects of scaling up their use – how and where they will be implemented, and how NbS will be financed. Although scaling up quickly is vital, implementing smaller NbS remains important. Expanding small pilots that are known to work, rather than inventing new solutions will reduce costs. Hybrid, 'green and grey' solutions have also been shown to be useful and shouldn't be discounted.

A number of enablers for NbS were explored by the panel including:

- The business case: COP26 highlighted that there is ample funding for NbS. However, directing money down the pipeline towards on the ground work will require dialogues between businesses and policymakers.
- Multidisciplinary collaboration: Top-down models risk undermining existing rights and approaches of Indigenous Peoples. Greater benefits and resilient results can be realised by embracing multidisciplinary thinking, different stakeholders and skillsets.
- Monitoring and quantification: NbS should be designed to achieve multiple benefits from the outset and measurement is vital

for determining 'successful' NbS. However, there are knowledge gaps around NbS that need to be filled – particularly in the marine realm.

- EcoShape consortium identified six enablers that can aid in the creation, implementation and upscaling of NbS.

Costs

Studies have shown that NbS can be 50% cheaper than traditional grey approaches. It is sometimes more efficient to design a project with an NbS approach in the first instance, rather than spending additional time and cost to re-design the project to incorporate NbS at a later date. While cost effective, the full impacts of NbS can often be slow to materialise. Impact on economies over time must be accounted for. Once avoided loss over an appropriate timescale is calculated, the true cost-effectiveness is realised.

Case studies

Partners flagged the need to share case studies in order to engage in NbS. This session provided an opportunity for Partners to share their experiences and included the following examples:

- Mangrove rehabilitation to raise awareness, help halt biodiversity loss and reduce coastal erosion.
- Developing a joint carbon credit and NbS portfolio, which includes working with Indigenous Peoples to restore forest areas that improve habitat for wildlife, support plant species used by the community for medicines and food and contribute towards climate goals.
- Local investment in seawalls to reduce flooding and create new habitats whilst also boosting local economies through tourism
- Restoration of forest areas for carbon storage that also had the unintended positive outcome of stabilising water supply and reducing sedimentation rates for a hydroelectric dam.

Role of Business

Companies are already supporting NbS through action and coordination with the public sector, investments in 'high-quality' NbS, and transparent commitments and targets. Additional activities that companies can undertake include:

- Getting involved with initiatives: Natural Climate Solutions Alliance, Science Based Targets and the Leaf Coalition
- Ensuring the NbS they invest in are credible and safe-guard compliant, following the IUCN Global Nature-based Solutions Standard.
- Supporting research and the development of monitoring and evaluation tools, to measure NbS impacts.
- Aligning the implementation of NbS with the mitigation hierarchy, noting that it is cheaper to protect than it is to restore.

As we move into 2022, we will continue to support Proteus Partners through the launch of a dedicated NbS training module, and by developing new restoration layers that provide Partners with more opportunities to explore potential for NbS.

Nature Workshops

The final session of the Proteus Annual Meeting involved an interactive workshop on communicating the business case for biodiversity management, and a Data Forum to gather Partner insights into where spatial data can add value in company ecosystem restoration efforts. This opportunity to gain input across the Partnership is valuable for guiding the plans and priorities of the Proteus team. The level and breath of engagement with Partners is a core

strength of Proteus. It helps to ensure outputs supported by Proteus effectively address the needs of users, and have genuine positive impact on biodiversity through enabling better-informed decisions.

Workshop: Communicating the business case for nature

The business case for biodiversity is often not strong enough for companies to take action, yet private sector contributions are imperative to reversing global biodiversity declines. As such, goal 1 of the Proteus Strategy 2021-2025 is to *'help companies recognize their responsibilities for nature and communicate the business case for its management'*. There are multiple considerations that drive business action, ranging from external factors such as legislation and lender pressure to internal factors like company policies and securing the availability of business-critical resources.

However, much of the literature outlining links between biodiversity and business is inaccessible and/or impenetrable to non-specialists, creating a need for materials that quickly and clearly explain to different audiences in business why nature matters for them.

This gap can be addressed through producing visual and written materials and working directly with Partners. This workshop including a walkthrough of an example 30-minute presentation that Proteus Focal Points could use to communicate the business case within their companies, during which Partners were asked for live feedback. This proved an engaging and insightful means to share ideas, with 17 Partners contributing to the Menti survey and over 100 suggestions in response to open-ended questions.

These suggestions will inform development of this presentation pack and other communication materials under Proteus. Key themes throughout the feedback were:

- The need to balance the amount of content and detail, which is highly audience specific. Thinking about the presented slide deck as an example, this level of detail could be used when talking to biodiversity specialists within companies, with shorter decks for general environmental / sustainability managers, reduced further to one slide or even one sentence on biodiversity for senior company managers.
- Messaging needs to be tailored to different audiences, to reach beyond sustainability teams into other business areas such as the c-suite, finance teams, marketing, procurement, R&D and Human Resources.
- Highlighting practical examples, statistics and case studies will help emphasise key messages and translate high-level concepts into reality.

UNEP-WCMC is keen to work further with Partners on communicating the business case for nature, including training internal company 'nature champions' and helping develop a range of materials for them to use. This work can be covered under Proteus Partner training and/or technical assistance allowances. Partners are encouraged to get in touch if they wish to pursue this.

Data Forum: Restoration data priorities across marine and terrestrial realms

In this workshop UNEP-WCMC experts working on ecosystem restoration data and Proteus Partner companies had the opportunity to discuss the role of spatial data in guiding company ecosystem restoration efforts and where new data layers could support companies.

There are several data platforms and tools addressing ecosystem restoration already available. However, there are gaps and challenges associated with use by business. These include limited coverage of ecosystems and geographies, licensing constraints, and data that are not suited to informing decisions.

Through Proteus we are looking to support development of tailored data layers on restoration opportunities for land and sea that consider multiple ecosystems and benefits. The discussions during this session allowed for a

better understanding of the company processes and decisions that inform restoration activities, and the role of global and regional datasets within these.

Several important considerations and current data gaps were highlighted, including on the resilience of restoration efforts to climate change, understanding how efforts on sites contribute to larger-scale commitments and targets, and where to implement restoration to maximise habitat connectivity.

These insights will be used to help ensure that restoration layers developed with companies as an audience complement information from other sources, including site-level data, and address knowledge gaps applicable to decisions that companies make.

Proteus Annual Meeting 2022

We would like to thank all Partners, speakers and observer organisations who participated in the 2021 Proteus Annual Meeting. The engagement and contributions fuelled five days of informative discussion and provided a valuable opportunity to listen to Partner feedback. As we look towards the 2022 Proteus Annual Meeting, we invite all Partners to contact us and provide their feedback, including what you enjoyed about the 2021 meeting, what you would improve and what topics or themes you would like to see covered this year. Feedback can be sent directly to stacey.baggaley@unep-wcmc.org and can also be submitted to this Menti quiz: https://www.menti.com/zsymee42es .