

Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update

24 April 2012

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, was published on 7 June 2011. This third Update reports activity since 1 February. The second Update in January provided a full review of progress since June.

Since early February, 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.

Major steps forward include the start of further work building on the National Ecosystem Assessment; the launch of the 12 Nature Improvement Areas; the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework; the announcement of the chair of the Natural Capital Committee; the publication by HM Treasury of Supplementary Green Book Guidance on accounting for

environmental impacts; £15 million extra funding for cycling and walking initiatives; and £8.5 million funding for international wildlife conservation projects.

Progress on ambitions

The White Paper set out four ambitions. Below are highlights of progress since 1 February on commitments to deliver the ambitions.

Protecting and improving our natural environment

Building on the National Ecosystem

Assessment – On 26 March we announced the next phase of the National Ecosystems Assessment programme. The original UK National Ecosystem Assessment recognised the importance for local communities of being able to influence how their natural environment is managed. The next phase of the programme will equip local communities to reflect better the value of the natural

environment around them in a wide range of local decisions (Commitment 1). See: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

We've set up three stakeholder groups to work with us on delivering ***Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*** (Commitment 3). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/

On 2 April we invited applications for formal recognition as a **Local Nature Partnership** (LNP) and published more information on our high level ambition for the LNP role and the opportunities that LNPs may want to explore (Commitments 4-6). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/

We announced the 12 successful **Nature Improvement Areas** on 27 February and work started in April. They cover 5000 sq km and will be enhancing and reconnecting nature on a significant scale (Commitments 8-9). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/

The **National Planning Policy Framework** was published on 27 March. It is consistent with, and helps implement, the Natural Environment White Paper ambitions. It aims to enhance and not just protect the natural environment, seeking a net gain for nature. It also supports the creation of better local ecological networks; allows local planning authorities to recognise Nature

Improvement Areas in their plans; reflects the important role of Local Nature Partnerships on strategic planning matters; and provides for a Local Green Space designation (Commitments 10, 14 and 65). See: www.communities.gov.uk/issuesandresponses/newsroom/2056346

The Government's environmental bodies are providing **more coherent advice to local partners**. They have published an advice leaflet on Neighbourhood Plans for local communities (Commitment 12). See: <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEHO0212BWAZ-E-E.pdf>

Biodiversity offset pilots – Work to test a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting started in the six pilot areas on 2 April and will run for two years, until April 2014 (Commitment 15). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/biodiversity/uk/offsetting/

Through the Green Food Project, we're working with industry, consumer and environmental partners to examine the challenges of **improving the environment and increasing food production**, and how we can reconcile any tensions raised. An online forum was launched in February to seek views on the project. The project will also report this summer (Commitment 17). See: www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/food/environment/

The Sustainable Growing Media Task Force, which is advising on how best

to overcome the barriers to **reducing peat use**, published its interim report on 2 April. This sets out progress made on the 12 projects in the programme of work published in December 2011 (Commitment 26). See: www.defra.gov.uk/peat-taskforce/work/interim-report/

A £28 million **Catchment Restoration Fund** to clean up England's rivers and encourage local wildlife to flourish was announced on 3 February 2012. The Fund will help to deliver the commitments in the White Paper to restore nature in our rivers and water bodies (Commitments 27, 28). See: www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/02/03/28-million-to-enable-communities-to-spring-clean-england%e2%80%99s-rivers/

As part of the Government's commitment to **achieving Good Environmental Status across England's marine area**, on 27 March we published a consultation on the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Commitment 33). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/msfd/

On 23 March, the Marine Management Organisation started an informal consultation on a draft 20-year vision and draft objectives for the first two **marine plan areas**: the East of England Inshore and Offshore areas (Commitment 34). See: www.marinemanagement.org.uk/marin_eplanning/vision_objectives.htm

Growing a green economy

The chairman of the **Natural Capital Committee** was announced in the Budget on 21 March. Dieter Helm (Professor of Energy Policy, University of Oxford) will lead this independent advisory committee, which will report to the Economic Affairs Committee, providing independent expert advice on the state of England's natural assets (Commitment 36). See: www.defra.gov.uk/naturalcapitalcommittee/

The **international coalition of businesses and business organisations**, established to follow up on the 'TEEB for business' report, held its introductory meeting in February (Commitment 40). See: www.teebweb.org/ForBusiness/tabid/1021/language/en-US/Default.aspx

We published the **Total Environment** initiative progress report on 28 March, which includes examples of green infrastructure projects and outcomes across participating areas. The initiative is identifying and addressing barriers to using green infrastructure to promote sustainable growth (Commitment 42). See: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13731-total-environment-progress-report.pdf

On 2 April, the independent, business-led **Ecosystem Markets Task Force** released a call for evidence to support its work. The closing date for the call is 27 April. The Task Force 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/

On 29 February, HM Treasury published **Green Book Supplementary Guidance on Accounting for Environmental Impacts in Policy Appraisal**. The guidance includes a practical step-by-step guide to valuing environmental impacts in policy appraisal. It applies to all programmes, policies and projects – not just those with a specific environmental focus. It recommends the use of the ecosystem services framework, which ensures that the full range of environmental impacts from a proposed policy or project is included in policy appraisal (Commitment 51). See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/accounting_environmental_impacts.pdf

Although not Natural Environment White Paper commitments, there have been two recent major initiatives to reducing burdens on business, which relate to the ‘Growing a green economy’ ambition in the White Paper: the publication on 19 March of the proposals following the Red Tape Challenge for the Environment Theme and the publication on 22 March of the report of Habitats and Wild Birds Directives Implementation Review.

The **Red Tape Challenge Environment Theme** was open for comment on the Cabinet Office website from April 2011, with a ‘spotlight’ period in September 2011. Of 255 regulations, 132 will be improved, mainly through simplification

or consolidation; 70 will be kept as they are, to uphold important environmental protections; and 53 obsolete regulations will be removed. There will also be a new drive to introduce smarter implementation on the ground. See: www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2012/03/19/pb13728-red-tape-environment/

In November 2011 the Government announced a **review of the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives**, as currently implemented in England. The Report sets out the conclusions of the Review and the actions that Government will take, in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors, to improve implementation and in doing so strengthen the environmental purpose and integrity of the Directives. See: www.defra.gov.uk/habitats-review/

Both initiatives resulted in practical actions, which maintain protection for the natural environment, while enabling economic growth.

Reconnecting people with nature

We want people to reconnect with food, so we supported the **Food Growing in Schools Taskforce**, led by Garden Organic, which published its report on 5 March. This recommends how schools can teach children about growing food and where food comes from (Commitment 64). See: www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organicgardening/food-growing-in-schools.php

The **Green Infrastructure Partnership** to support the development of green infrastructure in England now has a membership of over 150 organisations from civil society, professional bodies, industry and local government. It is taking forward seven workstreams (Commitment 67). See: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure/

As part of the '**Love Where You Live**' initiative, on 6 March, the Defra Secretary of State chaired a roundtable on litter from vehicles to seek voluntary commitments from the vehicle sector to address the problem (Commitment 68). See: <http://lovewhereyoulive.org/>.

On 2 February we published research on the economic value of **Quiet Areas** (Commitment 69). See: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=17600>

In February we commissioned a three-year research project into the **impacts of street lighting** on biodiversity at the ecosystem level (Commitment 70). See: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=17600>

The Department for Transport, on 7 February, announced a £15 million growth package for **cycling and walking** measures across the country that will support economic growth and help to cut carbon, whilst promoting a healthier lifestyle. Sustrans will receive

£8 million to create cycle routes and the Cycle Rail Working Group will receive £7 million to improve integration between cycle and rail at stations (Commitment 73). See: www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/baker-20120207/

To support the **development of the national biodiversity network**, we've commissioned research to pilot and evaluate new approaches to biodiversity surveillance in the voluntary sector (Commitment 76).

International and EU leadership

The 20th anniversary of the Darwin Initiative was celebrated on 6 March. We agreed a total of £8.5 million in the latest round of Darwin funding, which supports wildlife conservation projects in some of the world's poorest countries, as well as our globally important Overseas Territories. This contributes to **implementation of the Nagoya agreement at the international level** (Commitment 82). See: www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/03/06/darwin-initiative/

In February, we let a contract for a project to undertake case studies to help apply **The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) principles** to the development of National Strategic Biodiversity Plans. The project was discussed at an Informal Workshop on National Experiences in implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-

2020, co-hosted by the Governments of Brazil and the UK on 12-14 March in Brasilia (Commitment 84). See: www.cbd.int/sp/global-workshop/

The head of the **National Wildlife Crime Unit** chaired the Interpol Wildlife Crime Working Group in February and the Unit is working with Interpol on enforcement initiatives relating to tigers and ivory (Commitment 85).

We're preparing for the 64th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), where we'll seek to uphold the **moratorium on commercial whaling** and promote the conservation and welfare whales. In March we hosted meetings with countries supporting the moratorium and an intersessional ad-hoc group on whale welfare and ethics. The UK also took the interim chair of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on strengthening IWC conservation funding (Commitment 86). See: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/whales-dolphins/

Monitoring and reporting progress

The **Ecosystems Knowledge Exchange Network** held a national workshop in February, bringing together 30 local scale ecosystem projects to progress the work of the Network. It is helping decision-makers, land and 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, which is developing a website to help bring the local scale projects together, currently has temporary web pages (Commitment 87). See: www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/ekn

EFRA Committee

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) inquiry on the Natural Environment White Paper ended on 18 April.

The Minister for the Natural Environment gave evidence at the final session. The inquiry report is expected in early summer. You can read all the evidence at:

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/

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

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