

# Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update

July 2013

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June 2011. This sixth update reports activity since December 2012.

Since December, we've made progress on a number of fronts as Government Departments and agencies, business, landowners, local authorities, environmental organisations and others all work together to meet the ambitions in the White Paper.

Highlights since December include the first Natural Capital Committee report, the Ecosystems Markets Taskforce report, launch of the Payments for Ecosystem Services action plan and best practice guidance, roll out of water catchment partnerships and the award of £200k grant to support environmental volunteering.

## Progress on ambitions

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

## Protecting and improving our natural environment

The first Ministerial event for the 48 Local Nature Partnerships, attended by Richard Benyon, was held in February. Defra hopes to build a close mutual relationship with the network of LNPs across the country so that, by LNPs acting on local priorities, they will prove a really valuable way of helping us to deliver our national priorities.

(Commitments 4-6). See:

[www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/local-nature-partnerships](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/local-nature-partnerships)

The reviews of **voluntary approaches** and how we use **advice and incentives for farmers and land managers** are completed. The report was published on 27 March and sets out Defra's plans to deliver a more streamlined framework of Advice, Incentives and Partnership Approaches for farmers and land managers. (Commitments 18 and 20). See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-of-environmental-advice-incentives-and-partnership-approaches-for-the-farming-sector-in-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-of-environmental-advice-incentives-and-partnership-approaches-for-the-farming-sector-in-england)

### **The Forestry and Woodlands Policy**

**Statement** was published on 31 January. This incorporates the Government's Response to the Independent Panel on Forestry's Report. The Statement sets out a forestry policy based around a clear hierarchy of priorities: protecting, improving, and expanding our public and private woodland assets. The statement also confirms that the Public Forest Estate will remain in public ownership, and announced that a new body will be established to hold the Estate in trust of the nation and manage it for the long-term benefit of people, the economy and the environment. (Commitments 21, 22).

See:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement)

Natural England has now published 59 of the 159 profiles of England's **landscape character areas**. Each profile identifies the environmental

potential of landscape areas, to inform national policies such as agri-environment schemes and help local communities and planners to make informed decisions about land use. Significant progress has been made and Natural England has received very positive feedback from partners on their quality and how they are using both the key facts documents and published profiles to inform, e.g. local planning decisions, NIA delivery and development of new NIAs and landscape scale projects, Protected Landscape Management Plans and funding applications. (Commitment 24). The remainder of the profiles are in train. See:

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/default.aspx)

Last year, the Sustainable Growing Media Task Force reported on how best to overcome the barriers to **reducing peat use**. On 17 January the Government published its response which sets out actions that Defra will take to support industry and show leadership. Both the Ministerial Retailer Summit on Sustainable Growing Media and the first meeting of the new Growing Media Panel were held in March. (Commitment 26).

See:

[www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-the-food-and-farming-industry-more-competitive-while-protecting-the-environment/supporting-pages/horticultural-peat](http://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-the-food-and-farming-industry-more-competitive-while-protecting-the-environment/supporting-pages/horticultural-peat)

On Monday 3 June Defra launched a Policy Framework to aid wider adoption of the **Catchment Based Approach**.

The policy sets out the high level objectives for the approach, to establish catchment partnerships in every catchment in England where there is an interest in doing so to: Deliver positive and sustained outcomes for the water environment by promoting a better understanding of the environment at a local level and; encourage a more transparent form of decision making, in support of local collaboration or partnership working, for both planning and delivery. (Commitment 28). See: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/131506.aspx)

In response to recommendations from the Green Food Project Defra is developing a Sustainable Intensification research platform, which will provide underpinning scientific, economic and social information to develop systems-based approaches that enable land managers and policy-makers to plan businesses and policy in a way that improves economic and environmental performance.

The project is currently at the scoping stage and is due to commence in the autumn. The platform will consist of three interlinked projects on 1)integrated farm management 2) landscape-level management and 3)Drivers and supply chain. The platform aims to bring together knowledge and researchers working on aspects of sustainable intensification, develop indicators and fill strategic knowledge gaps. The work will build on existing infrastructure through a mixture of desk-based and field-based

research; data sharing and knowledge exchange activities

## Growing a green economy

The independent **Natural Capital Committee** published its first annual state of natural capital report on 8 April. It will be advising Government on where natural capital is being used unsustainably. (Commitment 36). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/)

On 22 May Defra published the Payments for Ecosystem Services Action Plan and Best Practice Guide. This Action Plan promotes practical and innovative development of **Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)** schemes, and considers the actions we can take to enable them. PES schemes are about identifying practical ways to deliver new and additional investment in the natural environment, as well as seeking better targeting and value for money of existing funding streams. The Action Plan considers capacity building actions for government, the key policy areas of opportunity for PES and the monitoring and evaluation needs of PES schemes. (Commitment 43) See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-pes-action-plan](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-pes-action-plan) and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-pes-best-practice-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-pes-best-practice-guide)

On 5 March, the independent, business-led **Ecosystem Markets Task Force** published its Final Report. The report states the business case for why nature matters. It makes practical recommendations for both Government and business where interventions would assist in the creation and development of new markets, enhancing opportunities for growth that also benefit the environment. The report affirms that business is often unaware of its true reliance on nature, and that a new approach is needed to maximise opportunities and manage future risks. (Commitment 44). See: [www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/ecosystem-markets/)

Defra has designed a guide to help businesses measure and report their environmental impacts. Understanding and reporting these impacts can help identify ways of improving environmental performance and cutting costs. (Commitment 48). See: <https://www.gov.uk/measuring-and-reporting-environmental-impacts-guidance-for-businesses>

## Reconnecting people with nature

The **Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP)** The GIP has been successfully established and now brings together over 300 organisations. Through a wide range of partnership-led activity its members are providing the evidence, tools and guidance to help support decision-makers better integrate green infrastructure at local, city and national level. Recent highlights include:

- GIP supporting Birmingham City Council's Natural Capital City Model.
- GIP working with developers, architects, planners and construction industry sector to support improved green infrastructure in the built environment.
- GIP ran a range of webinars and multidisciplinary workshops (and more planned) to build stakeholders knowledge on a range of GI issues and build capacity among design, planning and development professionals.
- GIP ran its own pavilion and seminar day at Ecobuild '13 (Europe's largest eco construction industry 3 day exhibition at Excel). (Commitment 67)

In April, we awarded a £200k grant to The Conservation Volunteers to deliver a two year project that will build the capacity of the environmental volunteering sector to manage volunteers and support local communities to take action themselves. The project will develop training and resources that will be freely available beyond the end of the project. (Commitment 75). See: <http://capacitybuilder.tcv.org.uk/>

An initial **My Environment web portal** was launched in February making it easier for people to find environmental information across a range of Web sites. (commitment 78). See: [www.naturalengland.org.uk/advice/myenvironment/myenvironmentlaunchfeature.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/advice/myenvironment/myenvironmentlaunchfeature.aspx)

The My Environment web portal is supplemented by an updated environmental mapping service, linked to and complementing the My Environment service, that replaced the existing **MAGIC** service on 22 May. (commitment 78). See: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

To encourage the **consumption of underutilised sustainable fish species**, communities in Brighton and Chichester have been chosen to take part in a Community Supported Fishery. The project has gathered lots of positive interest locally and has been shortlisted for an Observer Ethical Award in the 'Big Idea' category. Management committees for both of the communities are being selected to oversee the scheme for a second season. ( Commitment 80). See: [www.catchbox.coop/](http://www.catchbox.coop/)

Richard Benyon announced on 23 January that all funding partners have committed to providing the **National Wildlife Crime Unit** (NWCU) with funding for a further financial year. The NWCU has continued to actively participate in EU and International wildlife crime work including operations on rhino horn. Defra is funding a database recording rhino horn legitimately in people's possession, this will aid the police in their investigations into people attempting to trade rhino horn illegally. (commitment 85). See: [www.nwcu.police.uk/](http://www.nwcu.police.uk/)

## Monitoring and reporting progress

The **Ecosystems Knowledge Network** has now reached over 1000 members throughout the UK, representing a range of private, public, charity and academic sector organisations with interests in an ecosystems approach. The Network has delivered a number of workshops and its website has been expanded with new project examples and sections and links to a wide range of tools, and guidelines to assist land and marine management projects apply an ecosystems approach in their work. (Commitment 87) See: <http://ekn.defra.gov.uk/>

The **indicators** developed to assess progress against the ambitions in the Natural Environment White Paper were published on 8 May. (Commitment 91). See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-natural-environment-indicators](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-natural-environment-indicators)

You can 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)