

Public Services Team
Office for Civil Society
Cabinet Office
Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London
SW1A 2WH

6 January 2011

Dear Sir or Madam

Modernising Commissioning Consultation

There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK and the Isle of Man and Alderney all working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We have more than 800,000 members including 150,000 members of our junior branch Wildlife Watch. Our vision is to create A Living Landscape and secure Living Seas. We manage around 2,300 nature reserves and every year we advise thousands of landowners and organisations on how to manage their land for wildlife. We also run marine conservation projects around the UK, collecting vital data on the state of our seas and celebrating our amazing marine wildlife. Every year we work with thousands of schools and our nature reserves and visitor centres receive millions of visitors. Every Wildlife Trust is working within its local communities to inspire people about the future of their area: their own Living Landscapes and Living Seas. This has resulted in a core body of 39000 volunteers working at the local level for the future of the natural environment in their community. We are therefore delivering benefits on the ground for the natural environment but also involving the local communities.

We welcome the publication of the Green Paper asking for views on how the Government can create a level playing field for charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises bidding for public service contracts. We are delighted that the Government recognizes through the Big Society the crucial role that voluntary organisation have played and can continue to play in delivering services at the local level. We believe we have a crucial role to play in delivery services currently provided by the public sector that can improve the health of our natural environment. The strength of our movement has been in the local nature of our structure, with 47 independently governed Trusts actively responding to local needs and priorities across a number of areas of key importance to local communities – conservation and restoration of the natural environment, education, training, delivery of work experience opportunities, surveying and monitoring, data collection and analysis, advice to public, private and voluntary sector organisation at the local and national level.



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We are well positioned to deliver on new opportunities that will be made available and would suggest that the following should be considered as part of the development of this area:

- Management of nature reserves, open spaces, parks, cemeteries, gardens, public areas, countryside facilities
- Ecological surveying and monitoring
- Farming and land stewardship, advice and support
- Environmental education and outreach to schools and communities
- Health and wellbeing activities
- Development of skills that can be used in horticulture, agriculture, forestry, conservation
- Expansion of provision of ecological consultancy and advice

Accessibility to public service markets has been an issue in the past for the voluntary sector and we applaud the very positive position taken by the government on the full and equal inclusion of voluntary sector organisations in the delivery of services. Increased transparency, streamlining purchase processes and a move towards a decentralized approach will all assist in greater access to these markets. We are also pleased that the requirement for the voluntary sector to be adequately remunerated for delivery is being emphasised, ensuring that sufficient funding is available to deliver services at the local level. For voluntary organisations there will, however, be issues of risk and financial resourcing, particularly on a payment by results basis, which could lead to an initial reluctance of the voluntary sector to become engaged in the process. In addition assistance for the voluntary sector in upskilling and accreditation is important if there is to be parity in the process for voluntary and private sector organisations competing for the same contracts.

The fundamental nature of the Big Society is closely aligned with the way that The Wildlife Trust movement works. Localism is key to the success we have enjoyed not just in nature conservation but also in the delivery of associated local services such as Future Jobs Fund. We look forward to an expansion of the opportunities to work with civil society and state partners through the Big Society.

Unfortunately, due to late notice of this consultation, we have not been able to respond as fully as we would have liked but we have further information on our website www.wildlifetrusts.org.

Stephanie Hilborne OBE
Chief Executive