

Natural England Board



Meeting: 14
Date: 10 December 2008

Paper No: **NEB PU14 04**

Title: **Evidence and Policy Priorities for Natural England 2009/10**

Sponsor: **Andrew Wood, Executive Director Evidence and Policy**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to secure the Board's agreement to priorities for our Evidence and Policy development work for 2009/10.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Board endorses the evidence and policy priorities for 2009/10.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 In previous years the Board has been invited to comment on priorities for policy development. Annex 1 lists the agreed policy priorities for the previous three years, and shows progress against the 2008/09 priorities.
- 3.2 This year the Board is invited to consider the evidence and policy priorities for 2009/10 together, reflecting the need to ensure that our policy work is evidence based.
- 3.3 To guide our analysis of evidence and policy priorities we have drawn on the following:
 - Strategic Direction;
 - State of the Natural Environment 2008 Report;
 - Policy and evidence reviews;
 - Known initiatives and priorities in Government and Europe;
 - views from key stakeholders;
 - Regional perspectives (in future years these will be captured via Communities of Practice);
 - Discussions at the Board Outcome Groups.

- 3.4 The evidence programme of Natural England encompasses both work to maintain the evidence base (including the continuation of long-term surveillance data sets) and to expand it, through new research and novel monitoring programmes.
- 3.5 Evidence priorities have been identified by analysis of the evidence needs derived from the process described at 3.3, against the following criteria, both of which are included in the top ten strategic risks faced by the organisation:
- demonstrating environmental leadership;
 - addressing operational and reputational risk.
- 3.6 In identifying the policy priorities for 2009/10 we identified policy areas as priorities where:
- we wish to highlight or launch new Natural England policy which is key to delivering our outcomes;
 - there are major opportunities, such as new legislation, which we wish to influence;
 - there are significant Government or European consultations planned or underway.
- 3.7 The key challenges for the natural environment are halting the decline in biodiversity, adapting to climate change, renewable energy development, protecting the marine environment, developing a strategy for land use and ensuring that more people can enjoy and value the benefits supplied by the natural environment more often.
- 3.8 This paper focuses on the requirements for the coming year. It is recognised many of these broad areas will require ongoing development of the evidence base and evolution of policy over a number of years. Our evidence priorities, in particular, will evolve as communities of practice begin to consider the medium term needs of the organisation for new or refreshed areas of our evidence base. Additionally, the work of the Chief Scientist's team and the Futures team will point to much longer term priorities.

4. Proposed priority areas for Natural England evidence development

- 4.1 We propose that the four evidence priorities for 2009/10 should be:
- Building on core monitoring programmes in order to understand and articulate the impacts of agri-environment delivery, and working on the wider social and economic valuation of the natural environment;
 - Development of the scientific understanding needed to define an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas, and monitor their condition;
 - Further develop and refine an ecosystem services approach that will enable the development of a practical delivery model;
 - Development of our understanding of how Natural England's delivery will need to evolve in order to deliver effective adaptation of the natural environment to climate change.

4.2 These four priority areas will rest on the foundation of our ongoing monitoring programmes. Specifically, we will work to broaden our monitoring to include more robust programmes for landscape and engagement with the natural environment.

4.3 We are continuing to work to ensure that our evidence programme is fit for purpose in the longer term and we will ask the Board to consider our refreshed evidence priorities at a future Board meeting.

5. **Proposed priority areas for Natural England policy development**

5.1 For 2009/10 we are proposing a mix of more integrated policy development, which read across outcomes, as well as some more specific topics.

5.2 We propose that the five policy priorities for 2009/10 should be:

- **Landscape scale integration.** The Integration of landscapes with biodiversity, and the impact on both of climate change, remains a core objective, to allow us to deliver our work and objectives at a larger scale
- **Inspiring People to enjoy, understand and act for the natural environment.** This will build upon existing policy development to enable people to be inspired by and engage with the natural environment close to where they live or where they want to go.
- **Planning and sustainable land use.** This includes our engagement with the development of National Policy statements, and the Sub-National review. Our ongoing work on the CAP Health check and the proposed Floods and Water Bill are also included here
- **Sustainable use of the marine environment.** This will be important to ensure effective implementation of the marine bill, in preparation for the forthcoming review of the Common Fisheries Policy and for our ongoing work on renewable energy, including any proposed Severn Tidal Power Options.
- **Climate change adaptation.** Further policy development work is needed to ensure effective implementation of the Climate Change Bill, including work on Vulnerability Assessment.

5.3 These policy priorities reflect a shift in emphasis, as we begin to complete the initial stages of Natural England's own policy development (Annex 3), towards influencing policy development across government and in Europe to achieve our outcomes. We will also focus effort on producing guidance to secure the consistent implementation of our own policies across Natural England.

5.4 In all of the identified priority areas, there is close linkage between evidence and policy development work. Clearly the different portfolios of work have slightly different drivers and operate to slightly different timescales - in general the evidence perspective is 1 to 5 years ahead, the policy perspective is slightly shorter taking a 1 to 3 year view. We have also attempted to achieve appropriate linkage with our advocacy priorities, with much of our advocacy

being designed to achieve policy objectives and both policy and advocacy being evidence based.

Annex 1

Policy priorities agreed by the Board in previous years and progress in 2008/09

2008/09	Board consideration	2007/08	2006/07
CAP reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy response to CAP Health Check and mitigation of loss of set-a-side consultations approved 	To maximise the environmental benefit from the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13, via review of Environmental Stewardship and engagement with CAP Health Check process	CAP reform with a particular focus on the EU Rural Development Budget and RDPE including the targeting of ES
Planning and development-both terrestrial and marine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All landscapes Matter draft Policy approved Flood and erosion risk management draft policy approved 	Spatial planning and land use; to influence the Planning Reform and Government reviews leading to change at national through to local level.	Land use with an emphasis on green infrastructure, particularly in respect of our work in the Growth Areas and Growth Points and linking to our health and environment campaign
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy response to Climate Change Bill approved Biodiversity and Climate Change draft policy approved Coastal Change draft policy approved 	Climate Change adaptation and mitigation, opportunities as offered by the draft Climate Change Bill and Energy White Paper.	Climate change – a scoping paper setting out the parameters and focus of the work to December Board
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind energy draft policy approved Wave and tidal energy draft policy approved 		
Access to the natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the natural environment draft policy approved 		Coastal access to enable us to present advice to Ministers on options
		To influence the Marine Bill and Marine White Paper plus the EC Maritime Green Paper and Common Fisheries Policy mid-term review.	Marine development of Natural England's policy position on progressing the establishment of Marine Protected Areas and policy on particular aspects of the Marine Bill.

		Urban and Urban Fringe policy and the Planning White Paper, an ideal opportunity to influence the urban green infrastructure debate at national and local levels.	
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Annex 2 - The interrelationships within our policy development

