

Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update

13 October 2011

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June 2011. This Update highlights how, working with stakeholders, we've been making progress on implementation.

Progress on ambitions

The White Paper set out four ambitions. Below are highlights of some of the progress so far on commitments to deliver the ambitions.

Protecting and improving our natural environment

We published ***Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*** in August. Drawing on the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, the strategy takes forward the biodiversity components of the White Paper and is the Government's main response to the agreement at Nagoya and our EU biodiversity commitments. (Commitment 2). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/

We're inviting comments by 11 November on the scope and detail of **indicators** to track progress on the England Biodiversity Strategy. (Commitment 3). See: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/files/discussion-paper-biodiversity-indicators-strategy.pdf

The White Paper provides an opportunity for local areas to play a bigger role in protecting and improving the environment – working across sectors and boundaries for greater impact. Examples include Local Nature Partnerships, Nature Improvement Areas, and biodiversity offset pilots. Each will be pursuing multiple environmental outcomes, varying to fit the particular needs of each local area, but all involving local people. Progress on these three initiatives is as follows:

Local Nature Partnerships – Areas will be invited to apply to be Local Nature Partnerships this winter and we expect the first Local Nature Partnerships to be announced next summer. We've had huge interest in

the Local Nature Partnerships' capacity-building fund with Round 1 being significantly over-subscribed. There's another chance to apply to the fund in Round 2, which closes on 31 October 2011. It's been great to see how interested and committed people are to developing Local Nature Partnerships. Although we cannot fund all areas to do capacity building work, we hope that everyone who is interested will get involved in the development of a Local Nature Partnership in their area.

(Commitments 4-6). See:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/

Nature Improvement Areas – We launched the competition in July to enable partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations to establish Nature Improvement Areas. By the deadline for bids of 30 September, we'd received 76 applications. We'll be deciding on up to 20 areas to go through to the second stage of the competition by the end of October. (Commitments 8-9). See:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/

Biodiversity offset pilots – In the White Paper we announced that we'd establish a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting and test this in a number of pilot areas. In July we provided more information on how the pilots will work, and invited local authorities to express an interest in testing this innovative approach. We

also invited expressions of interest from developers, conservation and community groups and others who wanted to be involved in the pilot phase. By the closing date of 30 September, we'd received 20 expressions of interest from a range of areas and organisations for pilots and complementary projects, which we're now considering. The pilots are due to start in Spring 2012. (Commitment 15). See:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/

We've established **ten pilot catchments hosted by the Environment Agency** to work collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders in developing and implementing plans for maintaining and improving healthy water bodies. We've also invited expressions of interest for external organisations to play a hosting role in other catchments. We've received 67 expressions of interest that we'll support. While we'll look to learn from all of these catchments in the pilot phase, we'll focus more intensively on 25 to evaluate the approach and inform wider national roll-out after 2012. (Commitment 28). See:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx

We've supported the **Big Wildlife Garden Scheme**. The competition was launched in August. (Commitment 31). See:

www.bigwildlifegarden.org.uk/wildlife-garden-competition

Growing a green economy

We're setting up the **Natural Capital Committee**. This is an independent advisory committee, reporting to the Economic Affairs Committee, which will provide independent expert advice on the state of English natural capital. We'll be recruiting a Chair and about five members, all of whom will be high calibre experts and influencers in fields such as economics, biodiversity and finance. We're expecting to advertise for these roles later this year, with the first meeting of the Committee in Spring 2012. (Commitment 36).

We published ***Enabling the transition to a green economy: government and business working together*** in August. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department of Energy and Climate Change and Defra developed this in response to requests from the private sector for greater clarity on what government means by a 'green economy'; the policies being put in place to achieve this; and how they come together. It looks ahead to 2020 and maps out planned Government action across areas including climate change, resource efficiency, waste prevention, carbon capture and storage, offshore wind generation, and the Green Deal. It will form the basis for continuing dialogue between government, business and communities. (Commitment 38). See:

www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096705244&type=ONEOFFPAGE&furlname=greeneconomy&furlparam=greeneconomy&ref=http%3A//www.defra.gov.uk/news/2011/08/05/encouraging-green-growth/&domain=www.businesslink.gov.uk

The Green Economy Council, set up with leading businesses to look at how government and industry can work together to help business rise to the low carbon challenge, includes in its terms of reference ensuring natural capital is used sustainably.

(Commitment 39). See:

www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2011/Feb/green-economy-council-formed

We're setting up the **Ecosystems Market Task Force**. This is an independent, business-led task force which is looking at the potential for British businesses to find new opportunities through goods and services which value nature. Ian Cheshire, CEO of Kingfisher, has been appointed as the Chair of the Task Force. The first stakeholder event for CEOs and board-level executives from a wide range of sectors – from mining to banking and beyond, will be later this year. The Task Force membership will be confirmed soon. (Commitment 44).

We've updated the **Business Link website** to provide information on natural capital; including guidance on tools and resources businesses can use to assess their dependencies on environmental assets and services and

identify growth opportunities. (Commitment 47). See: www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1097094983&type=RESOURCES

Reconnecting people with nature

We've consulted on **plans for meeting limits on nitrogen dioxide** in the shortest possible time and in September submitted a package of air quality plans to the European Commission. (Commitment 58). See: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/09/air-quality/

In July 1288 parks and green spaces received the **Green Flag Award** or Community Award. (Commitment 66). See: www.keepbritaintidy.org/greenflag/

We've launched the **Green Infrastructure Partnership**, which brings together expertise in civil society, professional bodies, local authorities, developers, planners and social housing enterprises, among others. Its work programme is likely to include finding ways to provide green infrastructure in towns, cities and rural areas; addressing barriers that might prevent this progress; demonstrating the many benefits green infrastructure can bring; looking into how communities, planners and decision-makers can best be supported in designing and developing green infrastructure; and helping people to quantify the costs and benefits of investing in green infrastructure and make the case for green infrastructure

projects. (Commitment 67). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/

The '**Love Where You Live**' website was launched in August, followed by a week of action in late September. (Commitment 68). See: <http://lovewhereyoulive.org/>.

International and EU leadership

The **moratorium on commercial whaling** was upheld at the 2011 meeting of the International Whaling Commission and the UK proposal to improve the effectiveness of operations within the Commission was adopted. (Commitment 86). See: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/whales-dolphins/

Monitoring and reporting progress

The **Ecosystems Knowledge Exchange Network** will be launched this month. It will help decision-makers, land/water managers, local interest groups and researchers involved in a range of locally based ecosystems projects to share learning and good practice in applying an ecosystems approach. The network will provide evidence and insights on how effective delivery can be achieved, which can then be shared with new audiences to help them make better marine/land management decisions, which will ultimately deliver a range of socio-economic benefits. (Commitment 87).

Working across Government

Defra is the lead Department for the cross-Government White Paper and we're working closely with other Government Departments. Some of our progress across Government on implementation follows:

The Department for Communities and Local Government launched the consultation on a draft of the **National Planning Policy Framework** in July and the closing date is 17 October (Commitment 14). The draft National Planning Policy Framework, its Impact Assessment and details of the consultation are at:

www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/

We launched the **Change4Life summer campaign** through TV, newspapers and online in mid-July focusing on how children and their parents could be more active and eat more healthily over the summer holidays. (Commitment 57). See for example:

www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx

We're working on removing unnecessary rules and other barriers to **learning in the natural environment**. The Department for Education published advice in July on the health and safety law relating to schools. This eight page advice replaces about 150 pages of guidance. The Department for Education has also issued a generic consent form for the comparatively small number of

school visits for which parental consent is advised. In June the Health and Safety Executive published guidance on school trips. This tackles health and safety myths. It clarifies how health and safety law applies to school visits; provides reassurance to schools about what is required; and discourages excessive bureaucracy and paperwork. (Commitment 61).

See:

www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf

EFRA Committee

The Natural Environment White Paper is the focus of a new inquiry, announced in July, by the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA). The Committee invited submissions by Monday 26 September on six areas:

- What actions are required across Government Departments, from local government and by civil society to deliver the White Paper's proposals to grow a green economy and reconnect people with nature?
- Will the institutional framework outlined for delivering the proposals (in particular Nature Improvement Areas and Local Nature Partnerships) be effective? Does the proposed Natural Capital Committee have sufficient powers?

- What further research and/or evidence is required to develop practical programmes sufficiently detailed to deliver the White Paper's ambition to fully embed the value of nature into policy delivery?
- What evidence is there from other countries that the approaches proposed in the White Paper can be successfully applied in practice?
- What resources will be needed to fully deliver the White Paper's ambitions and how can these best be provided? How might the value of 'services' provided by ecosystems to beneficiaries be translated into spending that will enhance the natural environment?
- Does the White Paper set out an accurate assessment of the barriers to public engagement with the natural environment and make the most effective proposals for re-engagement?

Dates and witnesses for oral evidence sessions will be confirmed later in the autumn. See:

www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/inquiries/the-natural-environment-white-paper/

You can find out more about the White Paper at:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/ and read the White Paper at:

www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.asp

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

naturalenvironment@defra.gsi.gov.uk