

## ***Natural England - for people, places and nature***

### **Summary of *Natural England's* strategic direction and approach - July 2005**

The creation of *Natural England*, as a powerful statutory champion of our natural environment, is a hugely exciting opportunity. We will build on the strengths of the Rural Development Service, of the Landscape, Access and Recreation work of the Countryside Agency and of English Nature. This will create a powerful agent for change with a strong and independent voice. We will be new and innovative in the way we work, adopting forward looking approaches. We will deliver our **vision** and so our contribution to sustainable development with confidence.

***England, from seabed to mountain top, will support diverse, resilient and accessible landscapes, habitats and green spaces. They will be rich in wildlife and contribute to our wealth and well-being. We want people to see themselves as part of nature and enjoy its benefits everywhere.***

This vision matters to many other organisations and individuals too and we will join forces with them. Our **mission** is to use our knowledge, influence and action to secure a better natural environment for the benefit of all. Our **strategy** will be to catalyse the changes in behaviour necessary to achieve this.

Our results, in partnership with others, will make a difference. We will:

- connect more people with nature
- support more sustainable management of land and sea
- conserve our wonderful landscapes, restore degraded ones and make connections between habitats and green areas in towns
- sustain and enhance biodiversity
- conserve geology and restore dynamic natural processes
- increase access, enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment
- contribute to improvements in health, wealth and wellbeing
- benefit and encourage communities

To achieve this we will:

- put people at the heart of our work
- develop evidence based on science, analysis and practical experience
- demonstrate leadership and develop mutually beneficial partnerships
- be an excellent employer and public body
- deliver high quality, efficient services to customers
- use our money and knowledge to achieve change
- have more effective and simpler relationships with land managers, securing their commitment and that of users of the sea to environmental improvements
- influence policies and practices at local, regional, national and European levels
- promote and exploit the role that a high quality natural environment plays in delivering social and economic benefits
- deliver across the whole of England, its land, towns, coasts and sea
- be firm, fair and passionate

**In this way we will help to secure our common future.**

# ***Natural England* - for people, places and nature**

## **Draft statement of strategic direction and approach**

### **1.0 Introduction**

*Natural England* will make a difference to people. We will join forces with communities, government at all levels, businesses, voluntary organisations and individuals to transform the natural environment for everyone to enjoy. A well functioning, resilient natural environment underpins economic and social wellbeing and is essential for wealth creation. It matters both now and for future generations. Major challenges and opportunities lie ahead of us. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing society. This and other important long term trends and their implications for our work are briefly reviewed in Annex 1. *Natural England* will work in new and creative ways that will benefit people's health, enjoyment and prosperity through improvement of the natural environment.

### **2.0 Our Vision**

***England, from seabed to mountain top, will support diverse, resilient and accessible landscapes, habitats and green spaces. They will be rich in wildlife and contribute to our wealth and well-being. We want people to see themselves as part of nature and enjoy its benefits everywhere.***

**This vision matters to many other organisations and individuals too and we will join forces with them. Our mission is to use our knowledge, influence and action to secure a better natural environment for the benefit of all.**

**Our strategy will be to catalyse the changes in behavior necessary to achieve this.**

"Make the wrong choices now and future generations will live with a changed climate, depleted resources and without the green space and biodiversity that contribute both to our standard of living and our quality of life. Each of us needs to make the right choices to secure a future that is fairer, where we can all live within our environmental limits. That means sustainable development."

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, March 2005

### **3.0 The purpose of *Natural England***

The draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill sets out the general purpose of *Natural England* – "to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development."

We believe the creation of *Natural England* is right. It enables us to bring the strengths of the three organizations together, in a way which is genuinely more than

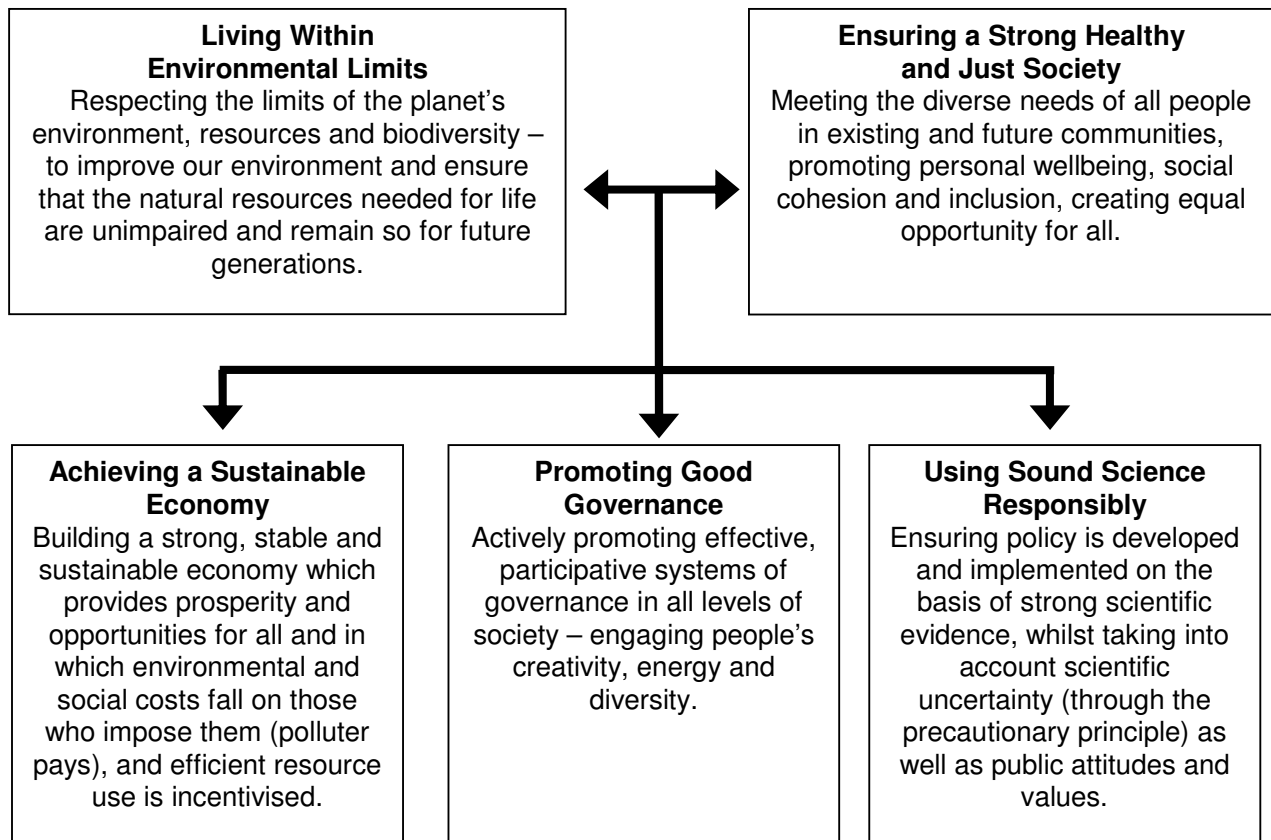
the sum of its parts. English Nature brings practical experience, ecological knowledge, leading edge science and a track record of influential policy advice. The Countryside Agency brings a focus on people, increasing access and enjoyment of the natural environment and a reputation for effective innovation and experimentation. The Rural Development Service brings extensive knowledge of farming and the expertise and resources to help farmers deliver a more sustainable future for their families and for the environment. *Natural England* will build on these strengths and go beyond them:

- to better link landscapes, habitats and land management
- to improve links between the people we work with and for
- build the case for the natural environment in public health terms, and through education
- to bring together world class science, delivery expertise and public engagement
- to form a high profile, credible and influential voice for the natural environment with national and regional government.
- networking with the many voluntary organisations who do so much for the natural environment and peoples enjoyment of it; we will seek to add value in our work with them

## 4.0 Contributing to Sustainable Development

The UK government's sustainable development strategy sets out five guiding principles for sustainable development (see box below).

### Guiding principles for sustainable development



HM Government UK Sustainable Development Strategy - March 2005

*Natural England* will be primarily and an environmental organisation. However, we will carry out our functions within a sustainable development context and will, wherever possible, proactively seek solutions which both achieve our environmental objectives and also provide economic and social benefits.

The inheritance of *Natural England* and its new remit will place it in a good position to help society apply the principles of sustainable development set out by the Government and move onto a more sustainable path. It places an onus upon us to augment our existing strengths by greater capacity to make the socio-economic case for the natural environment and to engage directly with communities.

The Government's sustainable development strategy also sets out four 'shared priorities for UK action'. These are:

- **Sustainable consumption and production** – leadership by industry, Dti, and the Environment Agency is crucial here and we will be supportive
- **Climate change and energy** – we must become a flexible organisation,

using wider landscapes and biodiversity corridors, for examples, to link Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and to give them the cushions to adapt. The new agri-environment schemes are ideally placed to assist with this; and we will promote the need for adaptation of land use strategies to reduce the risks to biodiversity as well as supporting essential action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

- **Natural resources protection** – this is simply the core of much of what *Natural England* will do
- **Sustainable communities** – here our input into Regional Spatial Strategies will be very important. But more widely, the importance of ‘green lungs’ is recognized in the sustainable communities strategy; we can work with this agenda – for example with the ‘greening the gateway’ initiative. Our role is urban as well as rural.

## 5.0 Our targets

*Natural England* is a key partner in the delivery of the Government’s environmental goals. Through our management of the natural environment we will also contribute to the Government’s wider objectives. Our results, achieved alone and in partnership with others, will make a difference.

5.1 We will demonstrate and **make transparent the hidden values of nature everywhere** – its importance to people’s sense of place, its life support functions and the positive effect that it can have on people’s happiness. We will raise the sights of policy makers and explore the ethical, moral, spiritual, economic and social arguments for caring well for our part of the planet. We will collaborate with other statutory agencies who deliver the higher quality air, water and soil environments on which we and other creatures depend. We will emphasise the dynamic nature of ecological change and show how this can be turned to our advantage or, if limits are exceeded, can lead to irreversible environmental losses with adverse consequences for society and our economy.

5.2 *Natural England* **will increase people’s connection with nature**, enhancing their enjoyment and understanding of the outdoors, particularly those most disadvantaged in society. We will reach out to a diverse range of communities. We will work with the voluntary sector to expand volunteering, and increase community involvement with Local Nature Reserves benefiting both people and nature. In partnership with land owners we will deliver the Government’s PSA targets for increasing access to open country. We will work closely with ODPM, CABEspace and local authorities and help planners and developers to green our towns and cities and promote better management of green spaces everywhere. Projects that link nature and health, and environment and social justice, will be part of our new ways of working. We will also seek new resources to work with government, schools, Non-Governmental Organisations and the Lottery to deliver the Government’s manifesto commitment to expand opportunities for ‘real world’ learning in the outdoors for children.

5.3 Together with our partners we will help Defra **meet the Government’s Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for the natural environment**, including securing favourable condition on 95% of SSSI area by 2010 and reversing the decline in farmland birds. New initiatives to bring back common species everywhere and achieve recovery at a landscape scale will be a priority for *Natural England*. We will

support the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' Countdown 2010 campaign to engage everyone in helping to meet the EU Gotenburg target of halting biodiversity loss across Europe by 2010.

**5.4 We will support our National Parks, AONBs, National Nature Reserves, national trails and access to mountains and moorlands.** We will secure the sustainable management of sites in England that contribute to the European Natura 2000 network. We will sustain England's beautiful and distinctive landscapes and enhance those that have become degraded. We will help to restore connections between areas of high natural value and increase ecosystem resilience. We will advise on necessary adaptations of land use strategies to reduce the risks to the natural environment from climate change and support action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**5.5 We will develop a more effective and simpler relationship with land managers** through a single 'shop window' for users of environmental schemes and advice. In partnership with farming communities we will secure more environmentally friendly farming across 70% of the farmed landscape by 2010. This will help to reduce diffuse pollution and expand wildlife habitats and attractive landscapes and contribute to the viability of rural businesses. *Natural England* will work with the Environment Agency to deliver catchment sensitive farming and improvements in the freshwater environment, helping Government to implement its Water Framework Directive obligations. Our strategic alignment with the Forestry Commission will deliver more benefits from sustainably managed woodlands. And we will work closely with English Heritage to nurture the historic environment particularly in rural and coastal areas

**5.6 We will implement the Government's manifesto commitment to improving access to our wonderful coasts** and we will support the sustainable management of these dynamic environments. We will work with all parties to deliver the Government's Johannesburg commitment to setting up a coherent network of marine protected areas by 2012 and restoring fish stocks by 2015.

Together with our partners in the Regional Development Agencies and others we will promote and help others exploit the role that a high quality environment plays in delivering social and economic benefits. Our work will contribute to the Government's goal of restoring vibrant urban and rural communities and reversing deprivation everywhere.

In all these ways we will support the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of this and future generations.

## **6.0 How we will work**

We will champion our own beliefs and we will listen to others advice. We will deepen our links with the science community and strengthen the evidence base of our work. We will seek to influence and work closely with government departments especially Defra, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, HM Treasury, Dept of Trade and Industry, Dept for Education and Skills, Dept for Culture, Media Sport and Dept of Health. We will manage our own land and resources and set an example. And we

will play a major role in direct delivery each year of incentives to sustainable land management through agri-environment programme. Put simply, we will be agents of change. We will:

- think long term
- bring together knowledge from practical experience, analysis and world class science
- share this knowledge with others in ways which inspire, enable and empower
- use our funding to deliver the maximum public goods for the public money entrusted to us and work with others who are also able to invest
- deliver a first class, efficient service to customers
- give well-evidenced independent advice to government on policy reform
- be a strong voice at national and regional levels
- influence and advise those who own the resource and use our expertise to help achieve economic benefits through sustainable management of the environment
- promote enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment
- strengthen popular and political commitment to the natural environment through dialogue with the public and politicians and engagement with the media
- provide information about the natural environment which helps people to make informed choices
- use our powers to ensure the environment is fully respected in spatial policies and local planning decisions, developing further our capacity to make the case for the economic and social benefits of good management of the natural environment.
- use our regulatory duties proportionately, but firmly
- make *Natural England* a body which attracts, motivates and retains the best staff

Annex 2 sets out some practical illustrations of how such ways of working can deliver a range of outcomes, contributing to more sustainable development.

## **7.0 New ways of working**

### **7.1 Staff**

Our staff are our experts, our delivery champions, our advocates and our relationship builders. We will develop, motivate and organise our people in the best possible way. In particular we will:

- ensure clear leadership, strategic direction and transparent management structures
- ensure multidisciplinary working and an integrated approach
- make best use of our staff's existing skills, knowledge and experience, foster learning and recruit new capacity and skills as needed
- ensure our structures and ways of working encourage challenge and innovation and recognize and reward achievement
- be enthusiastic; show that we care

## 7.2 Partnership Working

Working in partnership with other organisations will also be vital to our success. We will:

- organise ourselves across England, close to the people and communities we serve and the national, regional and local bodies who hold the power to make things happen
- work with and through National Parks, non-governmental organisations and the voluntary sector
- value collaborative working with other statutory bodies, particularly the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and English Heritage
- ensure we have the flexibility to deliver national policies in a way that meets local needs
- work with partners in our sister agencies and Joint Nature Conservation Committee to influence thinking in Europe and internationally and build alliances for change with government and other stakeholders, helping to promote sustainable behaviour across the economy

## 8.0 Emerging values for *Natural England*

Board and Council members have highlighted the importance of:

- being forward-looking, visionary and pro-active
- integrity and independence
- a focus on customers and providing them with excellent services
- commitment to staff development, good management and collective endeavor
- respect and fairness
- tenacity and passion
- creativity and innovation

Existing research and feedback from the Integrated Agency Stakeholder Analysis project and Integrated Agency Staff Participation project, suggest that most stakeholders consider it is important that *Natural England* should:

- be open and honest, willing to enter into genuine dialogue
- value partnerships, sensitive to and respectful of differences
- be evidence-based in its approach to making decisions and giving advice
- flexible enough to meet local and individual needs where possible
- be pragmatic, offering efficient, speedy services that are fit for purpose and not process-driven
- empower staff to find and provide solutions, using new ways of working
- manage risks effectively without being over-cautious

## **9.0 The Shape of *Natural England***

In designing our shapes, structures and processes we will:

- organise around outcomes
- rise to the scale of the challenges facing England's natural environment
- be a strong champion for the natural environment at regional and national levels
- drive holistic thinking, supporting cross-disciplinary working
- facilitate team work, excellent project management and networking within *Natural England* and with partners
- ensure clarity of accountability
- be open and accessible to the public
- bring people together to make the most of our synergies

Some consideration of the services that *Natural England* will need to deliver at different geographic scales is given in Annex 3.

*Natural England* Strategy Sub project  
July 2005

## How current trends will influence the work of *Natural England*

*Natural England* will be well placed to engage in dialogue with people about what matters to them concerning the environment - at local levels, at landscapes scales and across England. Cumulative pressures for development are likely to remain high. We can explore with people the likely short and long term consequences of alternative options and help to avoid irreversible changes that damage environmental quality while helping to meet people's needs. *Natural England* can provide data and analysis so that decisions can be based on the best possible evidence. The knowledge we bring can be informal and practical knowledge of local people or small businesses as well scientific and socio-economic analysis.

**Climate change** is happening now. The consequences will be increasingly felt by people in a myriad of ways and will vary across the country and with the seasons. Cutting greenhouse gas emissions is a critical task for the international community and *Natural England* will need to be exemplary in its housekeeping. The impacts will be seen in the look of the landscape, the plant life and the crops that are grown. Changes in temperatures and rainfall patterns will make it imperative to re-establish more links between areas of high habitat quality and to ensure larger areas of the countryside are supportive to wildlife. Our conservation strategies will need to take account of ecological change including changes in species composition. We will highlight climate change issues in our advocacy to government. And we will use our expertise to help policy makers to adapt land use and management strategies to reduce losses of biodiversity while minimising adverse consequences of changing weather patterns, like flooding, which affect people's daily lives.

Investment in more **sustainable production and consumption patterns** and so more sustainable wealth creation is vital to deliver our vision. Implementation by all public bodies and businesses of the Government's sustainable development principles will be crucial here. *Natural England* will have a wide remit, enabling a holistic view to be taken and we can work in partnership with others to help deliver the kind of economy that can support and maintain the natural beauty of our landscape and vital ecological systems. The first survey of public attitudes to the environment across the enlarged European Union of 25 countries has just been published. It reveals that 9 out of 10 Europeans believe that policy makers should pay as much attention to environmental issues as to economic and social factors when taking decisions. We will need to give high quality policy advice to government to help integrate natural environment objectives in economic and fiscal policies; and in agriculture, water, planning, marine, coastal, urban, transport, minerals, energy, nature conservation, access and recreation policies.

The reform of the EU **Common Agricultural Policy** presents a challenging opportunity, as it brings a greater emphasis on environmentally sensitive ways of farming. In order to sustain environmental enhancements, land managers will need to work collaboratively to explore how this can contribute to the success of their businesses. This can include opening up to greater access, recreation and tourism, or the environmental branding of commodities and niche products. *Natural England* will facilitate amongst land managers the wider understanding and collective appreciation of these opportunities based on their environment.

**Competition for space and for reliable supplies of natural resources, especially water, will be particularly keen in south east England.** Use of the countryside for leisure pursuits will grow and possible tensions will need to be resolved in a positive way. Adaptation of planning and land and water use strategies and working with farmers and water managers will be vital, both to reverse current fragmentation of habitats and to rebuild the resilience and functionality of our ecosystems, on land and at sea. Our marine natural resources are some of our finest natural assets and have huge economic value. They are in serious decline and action to restore fish stocks and safeguard other marine species and habitats is urgent. Working in partnership with all users of our coasts and seas to achieve more sustainable use will be essential, making space for people, industry and wildlife.

**Health inequalities, divisions in society, patterns of consumption,** and the need to strike a balance between individual and common rights and between rights and responsibilities, are all realities and will need to shape how *Natural England* behaves. Not all people will share our values or our understanding of the importance of the natural environment to us all and to future generations. We will need to adopt effective and innovative ways of communicating with the public and show how the environment does matter to their lives. The spread of access to the Internet, to networking and to global communication all offer opportunities to an agency rich in knowledge. Technological advances can deliver solutions to some current dilemmas and increase risks in other areas. The public's perceptions of risks will also influence their behaviour and their priorities. The demand for better regulation and for more public participation in decision-making will need to be met.

## Examples of how Natural England can deliver multiple benefits, contributing to sustainable development

### 1. Focusing on the land manager

The Craven Dales Project within the Yorkshire Dales National Park has been paving the way for *Natural England* by demonstrating how a single point of contact could work for owners and managers of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The point of contact is a designated member of staff from one of the three organisations (RDS, English Nature and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority) who, through a programme of joint training, is able to provide an integrated and comprehensive service of agri-environment agreements and land management advice to farmers. The project makes best use of the organisations' resources, has improved the quality of service delivery and is popular with land managers. It provides a tangible example of the benefits *Natural England* will bring.

### 2. Greening regional strategies

In response to the lack of environmental provision within the draft Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area Plan, *Natural England* partners advocated greening the strategy and developed the concept of Green Infrastructure. This is a network of multi-functional Greenspace providing habitats, public access areas, recreational facilities, historic sites, woodlands and urban landscaping. It contributes to a high quality natural and built environment, which links the urban centre to the surrounding countryside. The concept has been recognised as a key requirement for delivering sustainable communities in the Growth Area and a number of pilot projects are turning the concept into reality. This approach will help *Natural England* ensure new developments improve rather than degrade our natural environment.

### 3. Benefiting the local economy

The Mineral Valleys Project is a leading example of how *Natural England* could promote environment-led regeneration work. The planned investment of £5.2m will bring benefits such as nature-led tourism, habitat creation and enhancement, and improved access to the countryside and heritage features. Much of the work will be delivered with local communities - building valuable skills and knowledge through special events, educational opportunities and training, and encouraging people to celebrate their natural heritage. The jobs created and business generated will help to show how the environment can drive the local economy. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, over fifty partner organisations, including local authorities, voluntary bodies and community groups, along with hundreds of volunteers, are helping with this valuable work.

### 4. Nature and health

Good quality natural environments provide excellent places for gentle exercise, such as walking, which benefit the physical and mental well-being of individuals. Phoenix House is an organisation dedicated to helping substance misusers end their dependence on drugs and alcohol and rebuild their lives. For the last seven years' Phoenix House have been delivering a Conservation Therapy Programme to help both people and nature undergo recovery. Clients visit National Nature Reserves, in the Peak District and County Durham, each week to carry out practical conservation tasks such as dry stone walling to control livestock, and improving footpaths for

visitors. This pioneering partnership has shown how 'conservation therapy' can improve the mental and physical well-being of people going through rehabilitation, make a positive contribution towards wildlife management, and provide access to nature for local communities and reserve visitors.

### **5. Educating about nature through art**

In the midst of an area of light industry and electricity sub-stations in Canterbury is a green oasis - the Broad Oaks Environmental Education Centre and Nature Reserve. Despite the unlikely setting, people are encouraged to visit the centre and learn about environmental issues through a series of imaginative initiatives. In 2004 an environmental arts training programme was introduced, aimed at disadvantaged people in Canterbury and the surrounding area. The centre runs nature and art workshops aimed at special needs groups, Sure Start families and asylum seekers. This successful programme demonstrates one way in which *Natural England* will stimulate interest using art to communicate environmental issues.

### **6. Learning about nature locally**

Promoting the value of greenspaces, in and around our urban areas, will be an essential way that *Natural England* can reconnect people and with nature. The finest examples of natural open greenspace can be declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and management of these sites has enabled local communities to get involved, care for and enjoy their environment. In the London borough of Bromley, many people didn't know their two Local Nature Reserves existed. With support from the Wildspace! Grant scheme they now have two friends groups with 115 members and people are enthusiastic to get involved. Through the group they are learning new skills; making new friends; have a sense of pride and ownership; and come to respect and protect wildlife.

### **7. From the seabed**

The Invest in Fish project aims to develop options for the sustainable management of fish stocks around the South West of England. Management options will be proposed by all those with an interest in the region's fish stocks, from fishermen, anglers, restaurateurs, retailers, environmentalists to statutory agencies. Options being considered include gear limits, effort restrictions and closed areas. These options will be assessed for their economic impact, their impact on fish stocks, and for their impact on the marine environment, before proposing a final suite of management measures. Sound evidence of the best way to manage commercial fish stocks, from this and other projects, will be vital if *Natural England* is to succeed in securing recovery of marine wildlife and make the most of the opportunities from new marine legislation.

### **8. Supporting the local coastal economy**

With access to our coasts and seas set to increase, marine ecotourism is a developing business in England, ranging from scenic boat trips, with occasional seal sightings, to full scale offshore boat trips to see whales, dolphins or basking sharks. There is a need to ensure that these businesses run in a sustainable way without harming the marine wildlife they depend on. Standing for Wildlife Safe, the WiSe project provides boat operators with the knowledge needed to operate safely around marine wildlife without causing damage or disturbance, as well as information about wildlife to enhance visitor commentary. In return, businesses can use the WiSe accreditation in promotional material, and are featured on the WiSe website as

Wildlife Safe operators. The benefits of this project are numerous. Less wildlife disturbance from overzealous boat operators, improved wildlife experience for customers, and a growing appreciation of the wonderful marine wildlife to be found around our shores.

### **9. Nature, recreation and archaeology all in one**

Borough-on-the-Hill is a popular Iron Age fort which was built to defend the inhabitants of ancient Leicestershire against invaders. However, its foundations were under attack from rabbits, threatening its future. A mixture of Countryside Stewardship funding and support from the County Council and other partners has been used to repel the bunny invaders! A combination of sheep and cattle grazing and scrub management has resulted in a rapid decrease in the rabbit population whilst other wildlife is flourishing. The vegetation has recovered so much that parts of the site have been designated as a Wildlife Site by the local Wildlife Trust and the condition of the fort ramparts is now greatly improved. The integrated approach to the issue has delivered a more secure future for the historic monument, as well as public amenity and a wildlife haven, illustrating the multiple benefits which can be achieved by *Natural England*.

### **10. Economic solutions to biodiversity and landscape problems**

Encroaching bracken is a significant problem in many parts of the country. The Mendip Hills Bracken Composting Project was initiated in the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to tackle this issue in a way which enhances biodiversity, access and the landscape as well as the local economy. Following research into the properties of bracken compost, composted bracken is now marketed as a natural product from the Mendip Hills AONB. As well as producing an affordable peat-free soil conditioner, bracken harvesting has resulted in the restoration of a mosaic of habitats, helping ground nesting birds and increasing the small mammal population which provides more prey for raptors. The project has resulted in the establishment of Bracken Down Composting Ltd who are also involved with composting green waste from local authority recycling centres. This project provides a model for *Natural England* to seek economic solutions to biodiversity and landscape issues.

### **11. Advocating Policy Reforms**

Pooling expertise and commissioning policy research jointly through the Land Use Policy Group has enabled the Agencies, working with the Institute for European Environmental Policy, to build the case for reforms of the European Common Agriculture Policy and so help to release more resources to fund a growing agri-environment programme.

## Organisational principles for *Natural England*

We will deliver our services in ways that are the most effective. Partnership working and networking will be critical. In some cases this will mean individualised, local delivery. Other services will best be grouped regionally or nationally. Often our services will draw on knowledge and skills from across the organisation and beyond and we will need to operate at a number of levels simultaneously to achieve results. Staff at leadership levels will need to be aware of the broader context affecting all they do and to be able to work across the different scales. One of the opportunities of the new, integrated ways of working will be setting up support systems and creating a climate and events that facilitate knowledge sharing both within *Natural England* and with our customers who help us deliver.

We will need to be skilled in brokering innovative, joined-up solutions to challenging problems and develop our expertise in conflict resolution. And we will need to take full advantages of the synergies that can be obtained by working across different levels.

### Local Delivery

*Natural England* will be responsible for giving farmers and other land managers agri-environmental payments to enable them to deliver essential standards of natural resource protection and landscape and wildlife benefits on their farms and across the broader countryside and coasts. Delivery of tailored agri-environment agreements, support and advice to land managers and the regulation of protected sites is best done locally, within the context of targets set regionally and a framework set nationally, according to rules agreed across Europe. Sustainable management of protected areas, including our finest National Nature Reserves and AONBs will be vital.

Local environments in cities, towns, villages and rural areas affect people's daily lives and well-being. Positive influence on local plans and planning decisions will be a vital role for *Natural England* as a Statutory Consultee. Working with others to create new green areas and realise the benefits for people of more attractive watercourses in towns, improving the management of these assets and linking them together better will be exciting opportunities for *Natural England* to demonstrate a new approach delivering a multitude of benefits. This can make a contribution to people's physical and mental health and provide opportunities for more social inclusion.

Targeting effort to helping some of society's most excluded groups to benefit from higher quality local surroundings and contact with nature will be a priority for the Agency's local activities. Listening to local people and understanding the economic and social drivers that affect local businesses will be essential. Dialogue with offshore fishermen, farmers, developers, ramblers, gardeners, environment groups and a host of other social groupings including volunteers will be vital to delivery and to underpin the Agency's effectiveness and political support for its goals.

## **Regional Delivery**

Government has emphasised the importance of *Natural England* providing a strong environmental voice at regional level. And we will work in close collaboration with others especially the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and English Heritage. Coordination of agri-environment schemes will be most cost-effectively and responsively done at regional level, along with the delivery of standardised agreements.

Strengthening influencing of regional spatial, sustainability and economic strategies, in dialogue with Government Offices, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Assemblies will be important. Close working with Regional Water Companies, National Park Authorities, regional Environment Agency, and industries and developers will be important. Building trust, dynamism and joint achievement will be vital to these relationships.

## **National and international delivery**

As a national body, *Natural England* will need to deliver robust and well-evidenced decisions and advice that take account of economic and social drivers as well as environmental drivers. At national level we will need to set consistent and high quality standards for designation and management of protected areas and set rules, procedures and targeting guidelines for agri-environmental schemes that meet our legal obligations. We will need to give national guidance on planning, access and landscape issues. We will need to commission a strategic programme of research and monitoring and disseminate the results to a wide community. Networking with natural and social scientists, economists and other specialists and with NGO's in the UK and across Europe and the international community will be vital to ensure *Natural England's* knowledge and evidence base is robust and leading edge.

Advice to Defra and other government departments, to Parliament and to the European Commission will need to be nationally led, and developed in many cases in partnership with other Agencies, particularly the JNCC, Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales. Constructive and creative relationships with a wide range of public sector, private and voluntary bodies will be important.

Branding, strategic communications and setting presentation and service standards will also be a national responsibility.