sweep

Investing in Nature for Health
RESOURCE

Understanding environmental investment for health in the South West – exploring dynamic mapping case studies

This report was produced in collaboration with our project partners.

Public Health Dorset

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

WWT

Why this matters

Current research confirms that natural environments provide benefits for physical and mental health; [1,2] and it is estimated that £2.2 billion of health benefits are generated in England per year due to people exercising in green and blue space. There is a corresponding, growing interest in harnessing these benefits to promote good health outcomes through nature-based interventions and activities. This is both at a national scale, such as improving access to the coast, and at a local level, with projects that are regenerating neighbourhood green spaces[3].

There are many challenges, however, to effectively delivering and sustaining such programmes. Attracting suitable investment into the environment for health, for example, is complicated due to the fact that funding often comes from a number of sources including government, corporate sponsorship, health and social care commissioning. Another key challenge is the need for cross-sectoral working, with successful programmes often requiring effective collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders from environmental management to public health.

Through our project partners, we understand that programme structures can quickly become complex and confusing, with disconnect arising between different funding streams, delivery partners and beneficiary groups. In order to meet the challenge of coordinating and balancing the priorities of these different interest groups, and to inform more streamlined cross-sectoral investments that increase health outcomes, there first needs to be a better understanding of current project structures, funding streams and stakeholder engagement. This resource responds directly to this need.

What is the purpose of this resource?

This resource introduces a method for mapping key stakeholder groups involved in nature-based health outcome programmes: their relationships, and the funding streams that sustain them. Three simplified maps have been produced focusing on specific case studies, detailing who is involved in investing in nature for health and how they are connected.

'I think the process of creating these maps with a group, and the discussion that ensues, is a really valuable part of this process'.

Zoe Sydenham, Natural Infrastructure Projects and Partnership Manager, Plymouth City Council.

The iterative process of creating these maps can enhance stakeholder engagement, understanding and co-operation. The maps themselves offer a visual aid to increase knowledge and understanding about current investment in the environment for health, helping to reveal some of the complexities and opportunities facing stakeholders. As such, they serve as a useful communication tool both within, and between, different stakeholder groups, whether practitioners or funders. By creating and displaying information in this way, it is also anticipated the maps will help to inform more strategic understanding, discussions, and decision-making.

Who should read this?

These maps, and the process of developing them, could be useful for any organisation who invests in, or is interested in investing in, the environment for health, as well as those that deliver nature-based health outcome projects. These might include local authorities, local government partnerships, charities, trusts, environmental managers, public health, and businesses.

References

[1] Houlden V, Weich S, Porto de Albuquerque J, Jarvis S, Rees K. *The Relationship between Greenspace and the Mental Wellbeing of Adults: A Systematic Review.* Vol 13.; 2018. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0203000

[2] Twohig-Bennet C, Jones A. The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes. Environ Res. 2018;166(June):628-6237. doi:10.15124/CRD42015025193

[3] Lovell R, Depledge MH. *Health and the Natural Environment: A Review of Evidence, Policy, Practice and Opportunities for the Future.;* 2018

The mapping process

Firstly, key organisations involved in the three case study programmes, and the connections between them, were identified using relevant publicly available resources e.g. programme websites, management group minutes, project reports. This information was entered into kumu.io – one of several free online tools which can be used to map relationships. The resulting maps were discussed with the stakeholders of each case study and the conversations were used to refine the maps and develop further understanding of the case studies. The maps have been developed to be easily modified in the future as projects and relationships between organisations evolve.

It is important to note that the maps included here are simplified versions of reality, representing just the key organisations and connections, and one point in time. To further enhance their value, additional connections could be added, as well as other potentially useful information such as the strength and quality of the relationships and types and amount of funding. This will help support a more in-depth analysis of the challenges and opportunities, links and synergies, both within and between different case studies.

The maps

This resource contains maps of three case studies:
1. Dorset Healthy Places
2. Plymouth Future Parks Accelerator
3. Wetland & Wildfowl Trust (WWT) Social Prescribing Scheme

Each case study categorises the following stakeholders:
1. Central government
2. Local government
3. Partnership
4. NGO/charity
5. Private sector
6. Research and evaluation
7. Project

The maps also detail how these stakeholders are connected and the direction of the relationship:
1. Funding – the provision of monetary support.
2. Resources – the provision of non-monetary assets e.g., project management, site access.
3. Information – the provision of facts e.g., data.
4. Collaborative - multiple connections e.g., funding and resources between organisations.

Healthy Places Dorset

Healthy Places is a two-year programme led by Public Health Dorset (a shared service of the two unitary local authorities in Dorset - Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council). It is part of wider efforts to promote prevention at scale across the local health and care systems in Dorset.
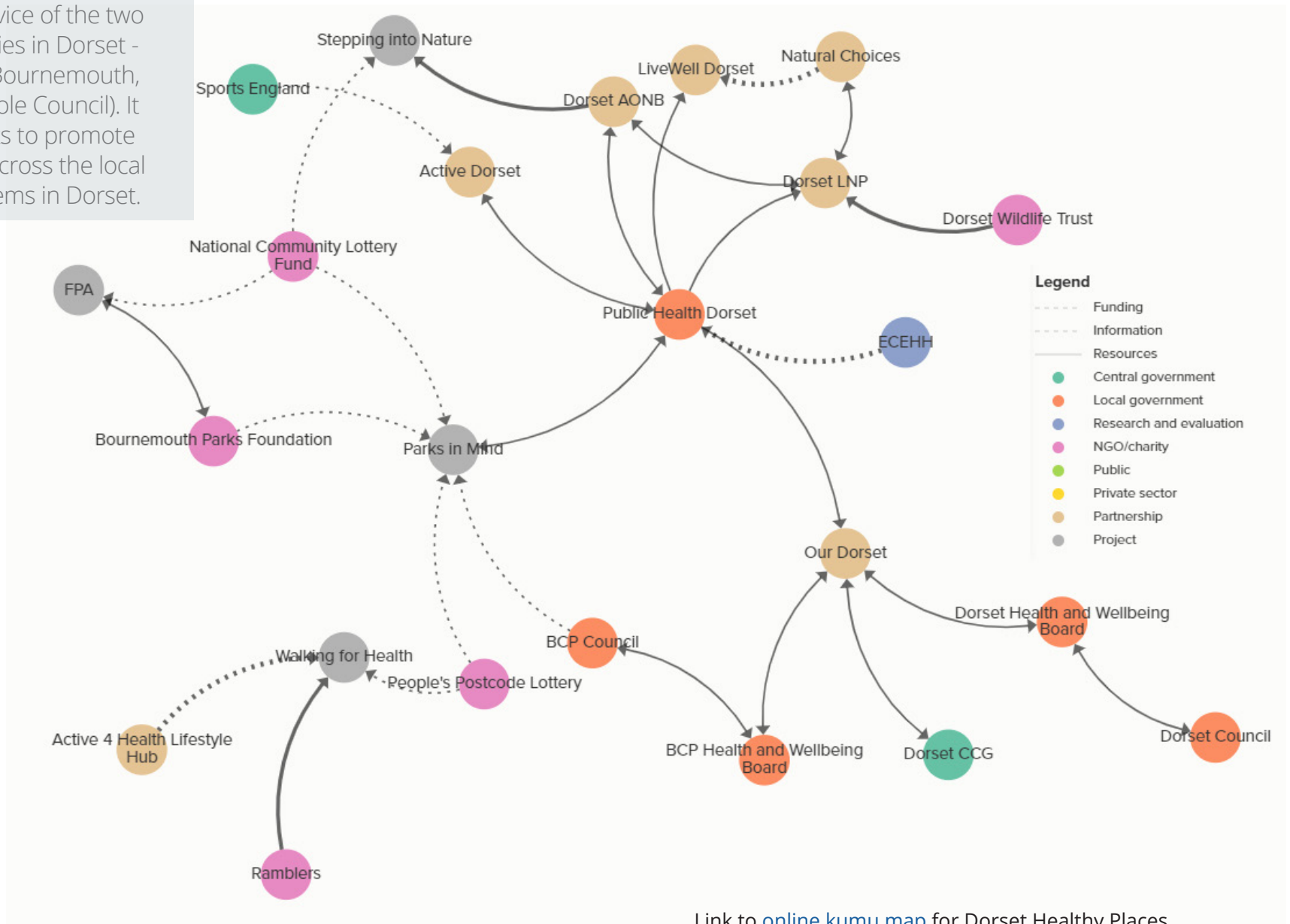
Link to online kumu map for Dorset Healthy Places.

Plymouth Future Parks Accelerator (FPA)

FPA is a collaboration between the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the National Trust and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, providing grant funding, support, and advice. This two-year programme aims to enable local authorities to try new and innovative methods to manage their green infrastructure. Plymouth City Council is working with communities and social enterprises to develop an enterprise funding model and a secure future for green spaces in the city.
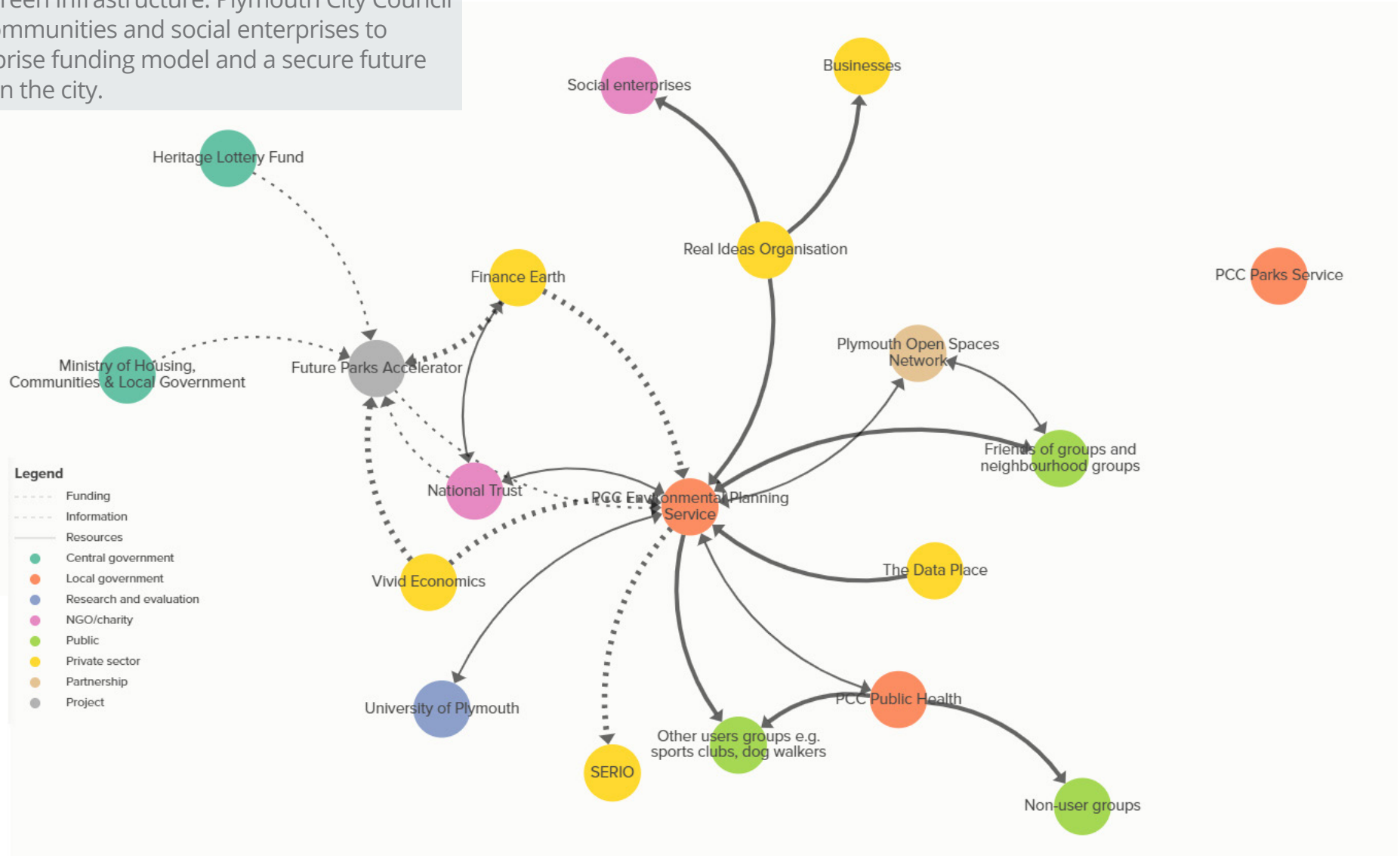
Link to online kumu map for Plymouth Future Parks Accelerator.

Wildfowl & Wetland Trust (WWT) Social Prescribing Scheme

Social prescribing links people to groups and activities in their community to support their health and wellbeing. WWT is working with local health care providers at their Steart site to implement a wetland-based social prescribing programme for people with low level mental and physical health conditions. The programme aims to encourage physical activity, connecting people with wildlife and social groups, within the wetland site.
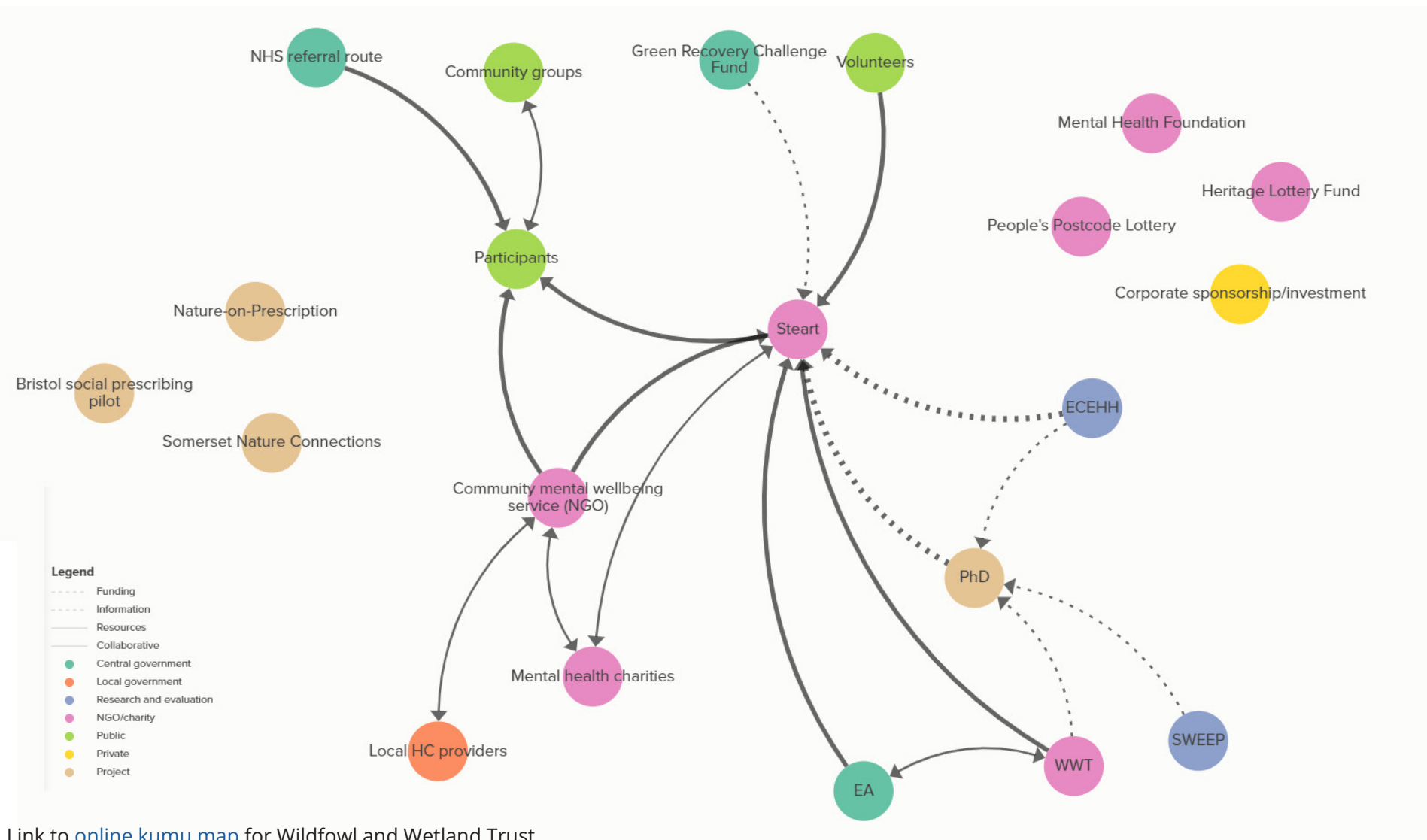
Link to online kumu map for Wildfowl and Wetland Trust.

Conclusions

This approach is intended to support shared understanding of the complex connections between organisations across multiple sectors. In turn this can support the development and implementation of projects, programmes and partnerships that protect and improve the natural environment and human health and wellbeing. Through use of shareable, online tools, these maps can be dynamic and responsive, and the collaborative process of development may be as useful as the final map itself.

For example, the approach could be used to:

- Demonstrate impact of investment to external funders (with a 'before' and 'after' map showing additional stakeholders and connections)
- Communicate complexity of projects for evaluation
- Aid internal understanding of organisational relationships within projects
- Share project learning with other stakeholders
- Identify other stakeholders and funders for future work

Contact

For more information, see the SWEEP Investing in Nature for Health project at https://sweep.ac.uk/portfolios/investing-in-nature-for-health/ or contact the team via Ben Wheeler (b.w.wheeler@exeter.ac.uk)

Notes

This work was carried out with approval from the College of Medicine and Health Research Ethics Committee (reference Jul20/B/227/1).

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