Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Ecosystems Accounting in the UK

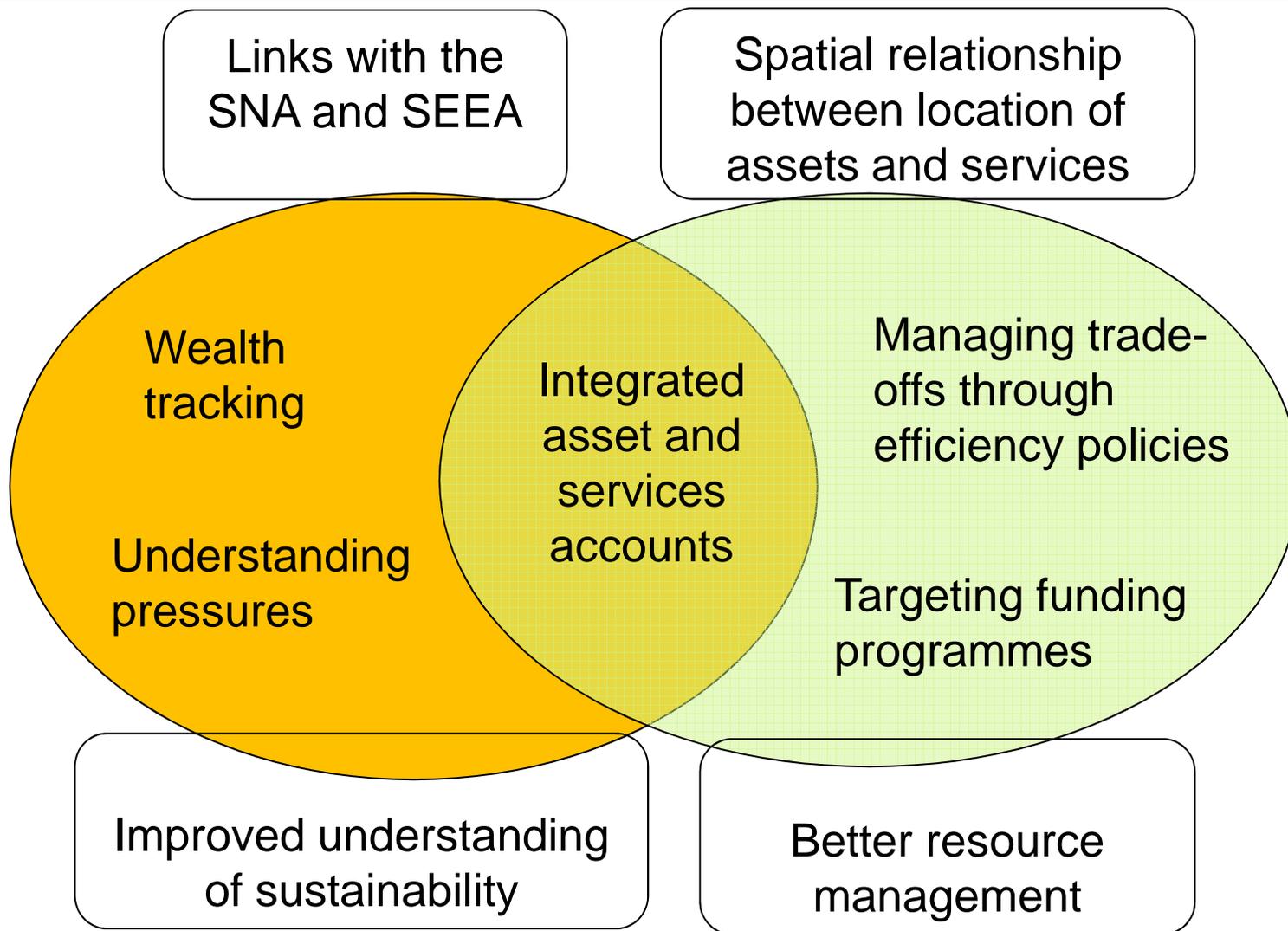# A framework for assessing potential policy applications

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London Group meeting
16 October 2014

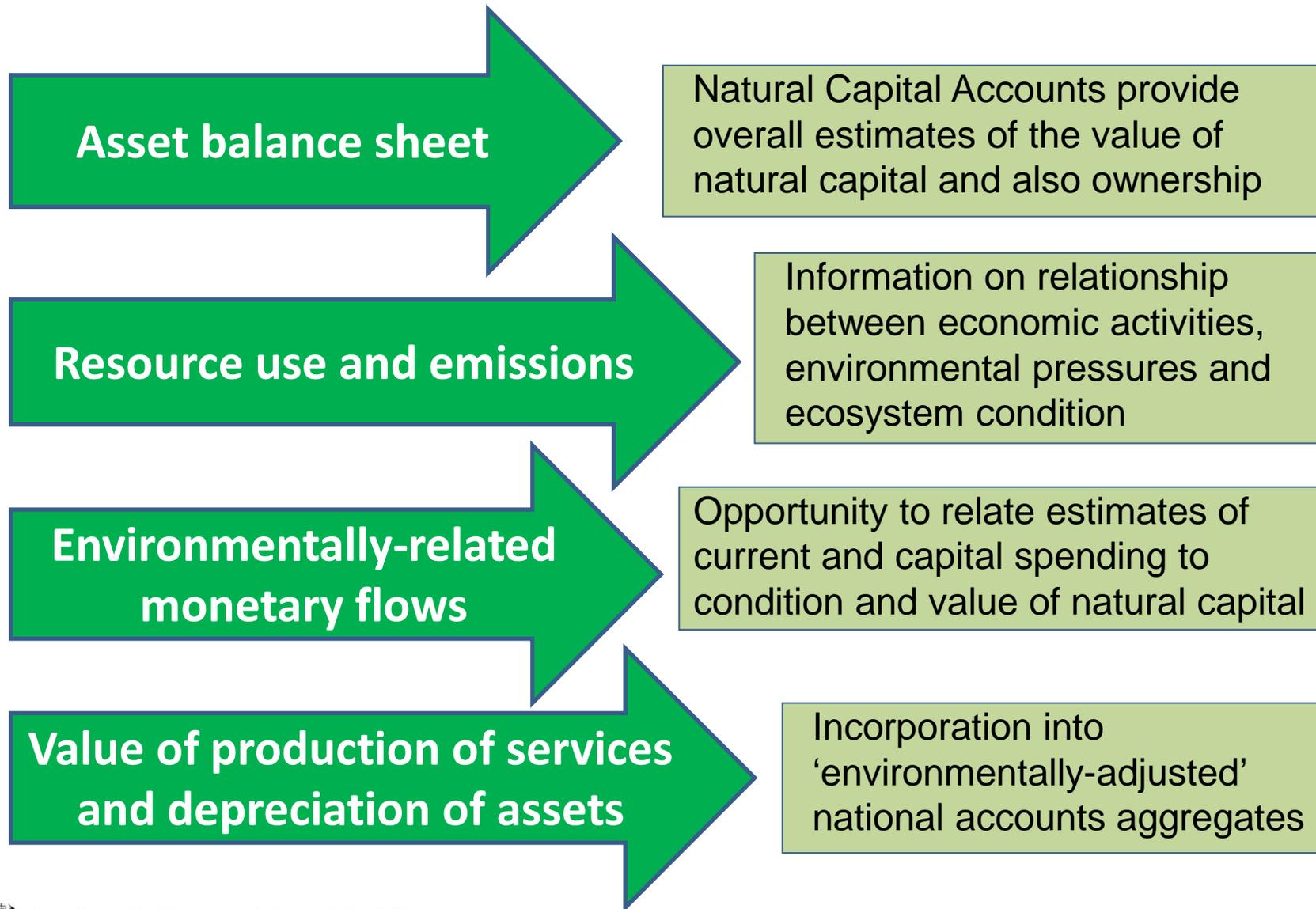# Need for quick wins on policy applications

Ambitious and challenging programme of work across the world, but momentum may easily be lost, because

- Statistics more useful with a time series

- Initial estimates are fairly rudimentary with significant gaps and weaknesses

- Some of the benefits are intangible – e.g. improved coherence of data

- Accounts tend to re-present information which the experts already know – difficult to demonstrate value-added until integrated accounts across different ecosystems have been developed

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Benefits of links with SNA and SEEA

Asset balance sheet → Natural Capital Accounts provide overall estimates of the value of natural capital and also ownership

Resource use and emissions → Information on relationship between economic activities, environmental pressures and ecosystem condition

Environmentally-related monetary flows → Opportunity to relate estimates of current and capital spending to condition and value of natural capital

Value of production of services and depreciation of assets → Incorporation into 'environmentally-adjusted' national accounts aggregates

Spatially disaggregated accounts in the UK

Reporting on the benefits derived from the **Public Forest Estate** to

- Understand the extent and location of benefits and how alternative resource allocation might improve value-for-money
- Assess the impacts of specific tree diseases
- Relate expenditure needed for maintenance/restoration to benefits

Accounts for **National Parks and other protected areas** can

- Inform resource management decisions and help to mainstream ecosystems approaches to management
- Identify the extent which these areas are protected and managed in order to maintain delivery of services
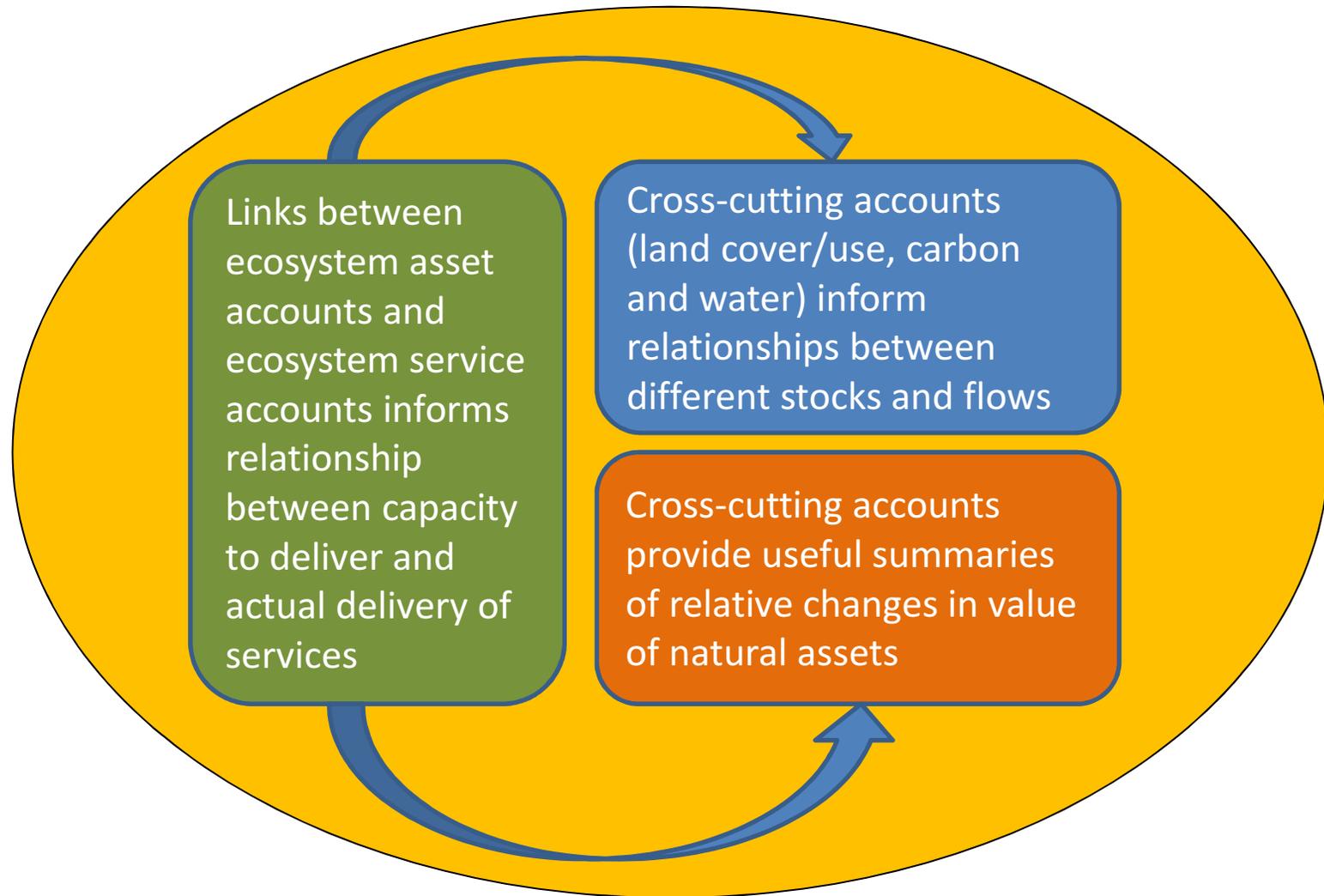

Accounts for **peatlands** could

- Support emerging Peatlands Code and influence incentives for restoration
- Help to measure progress on policy commitments to reduce peat extraction

Seeing the complete picture

Linking the habitat and cross-cutting accounts together

Links between ecosystem asset accounts and ecosystem service accounts informs relationship between capacity to deliver and actual delivery of services

Cross-cutting accounts (land cover/use, carbon and water) inform relationships between different stocks and flows

Cross-cutting accounts provide useful summaries of relative changes in value of natural assets

Key messages

- Early engagement with relevant stakeholders to manage expectations and identify policy needs

- Data and methodological limitations need to be clearly understood so that the results are not misinterpreted – modelled data not reliable at locally detailed levels

- Accounts and underlying data need to reflect changes in resource management or ecosystem condition in a timely way - need to optimise use of data from Earth Observation

- Accounts need to build on existing forms of ecosystem service mapping

Keep track of applications over time in order to evaluate progress