

Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update

17 July 2012

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June 2011. This fourth Update reports activity since late April.

The power of partnership in delivering the ambitions in the White Paper has been a strong feature of the first year of the implementation of the White Paper. New partnerships have come together, drawn from environmental organisations; business, farming and landowning communities; local authorities; and including local people with a passion for protecting, improving and enjoying their local natural environment – whether in city centres or rural areas.

Achieving the ambitions in the White Paper requires sustained long-term activity by partnerships, but some commitments have already been completed, some are underway and others have firm foundations on which to base action.

Major steps forward in the last few months include the announcement of the partnerships which will be recognised as Local Nature Partnerships and of extra Nature Improvement Area funding; the publication of the Green Food Project report, the Independent Panel on Forestry report, the report on reducing peat use, fact files for England's 159 landscape character areas, and the initial findings of the Ecosystem Markets Task Force; and the awarding of the Natural Connections contract to help schoolchildren learn about the natural environment.

Progress on ambitions

The White Paper set out four ambitions. Highlights of progress since late April on commitments to deliver the ambitions follow.

Protecting and improving our natural environment

Building on the National Ecosystem Assessment – the project team held its first meeting in early July to progress work on a further phase of the National Ecosystems Assessment programme which will give local communities the tools to reflect better the value of their natural environment in a wide range of local decisions (Commitment 1). See: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

We are continuing to work with partners to deliver our biodiversity strategy, **Biodiversity 2020**, and published a new set of indicators for the strategy on 29 May (Commitment 3). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/

On 17 July, we announced that 41 partnerships had gained recognition as **Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)**. Successful applicants demonstrated some ambitious and innovative ideas which signal an important new era in the way we manage the natural environment locally. We will work with a number of partnerships which we felt needed more time to develop, or for which we had insufficient information, to award LNP status. Commitments 4-6). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/ and the LNP case study at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/one-year-on/

We announced on 17 July that we are providing an additional £750,000 to support landscape-scale partnerships beyond those which were successful in the **Nature Improvement Area (NIA)** funding competition. This will help support some partnerships who narrowly missed out. The 12 NIAs which were successful in the competition started work in April. These cover an area about twice the size of Oxfordshire and will be enhancing and reconnecting nature on a significant scale. A best practice network for the 12 NIAs held its first meeting in May (Commitments 8-9). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/ and the NIA case study at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/one-year-on/

The report of the Green Food Project was published on 10 July. Industry, consumer and environmental partners worked together to examine the challenges of **improving the environment and increasing food production**, and how we can reconcile any tensions raised. The report identifies that we need to be ambitious if we are to grasp seriously the global food security challenges we face, and that England must show leadership in this challenge. The project partner organisations have committed to taking forward jointly actions in areas such as agri-food related research and development, knowledge exchange, the future workforce, ecosystem services, land management, investment,

business structures and consumption (Commitment 17). See: www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/food/environment/

The reviews of voluntary approaches and how we use **advice and incentives for farmers and land managers** are progressing alongside discussions on CAP reform and the future of the Rural Development Programme. Stakeholders have been feeding in their views on what works and what needs to change in the provision of advice and incentives. We have almost completed the first phase of evidence collation, analysis and synthesis and are on track to present some initial options for a future framework at a stakeholder workshop in September. We expect to publish our conclusions in the New Year (Commitments 18 and 20).

We have confirmed to stakeholders that new **Environmental Stewardship** options to benefit farmland birds will be available from 1 January 2013, including providing food for birds over the winter (to cover the 'hungry gap'). Other work as part of the Making Environmental Stewardship More Effective (MESME) project, to inform future scheme design under the next Rural Development Programme, is progressing according to plan – including on-farm testing of directed option choice for Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), which is designed to ensure the uptake of the more

environmentally beneficial in-field ELS options, and developing an approach to Higher Level Stewardship which increases focus on environmental outcomes (Commitment 19). See: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/mesme.aspx

The **Independent Panel on Forestry** published its final report on 4 July 2012. The report calls for England's woods and forests to be re-valued for all the benefits they provide, including recreation, clean air, clean water, and habitats for wildlife. It also calls for a revival of a woodland culture that appreciates the importance of trees for people, nature and the economy. It states that the Panel believes the public forest estate is a national asset, which should remain in public ownership. Government welcomes the report and has confirmed that the public forest estate will remain in public ownership. We will now consider the report's recommendations in detail and, working with the many different organisations interested in England's woodlands and forests, will respond more fully in January 2013 (Commitments 21, 22). See:

www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/files/Independent-Panel-on-Forestry-Final-Report1.pdf

On 17 July, Natural England published fact files for England's 159 **landscape character areas**. This is the first phase of a project to equip local communities with the tools to understand and shape their natural surroundings. The fact files provide information on natural and

cultural features that shape our landscapes (Commitment 24). See: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/s/nca/default.aspx and the case study at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/one-year-on/

The final report of the project to design a monitoring scheme to assess the area and severity of soil erosion was published in May. This is part of the research programme exploring how **soil degradation** can affect the soil's ability to support vital ecosystem services (Commitment 25). See: http://randd/Document.aspx?Document=9977_SP1303FinalReport.pdf

On 12 July 2012, the Sustainable Growing Media Task Force, which is advising on how best to overcome the barriers to **reducing peat use**, published its roadmap to take forward actions. Key actions include the development of a performance standard and responsible sourcing criteria for all growing media (Commitment 26). See: www.defra.gov.uk/peat-taskforce/

Work on the ten Environment Agency 'hosted' river **catchment level partnerships pilots** is progressing well and is being supplemented by 15 externally 'hosted' pilots. The Environment Agency is also supporting 41 other organisations that expressed an interest in hosting other catchments. We are undertaking quarterly evaluations and sharing findings

through newsletters and national Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) events. The evaluation findings will inform the approach for national roll out from 2013 (Commitments 28). See: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx and the case study at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/one-year-on/

Research projects are underway to underpin the impact assessment of options to **reform the abstraction regime** set out in the Water White Paper (Commitment 30).

At the Hampton Court Flower Show on 6 July, awards were presented to the winners of six categories in the **Big Wildlife Garden Competition**. This national competition was run by the Royal Horticultural Society and the Wildlife Trusts with funding from Defra (Commitment 31). See: www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/2012/07/06/wildlife-gardeners-recognised

In May the Marine Management Organisation published its draft 20-year vision and draft objectives for the first two **marine plan areas**: the East of England Inshore and Offshore areas. The next two marine plan areas will be announced in late July (Commitment 34). See: www.marinemanagement.org.uk/marin_eplanning/vision_objectives.htm

Growing a green economy

In July, the Office for National Statistics and Defra will be launching a consultation on how we fully include **natural capital in UK national accounts**. The consultation responses will feed into development of a roadmap setting out what we need to do to reach our goal and what our priorities should be (Commitment 35).

The independent **Natural Capital Committee** held its first meeting in May. The Committee will advise the Economic Affairs Committee on the state of England's natural capital. The Chair and five members discussed the work programme of the Committee and the development of a **natural capital asset check**, for which the scoping study is well underway (Commitments 36 and 37). See: www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/ and www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/work/evidence/natural-capital-asset-check/

On 17 June, the **international coalition of businesses and business organisations**, established to follow up on the 'TEEB for business' report, published a prospectus and a report on 'Natural capital at risk: a study of the top 100 business impacts' (Commitment 40). See: <http://thefinancelab.org/teeb-for-business-coalition-is-going-to-rio/>

The move towards a second, more collaborative phase of the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan was announced on 11 July as part of the work with business to consider **voluntary approaches for key products or natural assets** (Commitment 41). See: www.wrap.org.uk/content/sustainable-clothing-action-plan-1

On 17 July, the independent, business-led **Ecosystem Markets Task Force** released some of its initial findings following its evidence gathering phase of work. These included some of the most promising opportunities for UK business which help value and protect nature (Commitment 44). See: www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/ and the case study at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/one-year-on/

Reconnecting people with nature

For 2012/13 the **Pupil Premium** has been increased to £600 per eligible pupil: £125m in total, including £50m for a summer school programme for disadvantaged children, which will help them to experience the natural environment (Commitment 62). See: <http://education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium>

On 17 July, it was announced that Natural England has awarded the contract to deliver the **Natural Connections** demonstration project to provide an online one-stop shop and direct support and advice for teachers, to support and enable learning outdoors. The University of Plymouth (subject to contract) will be leading a range of partners to deliver this three year project, working with about 200 schools and approximately 40,000 children (Commitment 63). See: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/linkingpeople/learning/naturalconnections/default.aspx

We supported **Open Farm Sunday** on 17 June, which was enjoyed by about 150,000 people. Jim Paice, Minister of State, visited Coldham Estate, near Wisbech (Commitment 64). See: www.farmsunday.org/ofs12b/sponsors/List.eb

The **Green Infrastructure Partnership** now has nearly 250 member organisations from civil society, professional bodies, academia, industry, planning, development and housing organisations, local government and community groups. It is taking forward a range of work to support the development of green infrastructure in England (Commitment 67). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/

On 6 June, we published the summary of responses to the consultation on

whether exemptions for certain premises from the **artificial light** statutory nuisance regime continue to be appropriate. The Government's response proposed to retain the exemptions but keep the issue under review (Commitment 71). See: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/12/13/artificial-light-1112/

In May, we published a consultation on simplifying and streamlining the processes for **recording and making changes to public rights of way** (Commitment 72). See: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/05/14/improve-rights-of-way/

The Department for Transport has announced the outcome of its large projects and tranche 2 bids for the local sustainable transport fund to encourage walking and **cycling and improve public transport** (Commitment 73). See: www.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-sustainable-transport-fund-guidance-on-the-application-process/

On 17 July, we announced that we are working with volunteering organisations to help them build capacity to provide more **opportunities for volunteering** and are allocating £200,000 to support this work (Commitment 75).

To support the **development of the national biodiversity network**, in May Natural England invited a second round of bids to the Defra Fund for Biodiversity Recording in the Voluntary Sector (Commitment 76). See:

[www.nbn.org.uk/News/Latest-news/Invitation-to-Tender-for-Biological-Recording-\(1\).aspx](http://www.nbn.org.uk/News/Latest-news/Invitation-to-Tender-for-Biological-Recording-(1).aspx)

To encourage the **consumption of underutilised sustainable fish species**, a project is underway to explore how a community-supported fishery model linking consumers up more closely with local fishermen can promote the use of these fish species (Commitment 80). See: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18195&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=EV0&GridPage=13&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

International and EU leadership

To contribute to **implementation of the Nagoya agreement at the international level**, Round 19 funding from the Darwin Initiative was announced at the Rio+20 conference in June. A further £400,000 for smaller schemes was announced on 17 July. The Initiative supports wildlife conservation projects in some of the world's poorest countries and in the UK's Overseas Territories (Commitment 82). See: www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/06/19/7-5-million-to-global-wildlife/ and <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>

DfID has committed a further £1.9m (2012 - 2015) to the implementation phase of the World Bank's Global Partnership on **Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services**. Alongside the funding partners, the UK, Japan and Norway; developing country partners, who will pilot approaches to ecosystem accounting, are Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Madagascar and the Philippines (Commitment 83). See: www.wavespartnership.org/waves

At the 64th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in July, we successfully upheld the **moratorium on commercial whaling** and secured new commitments that promote the welfare and conservation of whales (Commitment 86). See: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/whales-dolphins/

Monitoring and reporting progress

The **Ecosystems Knowledge Exchange Network** has launched its website to help decision-makers, land and water managers, local interest groups and researchers working on local ecosystems projects to share learning and good practice in applying an ecosystems approach (Commitment 87). See: <http://ekn.defra.gov.uk/>

The Office for National Statistics will be publishing some outputs from the Measuring National Wellbeing Programme on 24 July. These will include a *Summary of Proposed Domains and Measures* and an article on *Where we live*. An earlier consultation highlighted the importance of the natural environment for our quality of life (Commitment 89). See: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Measuring+Societal+Well-being

We are working with stakeholders on the key **indicators to track progress on the ambitions in the White Paper** (Commitment 90).

EFRA Committee

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) inquiry on the Natural Environment White Paper published its report on 17 July.

The conclusions and recommendations in the report included:

“We recognise that both economic and intrinsic values need to be taken into account in valuing the full benefits that nature brings to society. We welcome the White Paper’s ambitious aim of reflecting the value of natural capital in government policy-making and thus providing a more comprehensive set of data on which to conduct proper cost benefit analyses. We further endorse attempts to apply new tools such as ecosystems services valuations to

policy evaluation. We welcome in particular the White Paper’s recognition that protection and enhancement of the natural environment delivers economic as well as environmental and social benefits” (para 14).

We will be considering the report and its recommendations and conclusions and will publish our response in the Autumn.

The report is at:

www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/Publications/

You can find out more about the White Paper at: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/

This update has been prepared by Defra. If you have any queries, please email:

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