

# Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update

31 January 2012

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June 2011. This second Update looks back over six plus months of implementation.

Working across Government, with business, landowners, local authorities, environmental organisations and others, we're making progress across all the ambitions in the White Paper.

We've already completed a number of the commitments, for example in August publishing both *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services* and *Enabling the transition to a green economy: Government and business working together*, providing guidance on natural capital on the Business Link website; consulting on plans for meeting limits on nitrogen dioxide; and running the Change4Life summer campaign.

We've begun implementation of major new initiatives such as Local Nature Partnerships, Nature Improvement Areas, river catchment partnerships and biodiversity offsets, and there has been lots of interest around the country.

Growing a green economy fits in with the Government's drive for growth. The White Paper is making its mark here, with the Green Economy Council and the Ecosystems Markets Task Force both forging ahead with their work. We're also doing some pioneering work on payments for ecosystem services.

We've published the Water White Paper. We have a new public health outcomes framework including indicators on green space, noise and air pollution, new guidance on minimising obtrusive light and also on school visits for learning in the natural environment.

Local people are being given the opportunity to re-connect with nature through initiatives such as the 'Love where you live' campaign and learning

in the natural environment is being made easier for schools.

As we look forward to Rio+20, we're helping internationally with a range of initiatives from protecting whales to helping countries to value their natural assets in their national accounts.

## Progress on ambitions

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

### Protecting and improving our natural environment

**Building on the National Ecosystem Assessment** – The central project team who will co-ordinate this major new research initiative funded by Defra, the Welsh Government and Research Councils is now in place. The project will investigate further the economic and social benefits we get from nature, and will develop practical tools to assist decision-makers in applying the lessons of the National Ecosystem Assessment. There will be opportunities for stakeholders to help to shape the work. (Commitment 1). Look out in February for further information on the research pages of the Defra website and on <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

We published ***Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*** in August and we're now setting up stakeholder groups and preparing a delivery plan (Commitment 2). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/)

We've awarded **Local Nature Partnership** (LNP) capacity building funding to 47 applicants across England, enabling them to explore the potential for an LNP in their area. Before Easter 2012 we'll be publishing more information about the LNP role and inviting applications to be formally recognised as one. We expect to announce the first LNPs in the summer (Commitments 4-6). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/)

**Nature Improvement Areas** – the 20 partnerships of local authorities, local communities, landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations, which reached the second stage of the competition, have prepared business plans. We expect to announce the successful 12 applicants at the end of February (Commitments 8-9). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/)

The Government welcomed the DCLG Select Committee's report on the draft **National Planning Policy Framework** which was published in December (Commitments 14 and 65). See: [www.communities.gov.uk/issuesandrespones/newsroom/2056346](http://www.communities.gov.uk/issuesandrespones/newsroom/2056346)

**Biodiversity offset pilots** – In November we announced the six pilot areas to test a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting. The areas are in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull; Essex; Devon; Greater Norwich; Doncaster; and Nottinghamshire. We'll also be learning from several 'complementary projects'. The pilots are due to start in Spring 2012 (Commitment 15). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/)

Through the Green Food Project, we're working with industry and environmental partners to reconcile how we'll achieve our goals of **improving the environment and increasing food production**

Commitment 17). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/food/environment/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/food/environment/)

We're working with delivery partners and stakeholders to develop and pilot an **approach to environmental stewardship that increases its focus on outcomes**, including greater flexibility within agreements in how outcomes are achieved. In November we submitted changes to the options available under the Entry Level Stewardship scheme to the European Commission (Commitment 19). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/land-manage/stewardship/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/land-manage/stewardship/)

The **Independent Panel on Forestry** published a progress report in December. The Panel is advising on the future direction of forestry and

woodland policy in England (Commitments 21 and 22). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/2011/panel-launch-progress-report/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/2011/panel-launch-progress-report/)

We're supporting **local engagement in landscape planning**. Seven case studies have provided feedback for refining the approach before rolling it out more widely (Commitment 23).

We've commissioned research to evaluate greenhouse gas fluxes and carbon balances in **lowland peat systems** as part of our research programme to explore how soil degradation can affect the soil's ability to support vital ecosystem services (Commitment 25).

The Sustainable Growing Media Task Force, which has been in action since October, is advising on how best to overcome the barriers to **reducing peat use**. It recently published its work programme for the next six months (Commitment 26). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/peat-taskforce/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/peat-taskforce/)

We've established **ten pilot catchments hosted by the Environment Agency** to work collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders. They will be helping to maintain and improve the health of our water bodies. We've also agreed 15 additional catchments to learn from in the pilot phase before national roll-out after 2012 (Commitment 28). See: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx) and [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/catchment-approach/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/catchment-approach/)

We published the Water White Paper, *Water for Life*, in December to provide more detail on plans to **reform the abstraction regime** (Commitment 30).

See:

[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/whitepaper/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/legislation/whitepaper/)

We're supporting the **Big Wildlife Garden** competition. It was launched in August and entries are rolling in (Commitment 31). See:

[www.bigwildlifegarden.org.uk/wildlife-garden-competition](http://www.bigwildlifegarden.org.uk/wildlife-garden-competition)

## Growing a green economy

We're currently appointing the chair and members of the **Natural Capital Committee**. This independent advisory committee, reporting to the Economic Affairs Committee, will provide independent expert advice on the state of England's natural assets (Commitment 36). See:

[www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/)

We've published two 'think pieces' and are currently commissioning a scoping study for a ground-breaking **natural capital asset check** (Commitment 37). See:

[www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/evidence/natural-capital-asset-check/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/evidence/natural-capital-asset-check/)

In August BIS, DECC and Defra published *Enabling the transition to a green economy: Government and business working together*, which 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 (Commitment 38). See:

[www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096705244&type=ONEOFFPAGE&urlname=greeneconomy&urlparam=greeneconomy&ref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.defra.gov.uk%2Fnews%2F2011%2F08%2F05%2Fencouraging-green-growth%2F&domain=www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1096705244&type=ONEOFFPAGE&urlname=greeneconomy&urlparam=greeneconomy&ref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.defra.gov.uk%2Fnews%2F2011%2F08%2F05%2Fencouraging-green-growth%2F&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](http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2011/Feb/green-economy-council-formed)

We've commissioned research through the Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales to support the establishment of a new **international coalition of businesses and business organisations** to follow up on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity 'TEEB for business' report. We will provide more information on the TEEB for Business Coalition as it develops (Commitment 40). See:

[www.teebweb.org/ForBusiness/tabid/1021/language/en-US/Default.aspx](http://www.teebweb.org/ForBusiness/tabid/1021/language/en-US/Default.aspx)

We held a **Total Environment Summit** in October which highlighted the importance of Green Infrastructure and the new Green Infrastructure

Partnership. We've also launched a Total Environment webpage (on the Defra website) and by the end of March 2012 plan to publish a report capturing the progress to date of the Total Environment initiative (Commitment 42). See [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/local/total-environment/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/local/total-environment/)

We've recently commissioned a best practice guide for designing **payments for ecosystem services** to be completed in summer 2012. We're also in the process of commissioning a number of pioneering projects under the first round of our pilot research fund. To progress this key issue, we've also published a major analytical paper on payments for ecosystem services and a study on barriers and opportunities (Commitment 43). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/ecosystems-services/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/ecosystems-services/) and [www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/evidence/science/research-funding/competitions/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/evidence/science/research-funding/competitions/)

We've set up the **Ecosystem Markets Task Force**. This independent, business-led task force, which has met twice, is looking at the potential for British businesses to find new opportunities through goods and services which value nature (Commitment 44). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/)

We've commissioned research to evaluate different tools available to businesses to quantify and **reduce the**

**impacts of their water use** (Commitment 46). See: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=17962&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=EV0468&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

We've updated the **Business Link website** to provide information on natural capital; including guidance on tools and resources which 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](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1097094983&type=RESOURCES)

We've issued a concept note and carried out an informal consultation with selected stakeholders on sections of the draft guidance for businesses on how to measure and report their **corporate environmental impacts** (Commitment 48).

## Reconnecting people with nature

The Department of Health published **Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Improving Outcomes and Supporting Transparency**, a new public health outcomes framework on 24 January. It recognises the benefits of connecting people and nature by including indicators on the percentage of the population affected by noise, utilisation of green space for

exercise/health reasons, air pollution and public sector organisations with board-approved sustainable development management plans (Commitment 55). See: [www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_132358](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_132358)

We launched the **Change4Life summer campaign** through TV, newspapers and online in mid-July 2011, 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](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx)

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/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/09/air-quality/)

We're working on removing unnecessary rules and other barriers to **learning in the natural environment**. The Department for Education published advice in July 2011 on the health and safety law relating to schools and issued a generic consent form for school visits for which parental consent is advised. In June the Health and Safety Executive published guidance on school trips (Commitment 61). See: [www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf)

We supported **Open Farm Sunday** 2011 and are supporting the stakeholder-led Food Growing in Schools Task Force (Commitment 64). See: [www.farmsunday.org/ofs12/home.eb](http://www.farmsunday.org/ofs12/home.eb)

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

We've launched the **Green Infrastructure Partnership** to support the development of green infrastructure in England. The Partnership is made up of over fifty civil society and other organisations, and is currently mapping out its forward looking workstreams (Commitment 67). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/)

The '**Love Where You Live**' campaign was formally launched by the Defra Secretary of State in October 2011. Information on campaign activity and how you can take part in events in your area can be found on the website (Commitment 68). See: <http://lovewhereyoulive.org/>.

In November Defra provided text on **minimising obtrusive light** to the Well-lit Highways Code of Practice Complementary Guidance for highway lighting managers (Commitment 70). See: [www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm?docid=2B75EC40-0A6F-4BE2-884C6F53ECAEC87B](http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm?docid=2B75EC40-0A6F-4BE2-884C6F53ECAEC87B)

In December Defra launched an informal consultation on the continued utility of exempting certain premises from the **artificial light** statutory nuisance provisions in England (Commitment 71). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/12/13/artificial-light-1112/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/12/13/artificial-light-1112/)

DfT approved the first tranche of bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in July to help local transport authorities to **encourage walking and cycling, improve public transport and make better connections** (Commitment 73). See: [www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/baker-20110705](http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/baker-20110705)

DirectGov is providing information on **actions people can take to help the natural environment** (Commitment 77). See: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerhomeandgarden/Greenershopping/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerhomeandgarden/Greenershopping/index.htm)

We've published a **Framework for Sustainable Lifestyles**, which is a new tool to help develop effective approaches to influencing behaviour and encouraging more sustainable lifestyles (Commitment 79). See: <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2011/10/framework-for-sustainable-lifestyles/>

## International and EU leadership

The Office for National Statistics and Defra have hosted a World Bank, United Nations and European

Environment Agency workshop on **ecosystem accounting**. The workshop was an important milestone towards the development of UN guidance to Experimental Ecosystem Accounts, which will guide efforts to reflect the value of natural resources into national accounts. The decision to hold the workshop in London was indicative of the UK commitment and leadership in this field (Commitment 35). See: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seeaLES/egm/lod.htm>

We are co-chairing a workshop, establishing a joint international panel and funding research to contribute to **implementation of the Nagoya agreement at the international level**, in preparation for the next conference in October 2012 in Hyderabad (Commitment 82). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/internationally/cbd/cop-nagoya/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/internationally/cbd/cop-nagoya/)

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/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/whales-dolphins/)

## Monitoring and reporting progress

The **Ecosystems Knowledge Exchange Network** was established in October. 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 (Commitment 87). For further information, including how to get involved, see: [www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/ekn](http://www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/ekn)

We've invited comments on **indicators** to track progress on the England Biodiversity Strategy (Commitments 3 and 90). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/consult/files/discussion-on-paper-biodiversity-indicators-strategy.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/files/discussion-on-paper-biodiversity-indicators-strategy.pdf)

## EFRA Committee

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) inquiry on the Natural Environment White Paper started on 11 January.

In its first three sessions, the inquiry has heard evidence from The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Balfour Beatty, United Utilities, British Aggregates Association, Wildlife and Countryside Link, The Ramblers,

National Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, Local Government Association, Town and Country Planning Association and The Environment Bank Ltd.

You can read about EFRA's work at: [www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/inquiries/the-natural-environment-white-paper/](http://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/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/) and read the White Paper at: [www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.asp](http://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](mailto:naturalenvironment@defra.gsi.gov.uk)