

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Delivery Framework

From 2012



We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

Foreword

Natural England has built an impressive track record of delivery over the last five years and many of the achievements are all around us. We have helped save rare species from national extinction and encouraged a million children to develop a passion for nature. In partnership with landowners up and down the country we have ensured that a major government target – to secure 95% of SSSI in favourable and recovering condition – has been surpassed. We have worked with farmers to extend environmentally-friendly techniques across two thirds of England's farmland in addition to publishing our ground-breaking State of the Natural Environment report. We have successfully developed our advice to government on coastal access and the measures that will deliver a landmark improvement in marine conservation across England's territorial waters. At the same time, we have made significant improvements to the way we operate and have achieved customer

satisfaction ratings well above the public sector benchmark. All this against a backdrop of creating a new public body from three predecessors - delivering 15% savings in the process – and then meeting the new challenge of finding further savings of 30% in the current Spending Review period.

These achievements are built on the constructive relationships we have with a wide range of partners, but they rely on our dedicated, highly skilled people who demonstrate their unfailing commitment to nature conservation both in their working lives and in their own time. This enthusiasm and expertise will remain critical as we all strive to meet the fresh challenges ahead.

Although our purpose remains the one given to us at the outset – to conserve and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of current and future

generations and thereby contribute to sustainable development – the political and economic landscape in which we operate has changed. Notably we have, for the first time in 20 years, a Natural Environment White Paper which clearly sets out the way in which the needs of our natural environment can be addressed and which describes the value of a healthy natural environment - both to well-being and to economic growth. Natural England is adapting to this new environment by identifying six important shifts of focus in the way we work:

- We need to highlight our credentials as a science-led and evidence-based organisation. This will involve investment in our evidence programme and our specialists and, most importantly, require new approaches to conveying data and information to the public.

- We will enhance the quality of our customer service to develop even stronger relationships with the large number of individuals and organisations we work with on a daily basis. With over 100,000 customers, we will use their intelligence and feedback to forge better processes and partnerships. These will be key to improving our joint delivery of environmental goals and will allow us to refine our products and services.
- Advice will increasingly be our principal tool, although we will continue to provide incentives and to regulate where necessary. Advice will be offered in three main areas: to government through our role as its statutory conservation adviser; to land managers through farm advice, and to local authorities and other agencies through our statutory role in the planning system.

- We will work in closer partnership with the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, the Marine Management Organisation and other Defra network bodies to get the best results for the environment from our combined resources and offer the best service to our shared customers.
- We will focus our efforts on high priority areas where we can achieve the biggest benefit for the natural environment. While maintaining core aims across the country, in certain areas we will concentrate our staff and financial resources to maximise the benefits from high-opportunity or high-risk environments.
- We will prioritise our investment in the local knowledge and expertise of our people, so that they continue to be a valuable and valued resource to local customers and partners.

We believe that this refocusing will enable us to respond constructively to the challenges and opportunities of the new policy landscape. This framework describes how we plan to do this across our outcomes, which have also been refreshed where appropriate.

What has not changed is our core job and our core ambition: to work with government, partners and local communities to deliver our common ambition for a healthy and sustainably-used natural environment, accessible to all and secure for future generations.

Signed: *Natural England Board*



David MacDonald, David Hill, William Cockbain, Poul Christensen (Chair), Andy Wilson, Joe Horwood, Nigel Reader
Not pictured: Catherine Graham-Harrison, Doug Hulyer

Introduction

The purpose of this Delivery Framework is to set out what we will achieve for the natural environment over the period to 2020. It updates and replaces our Strategic Direction 2008-2013.

Our statutory purpose

Natural England was created under an Act of Parliament – the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Our general purpose is *“to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development”*.

This includes:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity;

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- conserving and enhancing the landscape;
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment;
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation; and
- contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment.

Our duties and powers under this general purpose are wide ranging. For example, we may undertake research, give advice to any public authority or person, and publish information about our work.

All of our work is carried out under this and other environmental legislation (including EU and international obligations) and within the Government’s policy framework.

Who we are

Natural England is the Government's nature conservation adviser. Our job is to help protect England's nature and landscapes, for people to enjoy and for the services they provide, both now and in the future.

We are formally responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who is accountable to Parliament for our activities and performance.

We are a national organisation which covers the whole of England, extending 12 miles out to sea. Around 2000 people work for us, bringing a range of specialist skills and knowledge in all aspects of the natural environment and the ways in which people engage with it.

As an independent organisation, we make available evidence and information on the natural environment which Government, local authorities, communities and others can use in their work.

We receive an annual budget of £190m from Defra. We deliver the government's Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which offers around £400m each year to farmers and land managers to protect and enhance the environment and wildlife.

What we do

We work across all landscapes and inshore waters. Specifically, we provide the following services:

- Advising land managers in order to manage, monitor and protect England's most valuable wildlife sites, habitats and species, as well as the character of our landscapes, thereby maintaining and restoring the coherence and resilience of our ecosystems.
- Advising on the protection of the marine environment in inshore waters (0-12 nautical miles).
- Encouraging and enabling people to understand and take action for the natural environment.
- Managing 13 National Trails and some 150 National Nature Reserves, promoting responsible access to the natural environment so that people can enjoy and value what it has to offer.
- Protecting our landscapes and designated areas from damage – and developing priority habitats and green infrastructure – by giving statutory advice in the planning system.
- Managing restoration and re-creation programmes, including those relating to species recovery and the Water Framework Directive.
- Advising farmers and land managers on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, directing public money to where it will deliver best value.
- Issuing wildlife licences to enable people to carry out activities in a way that does not damage the natural environment.
- Providing the evidence base which shapes decisions affecting our natural environment.

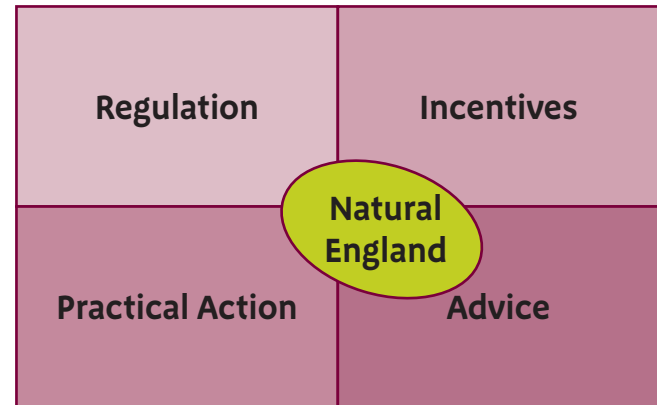
How we do it

We deliver through our advice, prioritising our effort by applying three principles:

- Before taking direct action we first seek to add to the hard work of others, then enable new partnerships to address local and national challenges – always endeavouring to build the capacity of local communities and society to act.
- Only where this is not sufficient to achieve the required outcomes will we initiate action. At a minimum, this could be making available evidence and options to ensure that the broader community understands the implications of its actions.
- We recognise that, in specific areas (for example, managing some of our National Nature Reserves), it is right that we undertake direct delivery ourselves.

This approach helps us to achieve the best use of collective resources for the natural environment.

We have four levers: advice, incentives, regulation and practical action. Box 1 illustrates the weight attached to these different approaches:



Box 1

Who we need to work with

Our agenda is too wide-ranging for Natural England to deliver alone. In these straitened times, it is vital that we work with civil society, business and other public sector organisations to get the most out of collective resources and to deliver better and more joined-up outcomes for the natural environment.

We work closely with Defra, who is our sponsor in Government and who sets our priorities. Defra is responsible for defining policy and in doing so takes account of our advice and that of others. Defra is also a major partner in delivery and in the development of our evidence base. In addition, we advise other Government Departments such as Business, Innovation and Skills; Communities and Local Government; Energy and Climate Change and even the Ministry of Defence because of its sizeable land holdings.

Outside Government we work alongside a wide range of organisations in the voluntary, public and private sectors such as: farmers groups; fishers; energy and water interests; developers and other businesses; local authorities; conservation charities and community groups. These partners and communities have a crucial role to play in the delivery of government policy. We want to foster a strong spirit of cooperation with them so that we can better understand their needs and views, share resources and expertise and identify and deliver mutually beneficial outcomes for the natural environment.

We also work closely with other agencies such as the Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation, the Forestry Commission and English Heritage to make best use of resources and to provide the best possible service to our customers.

Our four outcomes

To enable Natural England to fulfil its statutory role our work is focused on four strategic outcomes – each one supports the other three. A series of tables outlines the tasks we must undertake to fulfill national and international obligations. It also maps out our approach to completing these tasks.



Outcome 1

A healthy, well-functioning natural environment

England's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced

Why are we doing it

Natural England has been charged with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The value of landscapes and wildlife lies not just in the enrichment they give to people's lives, but also the services that healthy ecosystems provide and the economic prosperity that they bring.

People value the natural environment because of the inspiration it provides and the spiritual nourishment it offers. The importance of biodiversity is the resilience that it creates: a complex web of relationships that are mutually sustaining, where removal of any one component compromises the whole. Landscapes are our windows into this complexity and are understood by people at every scale, from the intimacy of a private garden to the sweep of our uplands. While the marine and geological environments are largely hidden from us, they are no less inspirational.

Not only do people enjoy the natural environment for its intrinsic beauty and leisure opportunities, they rely on it for a host of everyday services that are central to their lives. Healthy soils store harmful greenhouse gases and filter our water supply, naturally and cheaply. Lakes, rivers and wetlands have the capacity to reduce flooding and provide habitat for internationally important bird populations. Even the food we eat is dependent on the health of the pollinating species which inhabit our countryside.

The large membership of environmental organisations such as the RSPB, National Trust and Wildlife Trusts is testament to the value people attach to our natural environment. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment and international research such as 'The Economics of the Environment and Biodiversity' study have confirmed that the natural environment carries significance beyond intrinsic value. We understand

better the services that the natural environment delivers to people and we are beginning to place an economic value, both on those ostensibly 'free' services and on the consequences of losing them.

Government's priority is to ensure that our distinctive landscapes and the wildlife they support are robust and resilient. Coherent ecological networks are needed on land and at sea in order to adapt to, and accommodate, current changes and future pressures such as food security, development and climate change.

Current situation

England's natural environment is generally fragmented and under pressure. Whilst there have been improvements in some sources of water and air pollution and reductions in the use of fertilisers, many measures of the state of our natural environment continue to decline. Defra's figures, including those provided by the National Ecosystem Assessment, tell us that:

- In 2010 breeding farmland bird populations in England were at the lowest level ever recorded – less than half (48%) of the figure for 1970
- The condition of many soils – absolutely fundamental to continued productivity and support of biodiversity - is degraded
- Pollinators – estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of pounds - continue to decline
- Exploitation of our seas has resulted in degradation and continues to exert pressures -

wild fisheries have declined.

- 20% of our landscapes were showing signs of neglect in 2008.
- Fragmentation and deterioration of wetlands has compromised flood regulation and many other ecosystem services.
- Over 97% of sensitive habitats in England are at some risk from air pollution damage due to nitrogen deposition.

And the actions of some individuals – persecuting birds of prey, undertaking damaging management activities – continue to have more local immediate impacts.

There have been many local successes where there has been focused activity and resource: for example, the reintroduction of red kites, conservation of curlew and stone curlew populations, and the delivery of 96.2% of our Sites of Special Scientific (SSSI)

into favourable and recovering condition. However, that has not been enough to address long-term systemic degradation or to prevent the continued fragmentation of habitats and ecosystems.

In 2010, the Government signed up to an important United Nations agreement by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including 20 headline targets for 2020. The Natural Environment White Paper and the England Biodiversity Strategy (EBS), both launched in 2011, provide us with a framework for action to deliver these – on land and at sea - and to improve the coherence and resilience of our ecosystems. Government has asked Natural England to take specific actions in implementing the White Paper and the EBS and many of their broader themes are of direct relevance to our statutory remit.

1.1 Net biodiversity gain secured within healthy, well-functioning ecological networks

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>By 2020, overall biodiversity loss halted, healthy well functioning ecosystems supported, coherent ecological networks established, with more and better places for nature, for the benefit of wildlife and people.</p>	<p>Deliver a coherent and resilient ecological network, capable of responding to climate change and other pressures, and effective in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services.</p> <p>Chair the Terrestrial Biodiversity Group and lead delivery, reporting and monitoring of the EBS Terrestrial outcomes.</p>	<p>Identify priority areas where we will invest in and support landscape scale partnerships including Nature Improvement Areas.</p> <p>Provide local communities across the country, particularly Local Nature Partnerships, with core evidence and advice through National Character Area roll-out and other tools.</p> <p>Deliver our SSSI Notification Strategy so that we meet our statutory duties and ensure that new designations help establish coherent ecological networks.</p>
<p>By 2020, there is an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species prevented</p>	<p>Contribute to the delivery of key EBS targets, including the priority habitat condition and creation outcomes, and securing 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2020.</p>	<p>Contribute to England's Species Recovery Programme.</p> <p>Ensure our planning and other advice work safeguards existing biodiversity assets and ecosystem services and, through green infrastructure projects, increase the coherence of the priority habitat network.</p> <p>Contribute to strategy for managing specific invasive non-native species threats.</p>

By 2020 there are better wildlife habitats with 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition and at least 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition.

By 2020 there are more, bigger and less fragmented areas for wildlife, with no net loss of priority habitats and an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by at least 200,000ha.

Embed ecosystems approach across our work

Support a significant research programme to explore the impacts of soil degradation on the delivery of vital ecosystem services.

Complete inventories of priority habitats by 2014 and contribute to the development of a coherent set of monitoring indicators to track progress against EBS goals.

Fully exploit Environmental Stewardship by bringing EBS priority habitats under favourable management.

Work with landowners and land managers to secure 50% of SSSI in target condition.

Optimise the use of our National Nature Reserves for our research programmes and manage them as exemplars of nature conservation that contribute to wider ecological restoration.

Provide evidence and options to ensure Government's commitments could be adequately addressed.

1.2 Productive and biologically diverse seas

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>By end of 2016, in excess of 25% of English waters in a well-managed UK Marine Protected Area (MPA) network.</p> <p>An ecologically coherent and well-managed UK MPA network contributing to Good Environmental Status by 2020.</p> <p>Biodiversity maintained, further degradation halted and where possible, restoration underway.</p> <p>Marine plans in place covering the whole of England's marine area by 2021, ensuring the sustainable use and management of our seas.</p>	<p>Advise on the identification of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and ensure a robust evidence base underpinning them.</p> <p>Complete identification and advise on new Special Protection Areas (SPAs) by end of 2015.</p> <p>Advise on the development of mgmt measures for the MPAs in English waters.</p> <p>Establish appropriate baseline and ongoing risk-based monitoring and implement six yearly monitoring cycles for all MPAs in English waters.</p> <p>Work with the MMO, IFCAs, CEFAS, JNCC and EA to streamline the marine delivery landscape.</p> <p>Support the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive</p>	<p>Work with JNCC, Defra and the Scientific Advisory Panel to ensure robust evidence enables MCZs to be designated.</p> <p>Commission survey, other evidence gathering and analysis to identify possible SPAs, and lead consultation on behalf of Defra.</p> <p>Deliver timely and well evidenced conservation advice so that relevant and competent authorities can develop and implement appropriate MPA management measures.</p> <p>Work with JNCC to identify best practice in MPA and wider marine monitoring and establish programmes.</p> <p>Provide advice to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to enable robust, comprehensive marine spatial plans.</p> <p>Provide valuable and practical advice to marine users and regulators on licensing and consenting casework.</p>

1.3 Diverse and distinctive landscapes continue to reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks and Heritage Coasts are conserved and enhanced.</p> <p>The diverse character and quality of England's landscapes is maintained and enhanced.</p> <p>Local communities value their local landscapes and geology and are supported in engaging with landscape planning.</p>	<p>Work with family of Protected Landscapes through various structures including the tripartite MoA, with Defra and AONBs, and Defra's Protected Landscapes Forum to deliver landscape scale conservation.</p> <p>Lead implementation of the European Landscape Convention.</p> <p>Support Local Nature Partnerships in defining and promoting local environmental improvement.</p>	<p>Contribute to the shared outcome agreement with the National Parks and work with Defra on the development of a vision and strategic framework for AONBs and the wider landscape family.</p> <p>Implement strategic outcome monitoring and reporting for protected landscapes.</p> <p>Complete the boundary review for the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks and fulfil our designation responsibilities to other landscapes.</p> <p>Continue monitoring change in landscape character and quality.</p> <p>Continue to conserve, enhance and monitor the condition of geological and geomorphological SSSIs and maintain an overview of the condition of Local Geological Sites as a contribution to the ELC and UK Geodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Ensure landscape issues are properly addressed in our advice and our wider support to local planning authorities, through training, guidance and information, including landscape and seascape character assessment tools.</p> <p>Complete the programme of National Character Area profiles, providing data, information and analysis of environmental assets to local communities.</p>



Outcome 2

People are inspired to **value and conserve** the natural environment

More people inspired to enjoy, understand and act for the natural environment

Why are we doing it

Natural England is charged with conserving the natural environment as a resource for people to study, understand and enjoy. We are also responsible for promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation.

The natural environment gives people a sense of place, pride and identity. It offers opportunities for recreation and enjoyment, which provide a wide range of health and social benefits. Defra's National Ecosystem Assessment states that cultural services arising from access to good quality green space contribute to positive mental health, childhood development and physical health. Outdoor recreation can encourage individuals and communities to participate in the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment in a variety of ways, from monitoring garden bird populations to clearing polluted ponds.

The benefits are underlined by the Natural Environment White Paper which recognises that:

- Connection with the natural environment makes people happier and healthier
- People using the natural environment make a major contribution to local economies.

The White Paper calls for better understanding of people's motivations and requirements, especially among young people of whom there is increasing evidence of disconnection from the natural world. It states the ambition that everyone should be able to benefit from a healthy natural environment and that any barriers to this need to be removed. The White Paper also recognises that citizens, neighbourhoods, communities and civil society all have an important role to play in protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

Current situation

The Monitor of Engagement in the Natural Environment (MENE) shows that 54% of the adult population visit the natural environment every week and, in 2010, there was a total of 2.6 billion visits. However, this masks the fact that whole segments of society rarely or never experience the inspiration that the natural environment has to offer: 10% of respondents said they had not made a visit in the previous year and 8% had made only one or two visits. This is particularly pronounced for children: despite the evidence that links outdoor play with a range of physical and mental health benefits, recent research demonstrates that the range of exploration for children at play has contracted markedly over the course of the last three generations.

Yet provision of access to the natural environment has probably never been better. England currently has around 190,000 km of public rights of way, 3,800

km of National Trails, 865,000 ha of open access land, as well as access through agri-environment schemes, parks, open spaces, walks and attractions in public and private ownership. Whilst provision is focused on the interests of walkers more than horse riders and cyclists, this is a huge resource on which to create more of the right type of access, in the right places, managed in the right way for 21st-century access and recreational needs.

Accessible green space on people's doorsteps is particularly important: 80% of the population lives in the 8% of the country most heavily developed and MENE showed that two thirds of visits to the natural environment occurred within two miles of home. The National Ecosystem Assessment tells us that, while overall extent of urban green space has remained static, population growth means that it is under greater pressure. Furthermore, where losses

have occurred this has deprived people, in particular young people, of the opportunity to engage with the natural environment on their doorstep.

Despite the number of people visiting the natural environment, the relevance to them and their families of a healthy and sustainably managed, accessible natural environment - and the risk to their well-being if that environment continues to be degraded - are not widely understood.

2.1 More people understand the benefits of, engage with and take action to protect and enhance the natural environment

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in the natural environment, aware of its value and taking positive action.</p>	<p>Monitor engagement in and understanding of the natural environment.</p> <p>Create more opportunities for children to learn in the outdoors.</p>	<p>With partners, develop the evidence base on engagement within the natural environment, and publish its findings.</p> <p>Participate in the Natural Connections programme to provide more joined up delivery of outdoor learning for children.</p>
<p>People will take more responsibility for their environment.</p>	<p>Continue to support/expand biodiversity recording in the voluntary sector.</p> <p>Provide local communities with better information on their local assets and make it easier for them to make informed decisions about their local environment.</p> <p>On NNRs explore opportunities for increased partnership with civil society organisations and local communities</p>	<p>Encourage public engagement with the delivery of the England Biodiversity Strategy , and with partners, engage people across the breadth of our work.</p> <p>Ensure the 'My Environment' portal is equally accessible across all sectors of society.</p> <p>Work with BIG and other partners to develop a successor scheme to Access to Nature.</p> <p>Develop and deliver good standards for engaging with the public and local communities across all of our NNRs and develop outreach programmes on those NNRs with the highest potential to engage new audiences</p>

2.2 People are increasingly able to visit and enjoy the natural environment

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
Existing access infrastructure maintained.	Develop new models for National Trails that increase the engagement of communities in their maintenance and management.	<p>Support Defra and stakeholders in simplifying/streamlining the recording of useful public rights of way.</p> <p>Deliver the Paths for Communities' initiative to maximise benefits to communities and to help remove barriers.</p> <p>Continue to support Local Access Forums to identify sustainable local solutions to access provision.</p>
New infrastructure developed sustainably and in keeping with 21 st Century needs.	Roll out the first phase of coastal access provision.	<p>Continue with the early stages of coastal access implementation.</p> <p>Continue to develop the highest potential NNRs as local exemplars of access provision and outreach and dedicate our eligible NNRs and analogous land as open access where possible.</p>
More people using access facilities.	Develop a modern framework for rights of way legislation that enables local communities to develop local integrated solutions.	<p>Work with others to identify and deliver better access provision for horse riders and cyclists.</p> <p>Support government in developing its new greenspace designation. With others, provide tools that will help communities participate in the planning and management of local greenspace.</p> <p>Working with local government, communities and local conservation groups, support Local Nature Partnerships through provision of data and information and, where appropriate, through direct contributions.</p>
Enhanced contribution by access provision to local economies.		



Outcome 3

Sustainable use of the natural environment

The use and management of the environment is more sustainable

Why are we doing it

Natural England's statutory role in the planning system and in the protection of sites and species, as well as our delivering the government's RDPE programme, give us a unique role in the sustainable use and management of our land.

High-quality landscape, biodiversity and access provision depends on planned, sustainable land use to secure well-functioning ecosystems. Farmers are the irreplaceable stewards of the land, shaping landscapes and delivering many of the benefits pinpointed by the National Ecosystem Assessment. These benefits are, in part, enabled and encouraged by agri-environment schemes now supported by over half of England's farmers.

Growth at national and community level requires approaches to planning and land management which enable economic and social developments to take place

while recognising the benefits we get from the natural environment. This allows us to meet all of our needs: economic, social and environmental. Effective local planning that enables communities to understand the value of the environment is where these approaches can be developed and delivered, and will be essential to implementation of the Natural Environment White Paper.

The government expects the planning system to address the needs of the natural environment and the services it delivers whilst delivering the homes, business, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs for its long-term prosperity and well-being. The Natural Environment White Paper makes it clear that local decision-makers, farmers and land managers are central to achieving society's ambitions for biodiversity, landscape and our natural resources.

Current situation

We live on a crowded, heavily used island, containing unique and globally important biodiversity. England is home to some of the world's most iconic natural and built landscapes. 25% of the country is protected under various national and international designations, while 70% of our land continues to be shaped by farming. With the participation of 50,000 agreement holders, Environmental Stewardship is the biggest tool available for conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Pressures on our land are intense and growing: population growth, demand for housing, the need to produce more food, the development required for economic growth, and the requirement to establish a low-carbon energy industry. The scale and variety of these pressures are reflected in the 23,000 planning applications that Natural England responds to each year.

Our role in agriculture is to work with farmers and land managers to help them manage their land so

that produce, biodiversity and other ecosystem services are all provided, profitably, at the same time.

Beyond the farmed environment, the natural habitats and green spaces of our towns and cities are essential to our biodiversity and provide a range of essential ecosystem services. Under the National Planning Policy Framework a new generation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans will be developed, part of a streamlined approach to planning designed to re-invigorate the economy. Integrating the needs of biodiversity within local planning through the provision of early, effective advice and evidence will be essential to support this drive. Equally, we must ensure that key sectors in industry, alongside regulators and other stakeholders, operate in a spirit of openness, trust and collaboration to enable sustainable plans to be designed and put into effect swiftly; Natural England will need to lead in the building of these partnerships.

3.1 Land and sea are used for social and economic development in ways that recognise, protect and enhance the value of the natural environment.

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>Effective protection of our SSSI, priority habitats and protected landscapes through the planning system contributes to, at least 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition, 50% SSSI in favourable condition and 95% of SSSI in favourable or recovering condition.</p> <p>More beneficial and less damaging impacts – because developments are at the right scale in the right place (e.g. renewable energy).</p>	<p>Deliver our statutory role as adviser on the natural environment in the planning system and in relation to protected species licensing.</p> <p>Provide a quality risk-based pre-planning, licensing and planning service to developers.</p> <p>Enable local community planning to function in a manner that is sustainable through our Duty to Cooperate with Local and Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Pilot new and innovative approaches to funding biodiversity & support a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting.</p>	<p>Provide delivery-based advice to government policy makers on new policy proposals.</p> <p>Through new model for managing planning and licensing casework, including use of national hubs, high-risk case management, industry advisory panels. Charging for discretionary services where this increases our capacity for customer responsiveness and delivery of environmental outcomes (for landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity).</p> <p>Provide statutory advice for the new Local Plans to be developed under the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>Give evidence and, where appropriate, advice to support the development of community led Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Run and evaluate pilot offsetting schemes for biodiversity and other ecosystem services.</p>

<p>Strategic planning and associated GI delivery programmes enable restoration of fragmented habitats and ecological coherence.</p> <p>Seen as a responsible partner in the planning system - Developers and planning authorities are supported in taking better decisions (through better, more joined up, quicker advice).</p> <p>More broadly based investment and local ownership of environmental issues.</p>	<p>Contribute to GI delivery through local partnerships and lead on NEWP GI evidence provision.</p> <p>Work with partners to provide joined-up advisory and planning services to local authorities.</p> <p>Work with partners to deliver water bodies in good ecological status (32% by 2015) through WFD.</p>	<p>Provide advice and, where appropriate support, to Local Authorities on their strategic delivery plans for Biodiversity and GI. Build the evidence base to support this and the work of local communities through the GI Partnership.</p> <p>Work with the Environment Agency and others to deliver a Single Voice approach to priority local authorities and to support Total Environment pilot schemes.</p> <p>Give helpful and practical advice to developers and planners re European Protected Species.</p> <p>Work with EA, water industry, OFWAT and others to deliver a robust freshwater environmental programme.</p> <p>Work with EA, water industry, OFWAT and others to deliver a robust freshwater environmental programme.</p> <p>Work with EA and local communities to ensure our coastal environment is protected and enhanced in the context of development and climate change pressures.</p>
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3.2 Land is used efficiently by competitive and productive businesses to deliver more environmental services, food, renewable energy and other benefits.

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>ES schemes contribute more to agreed and specific outcomes – validated by ongoing monitoring.</p> <p>Environmental objectives delivered by farms and other land-based businesses that are technically efficient, productive, low waste and lower carbon, realising competitive benefits through increased environmental services delivering biodiversity and other landscape benefits supported by Environmental Stewardship.</p> <p>More locally led partnerships with farmers and local communities to deliver landscape scale programmes that bring in additional resources to increase the impact of ES delivering better and more resilient outcomes.</p>	<p>Deliver Environmental Stewardship effectively to make the maximum contribution to multiple environmental benefits in biodiversity, landscape, access and resource protection – all within a context of ecosystem services, ecological networks and ecological restoration at a landscape scale.</p> <p>Work with EA to develop the catchment approach to achieving Water Framework Directive and other natural environmental objectives, building on CSF, and embed in the next round of River Basin Plans.</p> <p>Continually improve the efficiency of delivery of RDPE to maximise resources available for environmental outcomes.</p>	<p>Target HLS resources to areas and projects at the scale required where the evidence indicates it is best to deliver the agreed outcomes.</p> <p>Encourage the development of local landscape scale partnerships in areas identified as optimal for achieving the agreed outcomes, and through this secure wider benefits and additional resources.</p> <p>Move to outcome based agreements and support HLS agreement holders through aftercare and monitoring to help them ensure that agreements deliver their intended benefits and provide value for money, and make changes in agreements where necessary.</p> <p>Ensure ELS delivers better outcomes through the choice of appropriate options, enhancing contributions to reducing diffuse pollution and water quality as a result.</p>

<p>The administrative costs of ES continue to fall.</p> <p>ES is clearly targeted to places where it will deliver agreed outcomes most effectively.</p> <p>Satisfied customers receiving high quality integrated advice that is coordinated and aligned with industry led initiatives and incentives.</p> <p>As seamless and rapid transition to new RDPE as possible with payments to customers maintained.</p>	<p>Contribute to the development and delivery of an integrated farm advice service based on the results of Defra's review of how advice and incentives for farmers can be better aligned, and of industry led programmes to improve environmental performance including the CFE, the GHG Action Plan and the Voluntary Initiative on pesticides use.</p> <p>Support Defra in developing and delivering a new RDPE following CAP2014.</p> <p>To license badger culling to prevent the spread of bovine TB in cattle and hence support a sustainable land management sector.</p>	<p>Work with hill farmers and upland managers to achieve sustainable long term management delivering environmental outcomes, viable farm businesses and contributions to the economy and to upland communities.</p> <p>Contribute to the development and delivery of farm advice, covering all environmental objectives, aligning our contributions with industry led advice and knowledge transfer programmes.</p> <p>Ensure significant efficiencies are made in the administrative costs of ES scheme delivery, whilst investing in support and monitoring.</p> <p>Develop a robust badger licensing system.</p>
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Outcome 4

A **secure** environmental future

Decisions which collectively secure the future of the natural environment

Why are we doing it

The factors that affect the natural environment are complex and changing rapidly. Delivering the ambition of the Natural Environment White Paper requires individuals, communities and government to make choices that are affordable and meet local and national needs, yet which do not compromise the resilience and ecosystem services provided by the natural environment. These choices must be based on sound advice.

As statutory adviser on the natural environment, Natural England requires sound evidence to inform its advice and provide the basis for good decisions. Our role is to mobilise evidence from our own sources and from others; present it in compelling and accessible ways; and make it available to shape our own decisions and those of government partners, communities, businesses and individuals across the country.

As an evidence-based organisation we have experts across the environmental sciences, as well as in economics, social science and regulation. Our complementary roles in advising on land use and management and in managing National Nature Reserves give us a strong scientific base and practical land management expertise. As a result our advice at all levels, from local communities to partners and government, is firmly rooted in evidence and experience.

Our use of the ecosystems approach and our understanding of climate change impacts will ensure that our advice today secures the natural environment for tomorrow. Information and evidence will help us to anticipate, monitor and respond properly to these pressures.

Current situation

To contribute to securing our environmental future, we require evidence on the current state of the natural environment, an understanding of the processes involved and expertise in predicting future impacts.

The evidence base on the natural environment improves in quantity and quality each year. Datasets are provided by a wide range of players from scientists, government bodies and commercial companies to voluntary groups and individuals. This evidence base is used by government agencies, local authorities and the public when making decisions that affect the natural environment. We make our evidence base available through the internet – in 2011 there were 2900 users per day for MAGIC (our interactive maps of environmental information; see www.magic.gov.uk), generating more than 9 million maps a year from 188 different datasets.

Some of the biodiversity datasets in this evidence base go back 50 years or more, with increasing volumes of data being collected year on year. These historic datasets are some of the best in the world and are critically important to long-term monitoring networks. They demonstrate the irreplaceable contribution that skilled volunteers make to the evidence base. The collective activity of many thousands of volunteer biological recorders is co-ordinated through the National Biodiversity Network, with input from 39 Local Record Centres (in England) and over 85 national societies or recording schemes. Through the NBN Gateway we now have access to almost 70 million species records from over 600 datasets, covering all UK species groups. The monetary value of this data is estimated to be worth around £50m per annum if the data were to be collected through consultancy.

Despite the impressive amount of available biodiversity evidence there are still gaps in both species group and geographical coverage; our aim is to encourage greater uptake of systematic or structured surveillance. There is also concern about the sustainability of the ecological skills base in England to continue and extend the natural environment evidence base.

The National Ecosystems Assessment provides, for the first time, a synthesis of the ecosystem services delivered in the UK. This assessment helps our growing understanding of how managing habitats and species through ecosystems can deliver multiple benefits, such as flood protection and pollination. Increasingly we are applying our data on species and habitats to managing land and sea through an ecosystem approach.

Not only are we improving the quality of biological information, but, through our comprehensive MENE survey (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment), we have a much greater understanding of how, when and where people use the natural environment.

We have growing evidence of the contribution that the natural environment makes to physical health and to mental well-being, and a developing understanding of the full contribution that specific ecosystems make to economic growth.

We undertake work on understanding processes (such as the joint Defra/NE research programme to improve the effectiveness of Environmental Stewardship), predicting the future (eg the likely impacts of climate change and demographic

change) and finding better ways of monitoring (eg integrated monitoring of SSSI land under Stewardship agreements). We play a significant role in better articulating the issues that need to be addressed by organisations such as research councils and the European Commission. Natural England is in a unique position to act as a conduit between the practical realities of managing the environment and the extensive resource of research and modelling in the UK's institutes and universities.

4.1 We support Government and public bodies through the gathering of evidence and the provision of environmental data, information and advice.

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>A quality assured evidence base fit for purpose, with clear identification of priority evidence needs.</p> <p>A more coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to evidence gathering across the Defra network.</p>	<p>Maintain and develop a sound and quality assured evidence base to inform our advisory and regulatory functions.</p> <p>Work with Defra and partner bodies to deliver joined up State of Environment monitoring, and to publish a single concise and integrated report about the state of the environment on land.</p> <p>Maximise and build on the benefits of joint working with ALBs and closer working with Defra.</p>	<p>Ensure our evidence planning, prioritisation and delivery processes are integrated across NE and with Defra and ALBs.</p> <p>Complete appropriate baseline monitoring in the marine environment.</p> <p>Work with the JNCC and other UK agencies to deliver statutory reporting on Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Complete update of National Character Area profiles.</p> <p>Fill the evidence gaps in identifying and monitoring ecosystem services.</p> <p>Increase evaluation of the effectiveness of our interventions, especially in the context of land use and climate change adaptation.</p> <p>Work with the other ALBs to support Defra in planning, co-ordinating and delivering themed and single State of Environment reporting.</p> <p>Work with Defra on the next iteration of the state of the seas report, Charting Progress.</p> <p>Work closely with other ALB and Defra to develop complementary evidence programmes.</p> <p>Work with ONS and Public Health England to devise new measures of national well-being that reflect the importance of the natural environment.</p>

<p>Quality assured evidence is used to underpin [our] delivery both on land (eg RDPE) and at sea (eg network of MPAs).</p> <p>Decisions by public bodies that give due weight to natural environment considerations.</p> <p>A green and growing economy that understands and uses natural capital in a responsible and fair way.</p> <p>An effective specialist service from the ALBs to Government encompassing all relevant environmental specialisms.</p>	<p>Support government in ensuring that the natural environment is regarded as a key determinant of health and well-being.</p> <p>Evidence processes take account of principles specified in the Joint Code of Practice for Research and other relevant good practice guidelines, such as the Government Chief Scientific Adviser's guidelines on the use of scientific and engineering advice in policy making.</p> <p>Support government in developing proposals for paying the providers of nature's services for their delivery.</p> <p>Work closely with Defra and other ALB to maintain and develop our specialist capabilities.</p>	<p>Collaborate with Defra and other ALBs to develop evidence on the relationships between the natural environment, society and the economy.</p> <p>Strategic and operational standards for the gathering and use of evidence are embedded across the organisation.</p> <p>Make more targeted interventions through RDPE and through the planning system.</p> <p>Provide robust evidence as basis for MPA management measures.</p> <p>Identify and map ecosystem service hotspots in England and use [this evidence] to inform EBS delivery.</p> <p>Provide evidence in the appropriate format and style to meet requirements of public bodies, including government so it can make long term decisions on issues that affect the natural environment.</p> <p>Deliver our commitments under the Climate Change Act Reporting Power.</p> <p>Utilise our long-term monitoring networks to increase our understanding of environmental change including climate change.</p> <p>Work closely with other ALBs and Defra in developing, strengthening and sharing our specialist capability.</p>
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4.2 We work with communities and individuals to gather relevant evidence on the natural environment and support them through the provision of environmental data, support and advice.

What will success look like?	What have we been asked to do?	How will we do it?
<p>A consolidated evidence base, accessible at a variety of geographical scales and easily available at local level.</p> <p>Civil society making effective contributions to developing the natural environment evidence base.</p>	<p>Join up our environmental monitoring at a local scale (data collection & provision).</p> <p>Contribute to development of the single 'My Environment' web portal.</p> <p>Adopt a coherent, shared and integrated 'civil society/ localism partnership approach to monitoring the natural environment.</p> <p>Facilitate local engagement with monitoring and survey.</p>	<p>Work with other members of the Defra Network to rationalise our investment in the collection and dissemination of data at a local level.</p> <p>Deliver good access to our evidence base through MAGIC and other systems.</p> <p>Provide geocoded MENE data via online data viewer.</p> <p>Support Defra in their development of the My Environment portal and allied databases of local environmental information.</p> <p>Undertake surveillance of priority habitats through a partnership approach.</p> <p>Develop species evidence base through the coordination and integration of volunteer, NGO and ALB effort.</p> <p>Mobilise networks of volunteers for species monitoring and survey and modernise processes for data collation and for sharing.</p>

<p>Better informed communities and individuals taking better decisions which balance economic growth with good outcomes for the natural environment.</p> <p>A resilient natural environment adapted to climate change</p>	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions in delivering climate change adaptation and mitigation.</p>	<p>Target our support for the National Biodiversity Network and NGOs to facilitate continued volunteer recording activity.</p> <p>Support local (Local record Centre) coordination of biodiversity data, and develop the National Biodiversity Network to meet localism needs.</p> <p>Support local decision-making through collation, interpretation and presentation of survey results.</p> <p>Use our work on NCAs, NNRs and SSSIs to develop local environmental data products for communities.</p> <p>Play a lead role in advising and providing information on the ecosystem approach and climate change adaptation and mitigation for the natural environment.</p>
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Excellent Public Body

Natural England will strive to develop the capacity, confidence and culture to deliver on the ambitious agenda set out for the natural environment in this document. Our priorities are:

- Our people
- Our operational effectiveness
- Our efficiency
- Our customer service
- Our communications

Through these strategies and programmes we will continue to drive efficiency, develop long-term capability, and build trust and common cause with customers and stakeholders.

Our people

The challenges outlined here can only be met by highly trained, motivated and well-led people. We will support, train and develop our staff to:

- Ensure that we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time
- Build our leadership capability and provide the right leadership for a highly geographically dispersed organisation
- Nurture our specialist knowledge and expertise
- Maintain motivation and provide support for staff in developing their skills and careers
- Ensure that staff know what is expected of them by the organisation
- Provide a safe working environment
- Value the diversity of our own people and the communities we serve

Operational effectiveness

We will have an operating strategy that shows how we will:

- Deliver challenging targets with increasingly constrained resources
- Change what we do as science and the policy context evolves
- Respond to feedback from partners, customers and staff on our work to improve the way we operate
- Use technology to develop better ways of delivering our outcomes and serving our customers
- Define and implement transparent standards for everything we do
- Ensure the optimal use of resources at a local level so that we are ready to respond to local needs.

Efficiency

We will have an efficiency strategy that shows how we will:

- Meet the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review targets
- Demonstrate that the services we deliver represent excellent value for money
- Lead by example in adopting good environment management and sustainable practices
- Work with our staff, the Defra network and our suppliers to find further opportunities for innovation and efficiencies to improve the way we work.

Customer Service

We will have a customer service excellence programme that will:

- Realise our vision to 'stand out from the crowd' for our customer service
- Improve our delivery of environmental outcomes
- Build trust in our advice by engaging early, openly and consistently with customers
- Encourage customers to recommend our services to others
- Deliver on customers' expectations of us as a public body.

Communications

Our communications will:

- Ensure our staff and stakeholders understand our role, purpose, values and priorities
- Support our aspiration to be an outward-facing, customer-focused organisation
- Help us engage with stakeholders to ensure successful delivery through partnership
- Embed our cultural values of being 'helpful, practical, trustworthy and impartial' in everything we do
- Make our evidence and advice available to stakeholders to help them make the right decisions for the natural environment.



We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

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