

Building partnerships for nature's recovery

Action Plan 2020/21

This publication was withdrawn on 17 June 2021.



Photo taken at Morecambe Bay by a member of Natural England staff

Foreword

The situation we find ourselves in is a stark reminder that **thriving nature** is not just nice to have, but a fundamental necessity for People and Planet. The way we look after our environment has long lasting implications for our economy and our society as well as the longer term future of biodiversity and our climate. And Nature's Recovery will be essential as part of the nation's recovery, as well as increasingly important to the many of us who are dealing with restrictions on normal family life and work by a daily chance to connect with wildlife near to home.

It seems strange then to be publishing a plan for the year with so much uncertainty ahead. We have decided to do so because our goals, and many of the actions in here, will be just as important during the coronavirus crisis, even if as the year unfolds we have to reprioritise or shrink/grow specific actions and projects.

I also wanted especially this year to set out our plan for our stakeholders and customers as it is the first of a new five-year strategy to support the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and through which Natural England will deliver our refreshed mission of **building partnerships for nature's recovery**.

And finally it is something of a significant milestone as for the first time in many years we see a small but significant increase in our budget, both to allow us to invest in our statutory duties and to take on new roles on behalf of government to restore nature and tackle climate change. So in three points, here is our plan:

- **Firstly we will invest in reforming some of our statutory duties which have been under the most strain – in part due to increased demands from public and industry.**
 - We will work with others in developing those reforms – for example in the way we monitor and manage Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) as well as our licensing work, seeking to build on recent innovations such as the new approach to Great Crested Newt licensing.
 - We are also using additional funds to ensure we can maintain an effective service to developers through our role in the planning system and making sure our National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are safe and well managed for visitors.
- **Secondly, we will advance nature across England through the developing Nature Recovery Network and Partnership and leading on pilots for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, one of the flagships of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.**
 - We will prepare for our local authorities work to implement the new **net gain** policy, due to be confirmed in the Environment Bill. We will lead the nature elements of social prescribing, and we will get ready to deliver advice to farmers so that they can



participate effectively in the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme pilots.

- **Thirdly- and there is a but - we still face resource challenge for many aspects of our work. For example, on landscape designations, on new SSSIs and our work on the marine environment.** In these areas we will need to balance what we can afford now with the ambitions that we have for the longer term.

My ambition is that we will continue to maintain that longer term view which will help Natural England stay true to its purpose and to ensure long term value from the public investment that we steer.

Of course this plan was virtually complete before the coronavirus crisis. Like the rest of the public sector we have already reprioritised efforts to help the wider government response to the crisis, staff availability and broader constraints on specific areas of work. We will keep everyone up to date with impacts on our work through live updates [online](#). And we will review, and if necessary refresh this plan throughout the year.

Despite those challenges, all of us at Natural England look forward to working with you in partnership over the year ahead.



Marian Spain
Chief Executive

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Building Partnerships for Nature's Recovery

Natural England is the government's statutory adviser for the natural environment. We play a vital role in delivering the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, supporting the Government's ambitions for agriculture, fisheries and the natural environment as we leave the European Union and responding to the Government's commitment to net zero by 2050. The twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change mean Natural England's work is more important now than ever.

Our vision is of **thriving nature for people and planet**. Our ambition is not just to improve nature, but to see it thriving everywhere, because a healthy natural environment is fundamental to everyone's health, wealth and happiness.

For us (and as defined in the [legislation](#) that founded Natural England), nature encompasses not only the natural beauty, wildlife and geology that underpins landscape character and the habitats on which our most precious species depend but also our historic and cultural connections with nature - for example through art and literature - and the opportunities we have to connect with the environment. Our understanding of nature covers the whole natural world on earth and at sea, and encompasses the natural environment in our towns and cities as well as the countryside.

Our mission is **building partnerships for nature's recovery**. This reflects the need for us to work with and through a wide range of people to undertake the rapid action needed to rebuild sustainable ecosystems and thereby protect and restore habitats, species and landscapes to help nature thrive.

Underpinning our vision and mission are our five-year aims which provide the threads that bind our everyday work to the long term vision in support of the 25 Year Environment Plan and net zero commitments:

- 1) **Well managed nature recovery networks** across land, water and sea delivering resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and character, enjoyed by people and widely benefitting society.
- 2) **People connected to the natural environment** for their own and society's wellbeing, enjoyment and prosperity.
- 3) **Nature based solutions** contributing fully to tackling the climate change challenge and wider environmental hazards and threats.
- 4) **Improvements in natural capital** underpinning sustainable economic growth, healthy food systems and prospering communities.
- 5) **Evidence and expertise** is used by a broad range of partnerships, organisations and communities to achieve nature recovery and enable effective regulation and accreditation.
- 6) **A values-led organisation** which delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving nature's recovery.

These aims will be delivered through our four strategic programmes:

- **Resilient landscapes and seas**
- **Sustainable development**
- **Greener farming and fisheries**
- **Connecting people with nature**

Natural England will be working harder than ever in the next year to work towards a thriving nature for people and planet for future generations.

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Resilient Landscapes and Seas

The focus of the resilient landscapes and seas programme is to create thriving, resilient, functioning landscapes and seas rich in plants, wildlife and character that provide wide ranging benefits for nature, climate and people.

Our five-year aims

Over the next five years, building upon our legacy of protected sites and designated areas, our ambition is to connect, restore and create distinctive and nature rich places across cities and rural countryside, on land, water and sea.

- Working at scale, we will re-establish functioning ecosystems that are resilient to climate change, contribute to net zero and create distinctive places for all of society to enjoy and benefit from.
- We will bring together and support existing local partnerships to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the national Nature Recovery Network. This will enable strategic planning - targeting investment in nature recovery and nature based solutions where it will achieve most, whilst taking local priorities into account.
 - Delivery will be supported by new tools including biodiversity net gain, conservation covenants and the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, working alongside a broader investment base.
- Reforms to our protected site work will see us working more proactively with land owners, site managers and other regulators on land and sea.
 - We will be applying technological developments to deliver risk based monitoring and condition assessment programmes.
 - Our expert evidence and advice will help land owners and managers improve the condition of protected sites, and will inform a well-managed network of marine sites that contribute to securing Good Environmental Status for our seas.
- Our enhanced evidence, advice and challenge to designated landscapes bodies will support them in delivering even more and helping them become exemplars in nature recovery, creating meaningful change within and beyond their boundaries.
 - Targeted investment around key National Nature Reserves (NNRs) will facilitate their role as catalysts for significant land-use change.
- We will use our delivery and scientific expertise to advise government on what is required to be an international leader in nature recovery.
 - We will tackle the climate crisis, identifying and delivering a broad programme of nature based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation on land and at sea, integrated with nature recovery.
- We will learn from a refreshed monitoring and evaluation programme about the character and resilience of our landscapes and seas, and how and why they are changing. That information will continuously inform the development of this programme.

Our priorities for 2020/21

We will begin to implement some longer term reforms such as the delivery of our statutory duties for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), supporting government to develop and bring forward new policy priorities and ambitions in the 25 Year Environment Plan and Environment Bill. We will bring together partners and support them in the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and form the national Nature Recovery Network.

We will continue to improve and share the evidence base on which our expert advice is based, and to deliver our essential statutory work, for example through the National Nature Reserve (NNR) estate.

We will be making a substantial additional investment of £4 million in 2020/21 to begin to address the underinvestment in SSSI monitoring and management. We will agree with stakeholders a new risk based SSSI assessment programme, focusing initially on the areas of highest risk, most sensitive features and most uncertain information.

This work is essential to rebuild stakeholder confidence, reverse current declines and put in place actions toward the long term trajectory for improvements in SSSI condition. The investment is also critical for improving the evidence base essential to providing more effective statutory advice to support sustainable development and economic growth.

Achieving this transformation will take more than one year. Our first step is to rebuild our staff capacity and skills, and develop more proactive relationships with site owners and managers to address the root causes of poor condition and deterioration.

Specific activities for 2020/21 include:

- With partners, pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategies to inform the statutory guidance for their wider implementation and launch a National Nature Recovery Partnership.
- Work with Defra to develop a new Nature Recovery Area fund and shape the new Nature for Climate fund, to deliver integrated nature recovery, peatland restoration and woodland creation benefits.
- Provide expert advice to Defra to inform the new Nature Strategy that will replace Biodiversity 2020, the development and implementation of the Environment Bill and the development of 25 Year Environment Plan indicators.
- Deliver the Species Recovery Programme with partners, and advise on high profile species reintroductions (including on hen harriers and beavers).
- Respond to the Glover Review's ambition for designation landscapes whilst re-establishing our strategic leadership role and re-building our capacity to engage strategically with all 44 designated landscapes, provide advice to government as it develops its response to the Review's recommendations, including any role for a National Landscape Service.
- Build internal capacity to deliver a reformed SSSI monitoring and improvement programme, improving confidence in condition assessments and working proactively with a greater number of site owners and managers to improve site condition.
- Deliver the NNR Strategy, make NNRs safe places for workers and visitors and explore opportunities for NNRs to catalyse significant land use change.

- Provide conservation advice and condition assessments on marine protected areas and support the Government's review of Highly Protected Marine Areas.
- Deliver the climate change adaptation plan and further develop the climate change evidence for nature based solutions.
- Develop indicators for monitoring and evaluating the resilience of landscapes and seas, including advice to Defra to support the development of a 25 Year Environment Plan indicator for landscape, and build our understanding of the Favourable Conservation Status of species and habitats.

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Sustainable Development

The purpose of our sustainable development programme is to help achieve thriving wildlife populations and beautiful landscapes that are enjoyed by people whilst enabling society to prosper.

Our five-year aims

Our sustainable development programme encompasses our advisory and regulatory work on planning for housing and infrastructure initiatives on both land and sea, and all our species licensing work. It includes strategic initiatives such as District Level Licensing and net gain, linking to local natural capital planning and urban greening.

This programme provides significant opportunities to deliver the 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions in a place through more effective use of our planning and licensing levers. We have a powerful remit combining our regulatory role with our ability to convene partnerships and collaborate.

Over the next five years we will develop stronger long term collaboration with local planning authorities at land and sea as a key contribution to recovering nature in local places where people live and work to deliver a wide range of benefits including mitigation from climate change.

- We will drive more effectively planned, high environmental quality development and infrastructure at a local level.
 - Not only is this essential for a healthy and resilient environment in the face of climate change, it is also integral to securing the greatest economic benefits from development investment and creating a great place to live.
 - The environment should not be seen as a nice to have or an add-on but as key in providing local solutions for economic and social issues.
- We will deliver our 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions on net environmental gain, the Nature Recovery Network and Natural Capital Plans.
 - We will influence a much wider range of strategies and plans such as local industrial strategies, marine plans, water resource plans and those of other government departments.
- Re-shaping our licensing approach, we will offer streamlined regulation that increasingly enables delivery of environmental gains at a strategic level and more clearly supports conservation outcomes for species and for nature's recovery.
 - District Level Licensing is providing us with the opportunity to gain experience in delivering this.
- We will develop an evaluation programme that measures the environmental outcomes from our input to inform continuous improvement.

Specifically through our planning advice we will:

- Focus on proactive and strategic advice at plan level, building environmental considerations in early and considering place-based solutions for environmental impacts.
- Ensure high environmental quality development and infrastructure that deliver net gains for the environment and people.
- Reform how our environmental advice is provided and funded to deliver more for nature from our investment.

And through our wildlife licensing we will:

- Offer streamlined regulation that enables delivery of environmental gains at a strategic level and more clearly supports conservation outcomes for species and for nature's recovery.
- Learn the lessons from District Level Licensing for both net gain implementation and application to other species.
- Reform licensing, including permitting others to carry out some low-risk licensing functions through earned recognition and moving to species licensing on a strategic basis. This will allow us to deliver more for nature from our investment while providing excellent customer service.

Our priorities for 2020/21

We have a phased programme to achieve these aims over the next five years. Our key emphasis this year will be two-fold:

- 1) Increase the quality, value and timeliness of our planning and licensing services to customers through targeted investment in core capacity and through reform of our services.
- 2) Optimise the impact our planning and licensing activity has on the protection of existing natural assets and on the growth in natural capital, contributing to nature's recovery.

Achieving these aims has proven more difficult over recent years due to reductions in core government funding.

In 2020, through a targeted increase in Grant in Aid funding for our sustainable development work, we will be able to invest in the following key priorities:

- Build partnerships with planning authorities on local strategic plans that enable economic growth and work hand in hand with nature's recovery and climate change mitigation.
- Recruit and train more staff to enable us to meet our statutory remit and deliver excellent customer service.
- Develop a net gain implementation framework for government.
- Complete the roll out of District Level Licensing.
- Reform our planning work to enable a greater focus on high value cases with greatest environmental risk or opportunity.

- Reform our licensing activity to enable expansion of our strategic approaches (learning from District Level Licensing) and to streamline licensing of low risk work.
- Develop strategic solutions to long standing environmental challenges relating to off-shore renewables, disturbance and pollution impacts from development.
- Establish an evaluation and monitoring programme so that our interventions can be better targeted in future.

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Greener Farming and Fisheries

Sustainable farming and fisheries require a healthy natural environment whether for fish stocks, soil health and fertility or water supply. Land and sea management is a major influence on our natural environment, both directly through land use and indirectly through by-products such as carbon emissions.

Our five-year aims

We will make full use of our expertise in advice, delivery and evidence, whilst recognising the importance of our regulatory role. We will work with government, industry and other stakeholders, to help achieve the objectives of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Over the coming years we have the opportunity to introduce sustainable farming and fisheries systems that put the environment first and, with the support of expert, evidence based advice, ensures that improving natural capital is at the heart of farm and fishing business decisions.

For fisheries, that means measuring sustainability beyond just the impacts on target stock, and ensuring the establishment of marine by-laws that contribute to environmental outcomes in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). To ensure our evidence and expertise is central to the development of future farming and fisheries policy and delivery we will:

- Advise Defra as they develop new legislation and incentive systems for farmers and fishers that contribute to the achievement of 25 Year Environment Plan targets and incentivise the delivery of well managed Nature Recovery Networks, based on public payment for public goods.
- Support customers and partners to ensure outcomes are secured as agreements move from Agri-Environment Schemes and other grant schemes to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme and to ensure that the public start to see and feel the benefits near to where they live.
- Seek a major role for Natural England in the delivery of environmental advice to underpin the delivery of the ELM scheme, working with Defra to ensure the scheme itself is ambitious in scope and scale.
- Advise across government and with other regulators to ensure a new, progressive and behaviour changing regulatory regime that achieves high levels of compliance backed up by a credible inspection and enforcement programme, and also supporting advice and guidance.
- Focus on enabling greater environmental gains through proactive casework and advice and promoting nature based solutions to all our delivery partners.
- Improve the quality of advice given to land and sea managers including through the identification of appropriate standards and possible accreditation of third party advisers.

- Ensure that improving natural capital is at the heart of farm and fishing business accounting and decision making, and that improvements are being delivered through evidence based advice and the new incentive systems.
- Use our evidence and delivery expertise to support the development of future farming and fisheries policy and delivery.
- Work with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to effectively establish marine by-laws which contribute to environmental outcomes in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Our priorities for 2020/21

- Provide technical guidance and policy advice to feed into the design of the ELM scheme.
- Review our existing farm advice work, with a view to better integration and outcome delivery, including Catchment Sensitive Farming outcomes.
- Improve Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) consenting, assenting and advice by implementing reforms, including a Single Point of Contact.
- Deliver existing Higher Level Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship agreements.
- Provide evidence and policy advice to help deliver an ecosystem approach to fisheries.
- Provide environmental advice to inform fisheries by-laws for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

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Connecting People with Nature

Evidence shows that a good connection with nature brings improvements in physical and mental health, improves our sense of well-being and in turn leads to more positive environmental behaviours.

Our five-year aims

Levels of nature connection in England are low in relation to other comparable countries. Therefore, Natural England's Connecting People with Nature programme will deliver transformative change, aiming for everyone to be able to enjoy nature's benefits and act for the environment, wherever they live.

When we consider this in light of Natural England's statutory purpose to provide understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment, this is a powerful combination of statutory power and evidence. This can drive forward an inclusive programme of work to engage even more people from a variety of backgrounds to develop a connection with their natural environment where they live, and in turn improve the nation's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Our work will improve daily life around some of society's biggest issues of environmental inequality that have been thrown into stark relief during the coronavirus public health emergency. Nature's solutions will play a major part in the national recovery effort, and a population more engaged with nature will in turn be a population that acts for the environment and supports ongoing investment in the environment.

Our Connecting People with Nature programme is ambitious in its aim to deliver this systemic change through these specific five-year aims:

- More people connected with and acting for the natural environment.
- More people spending time in nature.
- More people benefitting from the natural environment.
- Better quality accessible nature-rich places close to where people live.
- Better access to high quality nature further afield.
- More resilient environment that protects people from environmental harms. For example, flooding and air pollution.

Our priorities for 2020/21

- Complete advice to the NHS Social Prescribing training package.
- Provide strategic advice to National Academy for Social Prescribing to cement nature based solutions as a key thematic work area.

- Deliver the Wessex Water project to reduce pharmaceutical load via increased use of social prescribing.
- Produce Green Infrastructure standards that will enable contributions to the Nature Recovery Network and allow more people to benefit from green spaces near to where they live and work.
- Enable a wider range of voices to be heard in our work and decision making.
- Design and publish community engagement standards for the Nature Recovery Network.
- Identify and articulate routes for community participation in the Nature Recovery Network and the Local Nature Recovery Strategies. For example, tiny forests, large scale woodland planting, pocket parks.
- Gather evidence based on current barriers to accessing nature, including data gathered from specific questions added to the People and Nature Survey on impacts from current social distancing guidance.
- Design and deliver tools to enable Natural England to work more inclusively across all of our work.
- Evolve the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) into the People and Nature Survey.
- Reset the Children and Nature programme to form part of the essential green recovery following from the coronavirus crisis.
- Complete the England Coast Path.
- Identify new ways to help more people benefit from new and existing access and recreation infrastructure.
- Reimagine options for future of National Trails including funding models.

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Specialist Science and Evidence

We will realise our ambition for Natural England to be an evidence-led organisation. We will be recognised, respected and trusted for our expertise and the provision and use of evidence-based advice on the natural environment locally and nationally.

Our five-year aims

The quality of our advice, actions, and the legality of our decisions fundamentally depends upon our use and understanding of the evidence base. This includes understanding how and why the natural world is changing, identifying and enhancing areas of high environmental value, advising on the design of agri-environment schemes and creating opportunities for people and nature to thrive. Science and evidence is vital to the delivery of environmental outcomes. Fostering a culture where high quality science and evidence is celebrated, and is at the heart of what we do and how we do it, is key to delivering Natural England's vision.

We will:

- Use science and evidence to identify strategic opportunities, priorities and innovation.
- Ensure that the best available evidence is central to all our decision making, delivery, advice and risk assessment.
- Be a learning organisation that evaluates the outcomes of our actions.
- Develop a diverse and resilient specialist and technical expert cohort to ensure Natural England can draw on in-house expertise across its remit, investing in all our staff to ensure they have the skills they need to succeed in their work and adapt to future challenges.

Our priorities for 2020/21

Undertake long-term monitoring and strategic cross-cutting research to inform solutions to problems and challenges. The long-term challenges facing nature will not be met by just tackling our short-term research or monitoring needs. We will

- Invest in technologies such as Earth Observation, environmental DNA techniques, field-based science and data science techniques to find better ways of collecting and using data.
 - Lead reform through supporting decommissioning and the adoption of new approaches when benefits have been identified.
 - Invest in reviewing and managing our data to exploit their full value for technologically innovative approaches.
- Employ horizon scanning to help us identify emerging challenges (including high risk cases) and potential solutions.
 - Aim to be a partner of choice for others conducting environmental research.

- Maintain a science and evidence infrastructure that is cross-cutting and accessible (for example providing data services across all our programmes) and is capable of supporting forward looking investigations and experimentation.
- Ensure that the major investments in delivering nature's recovery, notably the Nature Recovery Network, tree planting targets, nature based solutions, peat restoration strategy, species recovery and the design and targeting of the ELM scheme, are grounded in evidence.
 - Carry out – with the resources available - research, monitoring and analysis to address immediate evidence priorities of our four programmes.
 - Support programme delivery with specialist environmental and technical advice.
- Start to embed evaluation across all our programmes. Evaluation is about learning what works, in what circumstances and for whom. It is a critical part of being an evidence-led organisation. It helps us to focus resources where we know we will make the biggest impact, by learning from our delivery and helping us to manage the risk of operating in new and innovative ways.
- Build our analytical capabilities and in-house use of emerging technologies and tools alongside existing science, evidence and evaluation skill-sets; sharing expertise and building joint capability across the Defra Group and with our partners.

Specific activities for the cross-cutting Specialist Science and Evidence programme 2020/21 include:

- Develop a National Earth Observation based validated habitat map.
- Produce jointly with the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission a state of biodiversity – Nature Based Solutions report.
- Identify longer term monitoring, surveillance, research and development requirements and use to inform future Spending Review funding bids.
- Develop an evidence statement for each programme to identify key evidence and gaps.
- Develop evidence principles to guide woodland planting (the 'right tree in the right place').
- Produce a Natural Capital local evidence and advice package, including county atlases.
- Produce horizon scan analysis of the post coronavirus natural environment.
- Review and relaunch the evidence standard.
- Develop appropriate digital and data governance.
- Develop webmap resilience improvements and system enhancements.
- Implement standards for all aspects of the data journey.
- Establish theory of change for each programme.
- Develop and deliver evaluation training packages.
- Create and maintain an integrated technical and specialist capability hub to support local and national delivery.
- Develop our accessible package of Chief Scientist Directorate led technical training offers.
- Refresh our technical skills framework.

Managing the Organisation

Our aim is to be a values-led organisation which delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving nature's recovery.

Our five-year aims

Natural England cannot deliver all of the ambitions and commitments in this Action Plan on our own. Reflecting our mission – building partnerships for nature's recovery – we will work in a way that encourages, enables and amplifies the contributions of others.

As a public sector body we will also work in a way that honours the full range of obligations and standards of the public sector and, specifically, we need to adhere to the regulatory and legal requirements placed on Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

We will deliver against these objectives:

- We are trusted and respected for our collaboration with those engaged in nature's recovery.
- We are ambitious in securing additional funding and support for nature's recovery.
- We reflect our vision and mission in ensuring that the environmental impact of our own operation reduces.
- We invest in our people to develop a capable, agile, engaged and diverse workforce.
- We operate with integrity in keeping staff (and visitors) safe, using public money safely and using data and information in line with regulatory requirements and best practice.

Our priorities for 2020/21

- Continue to invest in bringing further funding into the sector, both for partners where they can best deliver and the organisation.
- Refine our planning processes to ensure that we have a clear focus on the longer term outcomes we seek for the natural environment.
 - Articulate these outcomes and their value to government (including within future Spending Reviews) and demonstrate the link between all of our shorter term activities and that longer term ambitions.
- Complete the implementation of refreshed processes and accountabilities, to ensure that the commitments we make are delivered professionally and we report transparently on what we do.
- Meet our corporate obligations – to keep people, money and data safe and to deliver good governance.

- Progress the commitments made in Natural England’s People Strategy – including to improve the overall employee deal, to build staff and organisational capability and to improve the diversity, and inclusion of, the people who work for Natural England.
- Refine the ways we work with stakeholders and partners to bring more of their expertise into the way we develop the work that we do.
- Continue to build the profile and reputation of Natural England as the government’s statutory advisor on the natural environment.
- Stabilise the operating model for the Corporate Services that we receive from Defra, ensuring that we work in partnership with the wider group in agreeing fit-for-purpose and transparently delivered shared services, with flexibility to meet our specific organisational needs where that is justified.
- Invest in continually improving our ways of working, to be ambitious and innovative and lead by example to support the organisation’s vision and mission.

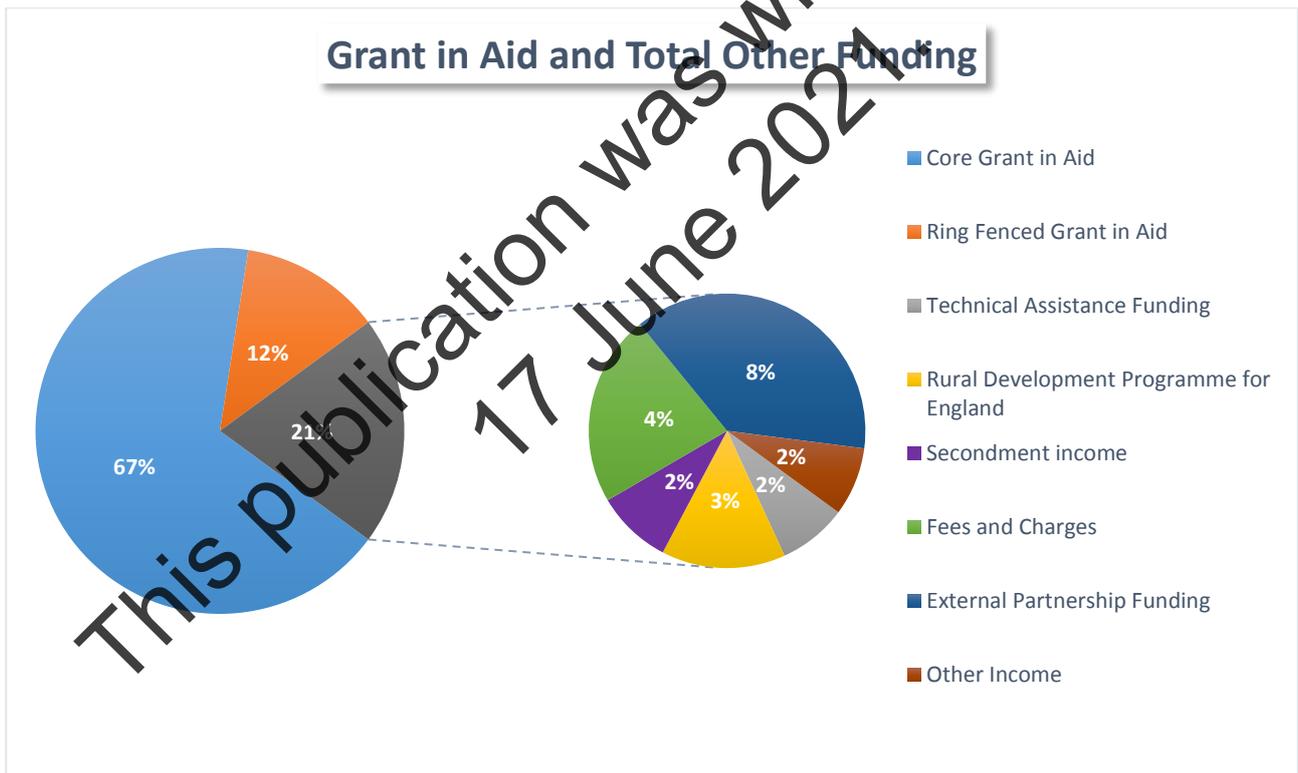
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Our Finances

Our total planned funding for 2020/21 is £122.6 million.

- 80% of this is Grant in Aid (GiA) provided by Defra, and includes £11.3 million one-off funding to support our statutory priorities. Of the GiA, £15.2 million (16%) of this is ring-fenced funding provided for the delivery of specific activities. This includes £4.5 million funding from other government departments towards joint projects.
- We are continuing our endeavours to increase our chargeable income and we intend to build on this progress with a new Wildlife Licensing Service which in total will bring fees and charges to £5.6 million.
- We currently have a significant number of Natural England staff on secondment to Defra to support EU Exit and Defra gives Natural England the income back to fund these staff.

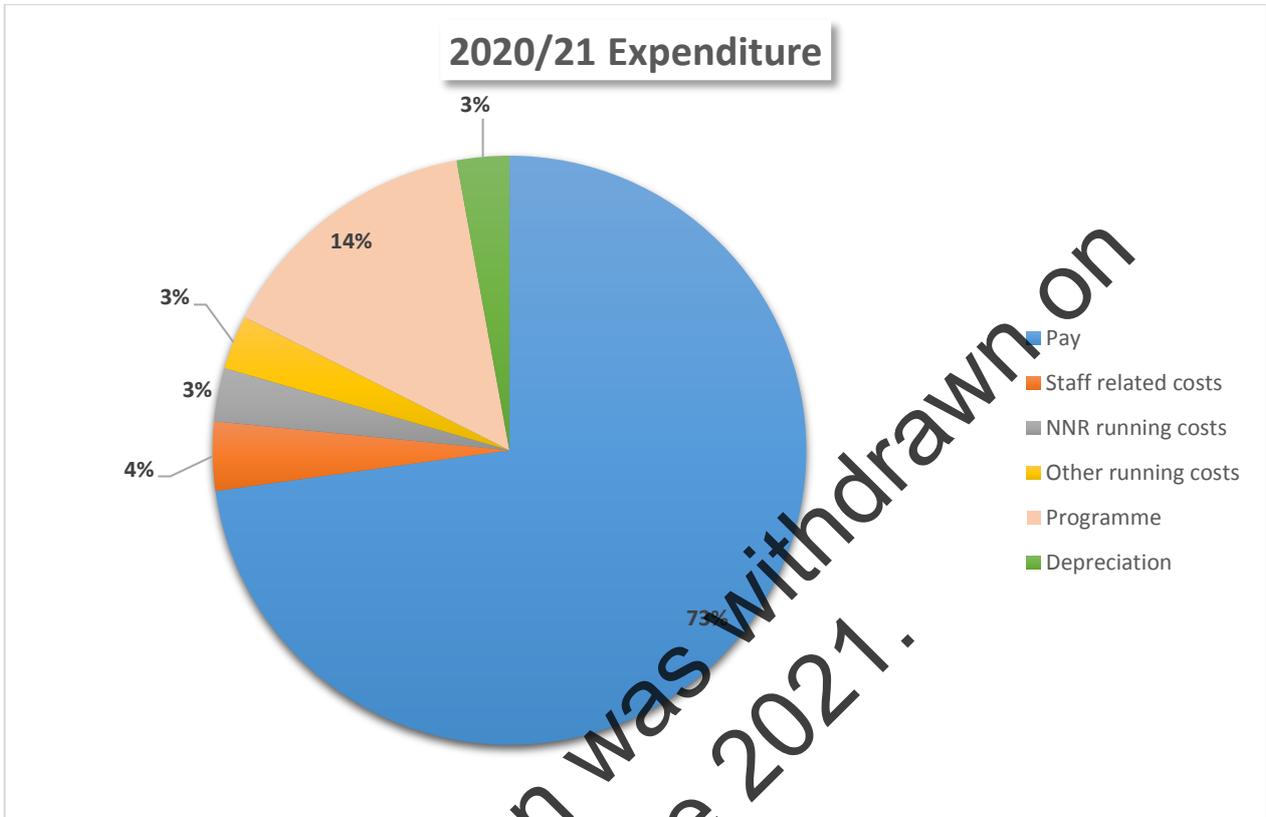
2020/21 Funding



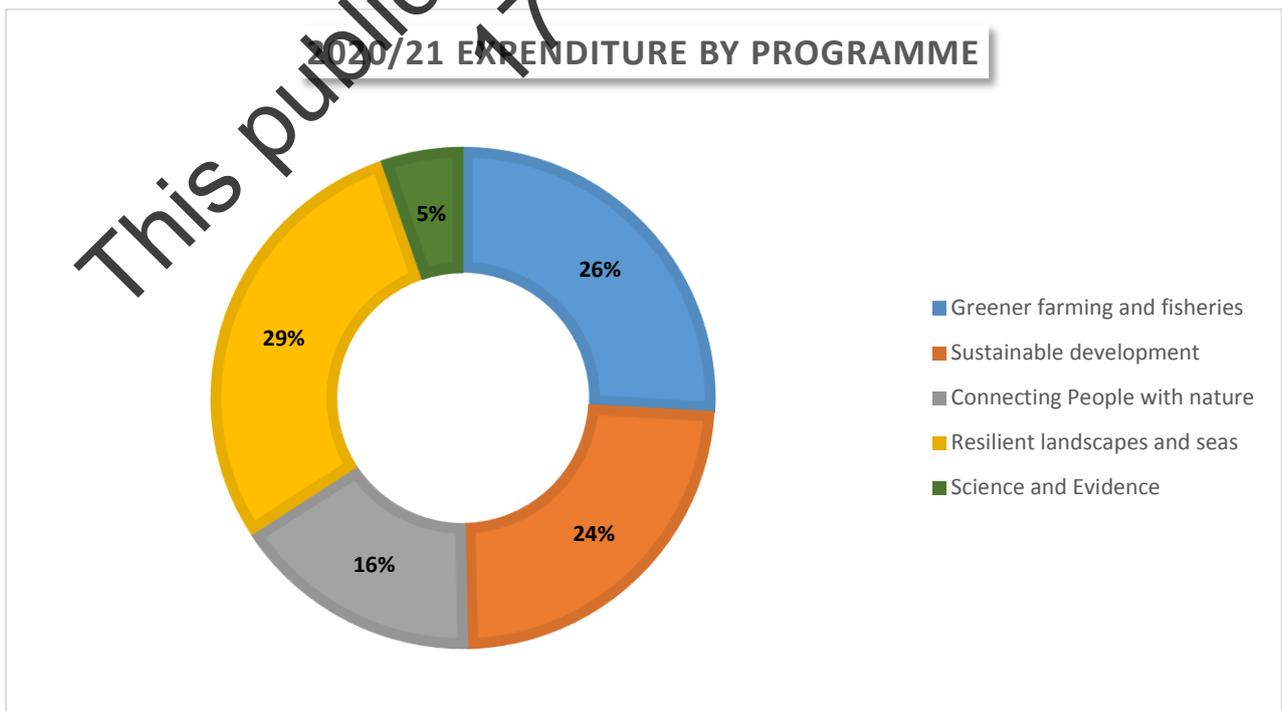
Note: Ring-fenced GiA includes England Coastal Path, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Water Framework Directive, Children in Nature and District Level Licensing.

2020/21 Expenditure

Planned expenditure for 2020/21 in line with the Natural England business plan is as follows:



Analysis of expenditure by our four Strategic Programmes underpinned by Science and Evidence is shown below:



Note: Managing the Organisation costs are attributed to each of the strands above.

The principles underpinning our Future Funding Strategy ensure we maximise the returns from the resources we deploy to support the environment. These principles are incorporated into all of our spending plans:

- Public money for public goods. This should not mean that public money is automatically viewed as the exclusive or preferred funding option.
- Where our services or outcomes benefit a particular group or organisation, and this group has the ability to pay for this, then the cost of the service should be met by this group as far as possible.
- We must operate within our legal powers, adhere to principles of regularity and propriety and ensure alignment with relevant wider government policies.
- Consistency - in the application of charges, but also in the way we deploy GiA.
- Look to enable market delivery wherever possible and avoid creating market distortion.
- Consider funding options beyond GiA at the outset for any programme or area of delivery.

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Measuring Success

For 2020/21 we have created a number of longer-term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked directly to our five-year aims to support the 25 Year Environment Plan and net zero commitments. These are more outcome focussed rather than trying to reference all the levers we pull to achieve them.

Progress against the key performance indicators will be reported quarterly to the Natural England Executive Committee and the Board. This information will be available to external stakeholders via the quarterly newsletter. Underpinning the KPIs are a number of in-year delivery performance indicators which will be reported monthly to the Natural England Delivery Committee and, by exception, quarterly to the Natural England Executive Committee and the Board.

During 2020/21 we will develop further the suite of key performance indicators so that they are each supported by a comprehensive set of shorter term performance indicators. These will individually and collectively contribute to the longer term outcomes-focused KPIs over the coming five years or so.

Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (PIs)	2020/21 Metrics
Well managed nature recovery networks	Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) are in place and influencing local environmental decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope and develop prototype LNRs ▪ Positive engagement with local planning authorities/combined authorities to embed biodiversity net gain policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Five prototype LNRS developed ▪ 30 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) engaged
	Landscapes and seas are becoming more resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area of land in current agri-environment schemes is maintained and contributes to Nature Recovery Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 500 Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreements ▪ 1,700 Higher Level Stewardship and Higher Tier extensions

Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (PIs)	2020/21 Metrics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protected sites on land and sea are well managed, resilient and central to driving nature recovery and Good Environmental Status of our seas ▪ Nature Recovery Network is in place, re-establishing functioning ecosystems, contributing to net zero and providing distinctive places for all of society to enjoy and benefit from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 95% high risk/high opportunity planning casework advised on within agreed timescales ▪ Develop a credible baseline of evidence on the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which will support work on the 75% favourable condition target ▪ Progress towards favourable condition of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) network on 47 features of marine protected sites ▪ We meet the following milestones: National Nature Recovery Partnership launch (Q1); publish partnership plan (Q2); develop and test Nature Recovery Network toolkit (Q2 – Q4); Nature Recovery Fund launch by Q4 ▪ Number of Nature Recovery Partnerships using community engagement standards (metric to be confirmed at end of Q1)

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Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (PIs)	2020/21 Metrics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conservation status of native species has improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 multi-species Partnership Programmes and 45 species recovery projects, with over 20 species reintroductions/ population reinforcements 500 ponds created/restored for Great Crested Newts through strategic licences
People connected to the natural environment	There is a positive trend of increasing levels of nature connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are safe and welcoming places for our staff, volunteers and visitors The full England Coast Path is approved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of People and Nature connection measure(s) by Q4 53 stretches submitted to government for approval (100% of the coast by length)
	General population is increasingly aware of the importance of nature recovery in order for us to all live well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature based solutions are mainstreamed into NHS prescription content and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural England staff embedded in the national Social Prescribing programme across seven regional offices
Nature based solutions	Land management practices are contributing to net zero through enabling greater carbon sequestration and storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme includes measures that support environmental delivery against 25 Year Environment Plan and net zero outcomes The tree and peat strategies are implemented consistent with the Nature Recovery Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400 ELM scheme technical guidance notes written 900 ha peatland restored Natural England's position on woodland planting published by Q2

Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (PIs)	2020/21 Metrics
	The impact of agriculture on diffuse water and atmospheric pollution reduces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice to land managers on agri-environment schemes and Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is reducing the impact of diffuse water and atmospheric pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice to 5,000 farms to improve the water and air quality with 60% of our recommended measures implemented
Improvements in natural capital	Planning authorities, including Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and Protected Landscapes, have plans and policies in place that grow natural capital, build climate resilience and optimise nature based solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide agreed package of environmental advice including strategic solutions on statutory local plans (terrestrial and marine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice provided and acted on for 60 plans across 12 area teams
	Natural England's advice supports land and sea managers to deliver healthy food and fishing systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide environmental advice on fisheries management so that it supports environmental outcomes ▪ The new regulatory framework for farming and fishing is established with high levels of compliance ▪ Natural England's advice on policy maximises protection afforded by Marine Designations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Task Based (qualitative measures to be agreed) ▪ Task Based (qualitative measures to be agreed) ▪ Delivery of advice on seven MMO Byelaws and the Marine Strategy.
Evidence and expertise	Routine evaluation of the outcomes of our actions and using the learning to ensure we implement actions that are most likely to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation is embedded in the delivery of each programme ▪ Natural England staff undertake specialist training offers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least one evaluation completed for each programme ▪ 10% increase of staff receiving evaluation technical training

Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (PIs)	2020/21 Metrics
	We publish and publicise our evidence to ensure it is available and used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing availability and usage of our publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of science and evidence publications published, aiming for greater than 50 in peer reviewed journals ▪ Number of downloads of our technical publications
	Natural England remains an expert organisation and has a fully embedded culture of being evidence led	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The evidence base for each programme is assessed and communicated ▪ Review expert capability needs and produce a development programme to fill critical gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence statement produced for each programme ▪ An increasing proportion of our communications highlight the use of evidence in support of our delivery and advice ▪ Number of staff receiving technical training in number of areas of expertise.
A values-led organisation	Natural England's operations and ways of working make the maximum contribution possible to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We can measure our carbon footprint and work towards ambitious targets for reduction ▪ Improvements in 2020 People Survey key areas of engagement, diversity/inclusion and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a methodology for measuring our carbon footprint (and a target for net zero) by Q4 ▪ Employee engagement index rises by 6% to 60% ▪ 80% of staff believe Natural England is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace (76% in 2019)
	Natural England's customers and partners receive inclusive, trustworthy, high quality and valued support and engagement		

Our Five-Year Aims	Our Long-Term Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2020/21 Performance Indicators (Pis)	2020/21 Metrics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide and maintain a safe working environment, work practices, equipment and facilities ▪ Provide a high quality service to our planning and licensing customers and meet our response obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 80% of staff respond positively to 'I believe my organisation cares about my wellbeing' (73% in 2019) ▪ Improve our Near Hit ratio by 10% on our 2019/20 performance ▪ 95% of all National Nature Reserve (NNR) check lists are up to date and completed by end 2020/21 ▪ 95% of planning applications responded to with agreed deadlines ▪ 85% of licence applications processed within agreed deadlines

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