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# Government response to the *Making Space for Nature* review

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## Government response to the *Making Space for Nature* review

Chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton, the independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network considered whether England's collection of wildlife areas represented a coherent and robust ecological network that would be capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. Published in September 2010<sup>1</sup>, the *Making Space for Nature* review summarised what needed to be done in four words: *more, bigger, better* and *joined*, and set out some guiding principles and 24 recommendations. Government's broad response to the review is set out in the Natural Environment White Paper. For further information, we have also set out below a specific response to each of the recommendations.

Recommendation	Government response
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b> Local authorities should ensure that ecological networks, including areas for restoration, are identified and protected through local planning. Government should support local authorities in this role by clarifying that their biodiversity duty includes planning coherent and resilient ecological networks.</p>	<p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will set out the Government's environmental, social and economic objectives for the planning system, and how they relate to each other, in a single, succinct policy document. The NPPF will provide communities and local authorities with the tools they need to deliver an improved and healthy natural environment and contribute to coherent and resilient ecological networks in their area.</p> <p>With regard to the biodiversity duty (section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), we will develop some further supporting and enabling tools to assist public bodies with their implementation of the duty, including setting out the top priority actions which they can choose to take. This will include encouraging contributing to coherent and resilient ecological networks.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b> Planning policy and practice should: (i) continue to provide the strongest protection to internationally important sites and strong protection from inappropriate development to SSSIs. (ii) provide greater protection to other priority habitats and features that form part of ecological networks, particularly Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland and other priority BAP habitats.</p>	<p>Government will ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework reflects the importance of planning in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the Coalition agreement to maintain the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other environmental protections. We will retain protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives for local planning and development management. The planning system will continue to facilitate coherent and resilient ecological networks in association with local partners and contribute to our objective of no net loss of biodiversity.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b> Ecological Restoration Zones (ERZs) need to be established that operate over large, discrete areas within which significant</p>	<p>We will enable partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations to establish new Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs), based on a local assessment of opportunities for restoring and connecting nature on a significant scale.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

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<p>enhancements of ecological networks are achieved, by enhancing existing wildlife sites, improving ecological connections and restoring ecological processes. We further recommend: (i) ERZs should be proposed and implemented by consortia of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and voluntary conservation organisations, supported by national agencies. (ii) To start and support this process, and recognising current financial constraints, we also recommend resources be provided, which can be accessed through a competition, to implement 12 ERZs in the next three years.</p>	<p>We want to see Nature Improvement Areas driven by the knowledge and vision of local partnerships.</p> <p>In order to provide inspiration locally and build a practical evidence base, we will fund a competition to illustrate what works. The Government will support the creation of Nature Improvement Areas. Natural England will set up a competition to identify twelve initial areas. We will provide £7.5 million over the current spending review period. The learning from these will help us extend this approach.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b> Public bodies and statutory undertakers planning the management of water resources should: (i) make space for water and wildlife along rivers and around wetlands; (ii) restore natural processes in river catchments, including in ways that support climate change adaptation and mitigation; and (iii) accelerate the programme to reduce nutrient overload, particularly from diffuse pollution.</p>	<p>We agree that where possible and appropriate, restoring natural processes, including improving connectivity of rivers to the flood plain and restoring sustainable abstraction, should be undertaken to help to improve the water environment and provide benefits for biodiversity and surface water management. Measures to protect and improve the water environment, including action on diffuse pollution, are being planned and coordinated through the Water Framework Directive river basin management planning process. This involves public bodies and statutory undertakers and land managers taking account of available resources, environmental costs and benefits, and the statutory functions of public bodies which include providing many essential services such as protection from flooding for people and nature. A number of initiatives outside the river basin planning process are also making a contribution to achieving a more sustainable water environment.</p> <p>Whilst Government advice and guidance will continue to assist farmers and land managers plan and use nutrients in ways that reduce losses and help farm productivity, the sector will need to respond positively to this support if we are to realise the intended benefits. As part of the recently launched catchment approach to implement the Water Framework Directive, we will be involving land managers and other key stakeholders in 10 Environment Agency-led catchments to come up with clear catchment plans that allow for targeted enforcement of existing regulatory requirements and deliver targeted advice and incentives that can reduce diffuse pollution and protect ecosystem function.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5.</b> Authorities responsible for</p>	<p>We agree that authorities responsible for measures to reduce the risks from coastal erosion and</p>

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<p>measures to reduce the risks from coastal erosion and flooding should do so in ways that enhance ecological networks where possible. This can be achieved by taking full account of the natural dynamism and functioning of the coast, thereby allowing wildlife and habitats to move and evolve.</p>	<p>flooding should do so in ways that enhance ecological networks where possible. We have considered how we give effect to this through the Natural Environment White Paper, the National Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategy and the implementation of the Flood and Water Management Act. Government will promote a strategic approach to flood and coastal erosion risk management, based on a sound understanding of coastal processes, catchment hydrology and the natural processes at play in rivers and at the coast, to inform local decision making. We will also promote examples of good practice which seek to manage the risk of flooding and erosion through working with natural processes.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.</b> Government should produce a strategy to ensure that we protect and secure multiple benefits from our carbon-rich soils and peatlands, and maximise their contribution to ecological networks.</p>	<p>Government shares the Review’s recognition of the importance of peatlands in providing a range of ecosystems services (such as agricultural production, carbon storage, and water storage and regulation) and in supporting rare bog and other semi-natural habitats. There is already a wide range of measures in place that seek to protect or enhance peat soils. This includes Government measures providing incentives through agri-environment schemes to improve peat habitats, and nature designations (e.g. SSSI designations cover 165,000 ha (68%) of upland blanket bog and 8,700 ha (85%) of lowland raised bogs). There are also various partnership initiatives bringing together land owners and managers with organisations such as the RSPB, Moors for the Future, the National Trust and water companies.</p> <p>Government is currently looking at whether more needs to be done to protect and enhance the multiple benefits provided by our peatlands, and if so what should be done and how best to take this forward. Among other things, this will include looking at the scope for further partnership approaches to be put in place, and the role of Government in enabling this. One of Defra’s early actions is to introduce voluntary phase out targets for horticultural use of peat, with the aim that the amateur market will be largely peat-free by 2020 and the professional market by 2030. Defra is also investing to improve the evidence base on some of the more complex issues raised by peat, including the costs and benefits of re-wetting degraded peat bogs and the impact that this may have on the provision of ecosystem services. This research will also help inform the future direction of thinking on peat.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7.</b> Responsible authorities should take greater steps to reconnect people to nature by enhancing ecological networks within urban environments, including wildlife-friendly management of green spaces, and by embedding biodiversity considerations in the need to adapt to climate change.</p>	<p>The Government is committed to developing a simpler, fairer and more decentralised planning system to help local communities achieve the kind of environment they want to see. The National Planning Policy Framework will provide communities with the tools they need to deliver an improved and healthy natural environment.</p> <p>The Government is committed to providing a new designation to allow local communities to protect green areas of importance to them. Local authorities and local communities are encouraged to seek</p>

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	<p>opportunities for the enhancement of ecological networks and wildlife-friendly management of green spaces as part of Big Society.</p> <p>When developing policy, Government will also carefully consider any recommendations made in the recently published report of the Farming Regulation Task Force on this issue.</p> <p>The Government will establish a green infrastructure partnership to support the development of green infrastructure in England. This will consider how green infrastructure can be enhanced in urban and rural areas to strengthen ecological networks and improve communities' health, quality of life and resilience to climate change.</p> <p>As part of reconnecting people to nature we also want to enable local communities and people to grow their own fruit and vegetables, and we are committed to increasing the provision of growing spaces to allow this to happen. Government activity is focused on reducing barriers to people growing their own food and Defra and DCLG are working together to develop initiatives to release land which could be used by community groups and individuals wanting to grow their own food. This includes funding the development of a 'meanwhile lease' to help provide access to land on a temporary basis for community groups and individuals wanting to grow, as well as looking at the feasibility of 'community landbanks' – effectively a land brokerage advisory service that would facilitate agreements between landholders and community groups on releasing land for community growing.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8.</b> Public bodies owning land which includes components of England's current or future ecological network should do more to realise its potential, in line with their biodiversity duty. Further, before disposal of any public land, the impact on the ecological network should be fully evaluated. Where such land is identified as having high wildlife value (existing or potential) it should not be disposed of unless its wildlife value is secured for the future.</p>	<p>Government agrees that the value of high biodiversity interest on the public estate should be secured, and that in these situations there should be consideration of this biodiversity interest through disposal and planning processes, in line with the Treasury guidelines 'Managing Public Money'.</p> <p>Government's ambition is to shift the balance of power from 'Big Government' to 'Big Society' by giving individuals, businesses, civil society organisations and local authorities a much bigger role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and a much bigger say about our priorities for it. Government considers that this balance can and should be shifted further – with a diminishing role for public ownership and management over the next decade, whilst protecting public policy objectives.</p>

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	<p>An example of this is Government’s announcement that it will move British Waterways in England and Wales from being a public corporation to a new charity - similar to a national trust for the waterways. Creating the new charity will give the waterways’ users and the communities that live alongside waterways, a greater involvement in how they are managed and will give key stakeholders a role in the governance of the waterways, allowing them to bring their expertise and passion to the organisation. The charity’s purposes are likely to include an obligation to further the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physical features of special interest associated with the inland waterways.</p> <p>Government will consider the extent to which the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework can support through the planning system the protection of significant biodiversity interest when sites are transferred out of public ownership and the extent to which planning authorities can be encouraged to protect sites that could contribute to a future ecological network through stronger policies in local plans.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9.</b> The government should ensure that the remaining areas of high conservation value that currently are not well protected are effectively safeguarded.</p>	<p>We are currently reviewing the network of Special Protection Areas to identify whether there are any undesignated sites that are important in a European context.</p> <p>Natural England is also undertaking a comprehensive review of SSSIs to identify gaps as part of its Notification Strategy.</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will set out the Government’s environmental, social and economic objectives for the planning system, and explain how they relate to each other, in a single, succinct policy document. Government will ensure that planning authorities are enabled to assess and identify local biodiversity assets and give them appropriate weight in local planning policies.</p> <p>Government is also committed to providing a new designation to allow local communities to protect green areas of importance to them. (See also our response to Recommendation 12).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10.</b> When determining the boundaries of designated sites, responsible authorities should take better account of the need to support underpinning ecological processes and of anticipated environmental change.</p>	<p>Natural England will be looking at existing site boundaries and assessing the long term fitness for purpose of sites in the face of climate change as it starts to implement its SSSI Notification Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11.</b> The recent progress in</p>	<p>Defra, working with Natural England, has developed a new policy framework for SSSIs. The key</p>

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<p>improving the management of SSSIs must be sustained, with the aim of moving the condition of sites from ‘recovering’ to ‘favourable’. Investment in the management of the SSSI series must be maintained.</p>	<p>elements are for Natural England to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop a programme, as part of its corporate plan, to increase the proportion of sites in the ‘favourable’ category and to present a new trajectory to achieve this;</li> <li>• maintain at least 95% by area of SSSI land in favourable or recovering condition; and</li> <li>• conduct a site by site analysis of unfavourable and declining sites to establish where and how condition could be improved, including considering new conservation objectives or denotification where the conservation interest has been lost.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 12.</b> Local authorities should take responsibility for the identification and monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites and the management of LWS must be improved.</p>	<p>Reporting by local authorities on the proportion of local sites in positive conservation management has been retained in the new Single Data List, in order to keep the focus on this important suite of sites.</p> <p>We also believe that Big Society has an important role to play in the management of local sites. At present most local sites are already looked after by local site partnerships and we would encourage these partnerships to continue to implement Defra’s local site guidance and play an increased role in identifying, protecting and managing local sites of nature conservation importance.</p> <p>We have asked Natural England to build on and reinvigorate the role of key partners such as local authorities and the voluntary and private sectors already involved in managing, protecting and enhancing local wildlife sites to ensure better join up in the delivery of local site, SSSI and priority species and habitat objectives together with closer working on delivery.</p> <p>When developing policy, Government will also carefully consider any recommendations made in the recently published report of the Farming Regulation Task Force on this issue.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13.</b> Responsible bodies should revise conservation objectives for SSSIs and other wildlife sites to respond to the effects of climate change - in particular by aiming to enhance habitat diversity and support underpinning ecological processes, whilst taking account of the requirements of current species and habitats.</p>	<p>Natural England will be considering the impact on the existing network of climate change and other long term processes as part of the implementation of its Notification Strategy. We have also asked Natural England to re-examine the conservation objectives for SSSIs as part of our new policy framework for SSSIs, concentrating on a site by site analysis of those in the ‘unfavourable declining’ and ‘no change’ categories to establish where and how condition could be improved.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14.</b> In view of the opportunity presented by their existing statutory remits, in National Parks and AONBs: (i) favourable condition of SSSIs should be achieved as quickly as possible; (ii)</p>	<p>The English National Park Authorities Association recently published “Beacons for Biodiversity”, which reports in more detail on the contribution that National Parks currently make to biodiversity. Government agrees that because of their unique governance, close engagement with local and visitor communities, and their statutory purpose to ‘conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife</p>

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<p>non-SSSI semi-natural habitat should be brought under management equivalent to SSSI standards; and (iii) other land should be managed so as to enhance connectivity.</p>	<p>and cultural heritage’ and their obligation for nature conservation, National Parks, alongside AONBs, should be at the forefront of the recovery of England’s biodiversity.</p> <p>(i) In England, 27% of land designated as SSSIs falls within National Parks. At the end of December 2010, 96.9% of SSSIs in National Parks, including those owned by National Park Authorities and those in private landownership were in ‘favourable’ or ‘recovering’ condition; for AONBs it was 97.6%. As part of the post 2010 policy framework for SSSIs, Natural England has developed a new trajectory to achieve the move from ‘recovering’ into ‘favourable’ condition with monitoring of sites to measure success. This has been presented in Natural England’s Corporate Plan (see also response to Recommendation 11). There is much potential for National Parks to be in the vanguard of achieving this objective.</p> <p>(ii) For the majority of land in National Parks and AONBs that is under private ownership, action for biodiversity is best pursued through close working with landowners and voluntary agreements both within and outside SSSIs. We will therefore continue to encourage National Park Authorities and AONB partnerships, working closely with Natural England, to encourage landowners to adopt and maintain suitable land management practices to deliver habitat restoration and increased connectivity within and between designated wildlife sites, including the potential role of Environmental Stewardship and other incentives. There is also a role for businesses, such as water companies, to support initiatives that secure improved habitat management alongside other public benefits such as improved water quality and carbon sequestration; tourism businesses can also contribute, for example through payback schemes.</p> <p>(iii) There are examples of close collaborative working to enhance biodiversity in all National Parks and AONBs as exemplified in the “Beacons for Biodiversity” publication. Building on this experience, we will encourage National Park Authorities and AONB partnerships to work in collaboration with other Local Authorities to extend this enhanced connectivity outside the boundaries of the National Park or AONB, and develop their own responses to <i>Making Space for Nature</i>.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 15.</b> The Higher Level Scheme of Environmental Stewardship must be retained and properly resourced as the single most important tool for maintaining and expanding the most significant areas of priority habitat and populations of priority species. Consideration should be given to improving</p>	<p>Government recognises the importance of HLS – following the Spending Review Defra announced that funding for HLS will grow by over 80% by 2013/14 as compared with 2010/11. HLS is a multi-objective scheme that already contributes to a number of environmental priorities including biodiversity, resource protection, the historic environment, landscape and climate change and we will therefore consider the role of other incentives, including ELS, and initiatives to achieve the objectives around habitat and species conservation.</p>

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<p>the quality of advice and putting longer term agreements in place to ensure sustained ecological benefits, while retaining the buy-in of land managers.</p>	<p>Consideration has also recently been given to improving the quality of advice available. An ELS training and information programme is now available to all farmers and HLS also has a dedicated programme of 'Integrated Site Assessments' that aims to review whether the management in place is working or needs adjustment.</p> <p>HLS agreements already run for ten years and there is provision for agreements to run for longer than this (up to 20 years in some cases) in very specific circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 16.</b> A new type of Environmental Stewardship scheme is needed, particularly to help buffer sites and establish stepping stones and ecological corridors. This should be simple to administer, be available in key areas, and provide support for high cost but relatively simple management measures.</p>	<p>This is being considered as part of the 'Making Environmental Stewardship More Effective' project. However, we will consider first what could be achieved using the current scheme structure as this would be the most cost-effective solution.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 17.</b> The government should promote economic approaches that will favour conservation management by stimulating the creation of new markets and payment for ecosystem services, to ensure that the values of a wider range of ecosystem services are taken into account in decisions that affect the management and use of the natural environment.</p>	<p>Harnessing the use of markets and ensuring correct economic incentives are in place could have an increasingly important role in delivering our natural environment outcomes. Our proposals for actions to accelerate new markets which pay for ecosystem services are outlined in the Natural Environment White Paper.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 18.</b> Government needs to establish a consistent, integrated and long-term expectation of land managers to deliver parts of the ecological network. In doing so, consideration should be given to: (i) providing more readily available, high quality advice; and (ii) developing the Defra Whole Farm Approach to provide an opportunity for those managing land to enter into a 'Whole Farm Plan' which integrates all aspects of a farm's environmental and productive potential, simplifies regulation, increases transparency and gives long term commitments to both farmer and the public.</p>	<p>(i) Defra has commissioned a pilot project, the Integrated Advice Pilot (IAP), to test the effectiveness of delivering advice to farmers integrating objectives from a range of policy areas, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, water, soil and air quality, nutrient management, biodiversity and farming competitiveness. The IAP will report in 2012, and efforts are being made to ensure that the project delivers a lasting legacy of reduced environmental pollution beyond the life of the project. Defra will carry out a full review of how we use advice and incentives for farmers and land managers, to create a more streamlined and efficient approach that is clearer for farmers and land managers and yields better environmental results.</p> <p>(ii) The Farming Theme of Business Link (replacing the previous Whole Farm Approach portal) offers a range of online self assessment tools that cover key areas of farm practice and planning, such as Soil Protection, Cross Compliance, Nitrate Vulnerable Zones and Catchment Sensitive Farming. The suite of assessment tools is not currently linked in the form of a single plan, but they</p>

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	do provide a broad overview of farm practice which has the potential to be developed into a cohesive plan. We will consider this issue in the light of the recommendations made in the recently published report of the Farming Regulation Task Force.
<p><b>Recommendation 19.</b> Habitat creation by government and its agencies, grant-giving trusts, businesses and the voluntary sector requires greater focus on the needs of ecological networks, in particular the need to contribute to Ecological Restoration Zones.</p>	<p>In June 2011 Government will publish a new England Biodiversity Strategy that will set out the key areas necessary to meet England’s long-term vision for biodiversity and provide an increased focus on delivery. The aim will be to halt the overall loss of biodiversity by 2020, to establish a resilient and coherent ecological network for the benefit of wildlife and people, and to have a better wildlife habitat than in 2010. It will provide a clear framework of our national biodiversity priorities to inform and motivate local delivery but recognising that people will wish to integrate action with other activity and take on local priorities too.</p> <p>Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission all have a key role to play in habitat creation but we will also encourage the development of local partnerships that could agree habitat restoration and recreation priorities for their local area, pool resources for collaborative projects and develop funding bids from available sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, EU LIFE+, distributive bodes under the landfill communities fund, and other major funders. Government would support this by ensuring that our agencies are aligned to help achieve these locally agreed visions. In addition some of these local partnerships may be successful in securing extra resources through the competition for NIA status outlined in the Natural Environment White Paper.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 20.</b> Government should consider extending tax incentives to encourage landowners to make long-term commitments to the creation of new wildlife habitats that benefit ecological networks.</p>	<p>Government believes that the tax system needs to be reformed to make it more competitive, simpler, greener and fairer, and is committed to improving environmental sustainability, including by increasing the proportion of revenues accounted for by environmental taxes. Taxation is one of the tools available for incentivising good environmental behaviour, reflecting the value of nature and enabling the transition to a green economy.</p> <p>HM Treasury leads on all tax policy for Government and decisions on tax are a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. These are made in the normal Budget process when all taxes can be taken into consideration as part of an overall fiscal judgement.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 21.</b> Public bodies and other authorities responsible for canals, railways, roads, cycle ways and other linear features in the landscape, should ensure that they better achieve their potential to be wildlife corridors, thereby enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks, and improving</p>	<p>Government recognises the importance of seeking opportunities to enhance biodiversity and mitigate negative impacts on biodiversity. Therefore the Local Transport White Paper states “often there are a number of other potential benefits from sustainable transport schemes e.g. greening local transport corridors to encourage walking and cycling may also reduce the heat island effect in towns, improve air quality, provide valuable space for sustainable urban drainage, increase biodiversity in towns and increase the value of neighbourhoods. When devising transport solutions it</p>

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<p>opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife.</p>	<p>is important that opportunities to realise wider benefits such as these are identified and properly considered.”</p> <p>There are also opportunities to deliver protection and enhancement of the ecological network along road and rail networks. For example in targeted locations, the soft estate could act as a buffer for adjacent, more valuable habitats, protecting these habitats from the potential effects of the operation of the road and rail network including the deposition of pollutants. In addition, habitat creation through ‘re-wilding’ could be undertaken to provide ‘stepping stones’ of habitat and is likely to be a cost-effective means of enhancing connectivity within the ecological network.</p> <p>The natural areas of our strategic road and railway corridors cover approximately 60,000 hectares and have the potential to support wider action to connect and enhance fragmented habitats, and to act as buffers to wildlife sites. In order to enhance the potential of this land, the Government will work with its transport agencies and key delivery partners to deliver focused interventions that contribute to the protection and further improvement of features which will support coherent and resilient ecological networks, where appropriate supported by organisation-specific Biodiversity Action Plans. The protection of biodiversity will be a key consideration in the delivery of the proposed new high speed line (HS2), and the line, if built, has the potential to support efforts to enhance habitat connectivity.</p> <p>It is likely that even more can be achieved along canals and cycle ways and we would encourage public, civil and private organisations responsible for the management of canals and cycle ways to consider how these features might further contribute to ecological networks. In particular inland waterways provide aquatic and riparian habitats, thereby supporting biodiversity and enhancing the quality of the landscape. They provide important links between habitats in an increasingly fragmented landscape.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 22.</b> If a formal system of biodiversity offsets is to be introduced, pilot schemes should be established to test and refine its operation, to ensure it meets the conditions we have set out for a safe and effective system.</p>	<p>We believe that a consistent framework for biodiversity offsetting has the potential to improve the delivery of the requirements of the planning system for biodiversity. We agree that this innovative approach should be tested, to develop a body of information and evidence to inform a decision about whether to support greater use of biodiversity offsetting in England, and how it might be used most effectively. In the Natural Environment White Paper we have asked for expressions of interest in working with us to test the approach.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 23.</b> The design and delivery of the Entry Level Scheme of Environmental Stewardship needs to be improved, in particular to ensure key options are taken up in appropriate combinations over a sufficient area. Delivering a more effective ecological network may require refinements to the schemes, such as rewarding farmers who act cooperatively.</p>	<p>Improving the focus and targeting of options within ELS agreements is already being considered through the ‘Making Environmental Stewardship More Effective’ project, along with options to encourage more collaborative working. Improvements are also already being delivered through the ELS Training and Information Programme and the Campaign for the Farmed Environment.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 24.</b> The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs should be advised on progress against recommendations in this report after two years, with a full evaluation of the outcomes for England’s ecological network after five years.</p>	<p>The Natural Environment White Paper sets out a broad approach for tracking progress. We will develop a set of key indicators by spring 2012, to track progress in securing the ambitions of the White Paper. Existing indicators will be reviewed and streamlined and crucial gaps identified to provide a comprehensive overview of progress. The review will suggest: where indicators are needed, the data on which they should be based, how we can make best use of existing or new data collection processes, and whether Government is best placed to manage their compilation.</p> <p>In order to be transparent and accountable in tracking progress towards the ambitions in the White Paper, we will report our findings and make them available to the public and Parliament for scrutiny.</p>