

# **An invitation to shape the Nature of England**

## **Summary of responses to the Discussion Document**

**December 2010**

### **Purpose of this document**

In July 2010, Defra published a Discussion Document *An Invitation to Shape the Nature of England*. This was an open invitation for views and aimed at encouraging the debate about how best we can protect and enhance our natural environment and the valuable services we derive from it. The deadline for responses was 31 November 2010 and the views received will contribute to the delivery of a Natural Environment White Paper in Spring 2011. Defra would like to thank all the organisations, groups and individuals that participated. In total, 951 responses were received.

This document provides a broad overview of the information contained in the responses. It seeks to give an insight into the main themes that have been raised and highlight some of the other messages that have been provided to Defra. It should be noted that this analysis reflects the variety of views received and does not necessarily reflect government policy.

Introduction .....	5
Climate change, demographics and incremental impacts .....	6
Biodiversity and environmental limits .....	6
The way we live .....	7
Pressures on land and ecosystem services .....	7
Engagement and acceptance of need to change .....	7
Economic drivers and implications .....	8
Key elements in responses: growth; global economics and trade; economic implications. ..	8
The challenge of delivery .....	8
Other specific issues.....	9
II   Setting the scene: Principles and Strategic Framework.....	10
Greater Understanding .....	10
Determining and accounting for value .....	10
Leadership and direction .....	12
Equal weighting.....	12
Communication.....	13
III.   Overarching approach.....	14
Approach .....	14
Education .....	15
Levers (Delivery mechanisms) .....	15
Support mechanisms .....	17
Ways of working.....	18
Deliverables.....	18
Key sector - farming .....	19
Cross cutting issues .....	19
a)   Localism.....	19
b)   Expertise and advice .....	20
IV   Defining success and monitoring progress .....	21
Targets .....	21
Public Attitudes and Engagement.....	21
Biodiversity & Ecosystem function degradation or decline.....	22
Ways of Working and Sustainability .....	22

Engagement and partnership .....	23
Baseline and monitoring .....	23
Levels of evidence/advice .....	23
V. Things to continue; things to do differently .....	24
Agri-environment schemes .....	24
Designations.....	25
Regulation and planning .....	25
Ways of working.....	25
Scale of delivery .....	26
Funding .....	26
Advice & Guidance .....	26
Education .....	27
Science and Evidence .....	27
VI. Barriers.....	28
Disjointed doing .....	29
Disjointed Thinking .....	29
Funding .....	30
Land Ownership; valuing environmental services; and environmental damage .....	30
VII. Sectoral approach .....	31
Civil Society .....	31
Schools and Education .....	32
Volunteering .....	32
Supporting local projects and initiatives.....	33
Working with conservation groups, government to lead, funding and advice and support. .....	33
Partnership working.....	34
Government to provide the skills, knowledge and enabling framework .....	34
Skills knowledge and professional ability, business engagement and land management ...	35
Localism.....	35
Other themes that had significant responses included ecosystem services, reform of the national planning system and further public participation in the consideration of planning applications. ....	36
Partnership working.....	36
Government leadership .....	37
Agri-environment funding.....	37

Smarter greener economy .....	39
Determining and accounting for value .....	40
Payment for use .....	40
Levers and delivery mechanisms .....	40
Key elements in responses: education and training; partnership working .....	43
VIII The European and International agenda .....	44
Biodiversity.....	44
In Europe and Reform of CAP/CFP.....	45
UK Leading .....	45
Climate Change .....	46
Sharing Knowledge and Practice.....	46
Environment in Decision Making .....	46
Other International action .....	46
IX. Mapping priorities.....	49
X.Campaigns.....	51

## Introduction

The overall response to the White Paper was one of near universal support for the need, timeliness and breadth of the ambition. Many respondents described their own sense of the impoverishment of the natural environment within their lifetimes.

*“I used to catch Great Crested Newts in a local pond and take them home so that I could observe their spectacular courtship and mating behaviour. .... the newt pond disappeared under the A1 trunk road after a few years but I didn't try to do anything about it because I thought no one would take any notice: an assumption which was probably correct in the early 1960s. It would be nice to think that society had become more aware but the pace of destruction has become ever greater.” (Individual)*

*“When I was a boy, seventy years ago, there were butterflies and crickets everywhere, bird song, and much else too. We took it for granted that nature was abundant. My grandchildren don't know what they are missing.” (Individual)*

*“We must rise to the task facing our generation, not leave it to those that come after us.” (Individual)*

### **I Challenge**

- **Investigating the major environmental challenges that the White Paper should address.**

1.1 Question 2 brought this to the fore. Many respondents agreed with the discussion document's identification of climate change, demographics and incremental impacts but commented on the relative importance of them, and interconnections between them.

QU 2. Have we identified the right overarching challenges for the White Paper to consider?

1.2 A third of respondents answered gave a straight yes/no answer, with 'yes' outnumbering 'no' by three to one. Two-thirds gave a qualified response, on which they expanded in question 2a. The most common observation was that the challenges were linked and thus could not be considered independently.

QU 2a. If not, what should we focus on?

1.3 In response to this question, five principle themes emerged:

- climate change, demographics and incremental impacts
- biodiversity and environmental limits
- the way we live
- pressures on land and associated ecosystem services
- engagement and acceptance of need to change

Three other themes emerged, though cited less frequently by respondents:

- global economic drivers
- the challenge of delivery itself

- other specific issues

### **Climate change, demographics and incremental impacts**

#### **Key elements in responses: climate change; population; incremental impacts**

1.3.1 Concurring with the discussion document, a considerable number of respondents highlighted climate change as an overarching challenge. They stressed both the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and ensuring that human and natural systems are able to adapt, thereby increasing resilience. Specific issues identified as gaps or challenges included: differential impacts across English regions; ocean acidification; and the need to overcome public suspicion.

1.3.2 A considerable number of responses underlined the challenge of demographics, focussing on overpopulation and population growth, globally and nationally.

*“It is particularly welcome that demographic changes are highlighted as a major challenge since this is arguably the cause of all the issues highlighted in this paper and is often omitted.” (A local environmental group)*

1.3.3 There was wide variation in responses to the challenge of incremental change. Many respondents considered it to be the most significant challenge, and highlighted the importance of using a longer timeframe for establishing an appropriate baseline to measure change. A significant number of responses reflected uncertainty on what was meant by the term and suggested that it did not reflect the scale of the problems facing the natural environment.

*“...the recognition that there are multiple small-scale drivers and impacts that operate incrementally is welcome: the challenge will be to develop coherent scientific expression and policy responses.” (A major national museum)*

### **Biodiversity and environmental limits**

#### **Key elements in responses: biodiversity loss; fragmentation; degradation of ecosystems; environmental limits.**

1.3.4 The challenge of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity was by far the most frequent challenge identified. Linked to comments on incremental change and shifting baselines (1.3.3), several respondents highlighted the importance of taking a long term view with respect to historic habitat loss, environmental degradation and the loss of natural resources. Specific concerns included the loss of soil and genetic diversity. The need to meet the new EU 2020 target to halt biodiversity loss was a common suggestion, reflecting a campaign run by the RSPB.

1.3.5 Fragmentation of the natural environment was identified by many as a separate issue to habitat loss, with the importance of habitat connectivity raised as a significant challenge. Again several respondents stressed the importance of reversing the current situation rather than just halting it, due to the inbuilt inertia of the system causing biodiversity loss to continue.

*“The fragmentation of habitats and reduction in their area has already put the remnant populations of wildlife on a path to extinction in many areas. These losses need to be restored and repaired even before any enhancement to habitats is implemented.” (Individual)*

1.3.6 The challenge of understanding and working within environmental limits was raised by a considerable number of respondents, as was the need to halt and reverse the decline in the wider suite of ecosystem services. The degradation of ecosystems, such as the soil and

marine environments were specifically highlighted. Many drew attention to the importance of environmental tipping points, thresholds that when crossed will result in disproportionate change to ecosystem function and the increasing risk that we are approaching or have crossed some.

### **The way we live**

**Key elements in responses: consumption; waste; sustainability; exported impact.**

1.3.7 There was considerable comment on the pressures placed on the natural environment from the way we live, the most common being on current levels of consumption, and on the impact on natural resources by the adoption of western lifestyles and diet in the developing world. Current levels of consumption and waste were viewed as unsustainable. There was wide recognition that current levels of consumption in developed nations were resulting in a significant exported environmental impact (as we buy manufactured products and raw materials from abroad), and that this was a topic of relevance for the White Paper.

*“One of the hardest things for any government to address I feel is...our need for the newest gadget, car, clothes etc etc. Unless this is addressed then the planet will continue to be overburdened.” (Individual)*

*“Mankind is now consuming 50% more resources than the Earth can sustain. And if the rest of the world consumed as we do in the UK, we would be using the equivalent resources of 2.75 planets.”(A national wildlife charity)*

*“In a society that discards 30 per cent of the food it buys, the overall challenge of waste is shaped by the nature of economic growth and the design of products, as well as matters such as marketing, packaging and consumers’ decisions on disposal and the options available.” (A public sector organisation)*

### **Pressures on land and ecosystem services**

**Key elements in responses: ‘perfect storm’; competition for space; farming; resource depletion.**

1.3.8 A commonly repeated theme among respondents was that of a “perfect storm” of simultaneous pressures on land use, comprising energy and food availability and security; the pressure of development; and changing climate. A key challenge driven by this combination of circumstances was an intensification of agriculture and land use in general. The impact of farming on the natural environment due to its scale was also identified by many.

*“At a global scale we are facing a “perfect storm” of challenges – passed peak oil; population increase; climate change and massive unprecedented biodiversity loss.” (A county-level biodiversity project)*

1.3.9 Respondents frequently linked these issues with the additional challenge of resource depletion, highlighting oil, uranium and phosphate depletion in particular.

### **Engagement and acceptance of need to change**

**Key elements in responses: lack of engagement and understanding; acceptance of change; attitudes; interests.**

1.3.10 Societal and individual lack of engagement and understanding of the natural environment and the challenges it faces, was a very frequently identified additional challenge

for the White Paper to consider. The need to engage with urban populations was repeatedly mentioned.

*“There appears to be an increasing disconnect in a growing proportion of society between lifestyle choices and the environment upon which we rely. One of the best mechanisms for stimulating a positive attitude to nature is to increase understanding of it and its true value to the community.” (A county council)*

*“Many children are growing up without contact with the natural world to the detriment of the quality of their lives and their understanding of the world in which they live.” (A local Ornithological Society)*

1.3.11 There was significant comment around the need for a change in response to the drivers identified and the considerable challenge of politicians, decision-makers and society accepting, understanding and acting on this need. One aspect of this was changing our attitude to the way we live and the way the countryside and landscape look.

1.3.12 A potential hurdle to this that was specifically mentioned, was that of vested or narrow interests, whether it be NIMBYism, landowners, single issue pressure groups or businesses and the challenge of ensuring a balance of action.

*“In too many decisions the strongly-held views of a few people, generally based on business, personal or narrow specialist interests, take precedence over the interests of the less vocal majority.”(A national recreation charity)*

### **Economic drivers and implications**

**Key elements in responses: growth; global economics and trade; economic implications.**

1.3.13 The view that the pursuit of growth was a fundamental challenge was raised in several responses, and was echoed in responses to questions 12 and 13 (Chapter 6), as was the problem of global economics and trade placing uncontrollable external drivers and pressures on the ability to address the challenges. Linked to this was the need to be aware and consider the economic implications of actions arising from the White Paper on different business sectors.

*“...the major challenge is to disconnect economic growth from negative environmental impact. This is perhaps the biggest challenge of our time.” (Individual)*

*“Governments have tended to prioritise economic growth, but the challenge for the future is to make this growth sustainable and reduce its environmental impact if the long-term damage to our natural systems is not to be irreparable.” (Rural interest pressure group)*

### **The challenge of delivery**

**Key elements in responses: lack of solutions; funding; short-term thinking.**

1.3.14 Many respondents highlighted problems around the ability to deliver the ambitions of the White Paper as a challenge in itself. It was suggested that current policies and structures were fragmented, that there was insufficient integration and coordination and that there was insufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject due to an erosion of the science and evidence base and expertise within government bodies.

*“The existing policy framework is fragmented and decisions are taken by a range of different bodies in isolation from each other. The mechanisms designed to ‘fix’ issues are not joined*

*up and do not have a holistic approach. The array of policies and current regulatory framework should be identified as an overarching challenge to be tackled within the White Paper.” (A local wildlife charity)*

1.3.15 The issue of funding or lack of it was raised in a considerable number of the responses, as was the challenge of short-term thinking. Concern was expressed about the risks of short term economic decisions versus the long term needs of the natural environment.

### **Other specific issues**

**Key elements in responses: invasive species; geodiversity; pollution; existing commitment.**

1.3.16 Several other discrete challenges or gaps were identified. These included; the increasing risk and impact of invasive plants, animals and pathogens; the need to ensure that the importance of geodiversity and geological processes was recognised in the White Paper; air, light and water pollution; and the challenge of delivering our existing commitments under international agreements and EU regulation with regard to biodiversity, landscape and water, and air quality.

## **II Setting the scene: Principles and Strategic Framework**

- **Identifying the high level, strategic issues that need to be addressed to enable delivery of environmental ambitions.**

2.1 This chapter focuses on question 1. Many respondents, whilst addressing this question, also made comment on the approach necessary to deliver the changes needed. These are picked up in Chapter III.

QU 1. What do we need to do to embed the true value of our natural resources in decision making at all levels?

2.2 Over two-thirds of respondents addressed question 1. Three principle themes emerged:

- greater understanding
- determining and accounting for value
- leadership and direction

Two other themes emerged, though cited less frequently by respondents:

- equal weighting to environment
- communication difficulties

### **Greater Understanding**

**Key elements in responses: understanding; attitude.**

2.2.1 Many respondents observed that improved understanding of the natural environment and the broad range of benefits it provides to society was a fundamental first step towards the embedding envisaged in question 1. The responses reflected a view that the level of understanding across both society and decision makers needs to be increased, and that society is far from realising the true value of our natural resources.

*“There is evidently a staggering level of ignorance about the importance of the natural world at most levels of decision-making in England.” (Individual)*

2.2.2 A greater understanding of the complexity, scale and urgency of the challenges faced was considered important in decision makers at all levels, especially so at the local level, where understanding was considered to be low.

2.2.3 Comments regarding the need for greater understanding were often linked to recognition of the task ahead in terms of the change in attitude that was perceived as necessary.

*“We will not achieve a step-change in nature conservation in England without society accepting it to be necessary, desirable, and achievable.” (A national rural protection association).*

### **Determining and accounting for value**

**Key elements in responses: determine value; ecosystem services, environmental accounting, environmental cost.**

2.2.4 The greatest number of responses to this question referred to the need determine the value of the natural environment before it could be embedded into decision making. There were suggestions on appropriate methods of valuation, with the TEEB and UKNEA approaches frequently highlighted. However concern was expressed by some that the methodology was not adequate, particularly with regard to how they could be made relevant to local issues and decision making.

*“Until society is ‘charged’ with the true ecological cost of our activities on the planet people as individual ‘consumers’ will continue to give the health of the planet a lower priority than their own well being and status when making their individual purchasing choices; until companies are ‘charged’ with the true cost of the environmental impacts of their businesses’ they will continue to prioritise dividends to shareholders and profit to owners.” (Individual)*

2.2.5 Comment was also made concerning the risks around attaching monetary value to aspects of the natural environment, such as the impression that natural assets are tradable and that choices can be made. Concern was also expressed on how evaluation would address issues surrounding environmental limits.

2.2.6 A large number of responses highlighted the importance of the intrinsic or inherent value of the natural environment, with a significant number expressing reservation on philosophical grounds on the use of financial measures to determine value.

*“The Government should be unashamed to say that we protect the natural environment because of its intrinsic value, not simply for economic reasons.” (A local rural protection pressure group)*

2.2.7 The ecosystems approach was suggested as the most appropriate mechanism to determine value, and to integrate environment into and evaluate the environmental consequences of decisions. Although the weight of opinion was in favour of the approach several reservations were also made; including the terminology being a barrier to engagement; the complexity of the approach; its relevance at a local level; and the need to ensure that the financial value of ecosystem services was not the sole consideration in decision making.

2.2.8 Various methods of accounting for the value of the natural environment were proposed, including triple bottom line accounting, environmental foot-printing and life-cycle analysis. In all cases the reasoning being that the value of, or cost to the natural environment, needed to be accounted for in decision making. There were a considerable number of responses that emphasised the importance of, and mechanisms, for ensuring that the value once determined was embedded. Ensuring that the cost of the use and degradation of the natural environment was included in the cost of goods, services and activities was the most common suggestion, with Payment for Ecosystem Services and the Polluter Pays Principle also frequently suggested.

2.2.9 The balance between the cost and profit to individuals or business, versus the wider cost to society was raised in several cases and the ‘failure of the commons’ was an example cited of how important it is to ensure the correct valuation and assign cost and responsibility. (Further comments are picked up in Section III and VIIc).

*“With regard to soil erosion and runoff from the land, when these are costed it becomes obvious that they cost the individual farmer little, and in most cases nothing at all, so it is not in his/her economic interest to tackle the problem. However, society does pay, for example*

*to remove pesticides from drinking water or to alleviate the impacts of flooding exacerbated by the too intensive use of the land.”(Individual)*

### **Leadership and direction**

**Key elements in responses: leadership; direction; cross-Government responsibility; transparency.**

2.2.10 There was a consistent view expressed that to address the challenges and ambition of the White Paper, the Government needed to demonstrate leadership, with charismatic leaders championing and raising the profile of the natural environment at the heart of government. A Ministry of Biodiversity or a Department of Natural Capital were two suggestions to help demonstrate such leadership. Many responses also highlighted the need for the UK to demonstrate leadership on the international stage.

*“Moving this agenda forward will require real leadership and potentially cross political party commitment...there is no poverty of ambition, but there is a poverty of leadership and sustained political commitment to resolving these issues.” (Joint Committee for a National Park)*

2.2.11 A second aspect clearly identified in the responses was the need for direction from government. The need for a clear, shared and ambitious vision on the natural environment was frequently articulated. A further important issue was the need for national strategic and spatial frameworks which were implemented through local prioritisation and decision making. The desire was to align and coordinate policy to ensure clarity of purpose.

2.2.12 The responses also identified the need for cross governmental support. Numerous mechanisms were suggested to help deliver this. Leadership and responsibility within HM Treasury, having a minister responsible for cross-government implementation and the enforcement of the NERC Duty were suggested means. Whilst the expansion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) into wider decision making or the use of rural or sustainability proofing were also suggested as mechanisms for evaluating decisions made.

2.2.13 Incorporating the value of the natural environment into policy appraisal mechanisms, such as through Social Cost Benefit analysis and HM Treasury’s ‘Green Book’ were also proposed. The need for a coordinated response that integrated policies and action across sectors was frequently highlighted in the responses to both questions 1 and 2b.

2.2.14 An additional facet to this theme, suggested by several respondents, was the need for decision making to be transparent and open to challenge.

### **Equal weighting**

**Key elements in responses: equal footing; environmental underpinning.**

2.2.15 A significant number of respondents expressed the view that environmental concerns should be placed on an equal footing with economic and social considerations, with some suggesting that the natural environment should take precedence, as it underpins the other two. Similarly, many of the responses referred to the need to ensure that decisions and actions promoted sustainable use and management.

*“In general at local government level the environment and in particular the natural environment is subsidiary to economic and social issues. This is to be an expected consequence of the statutory burden on local authorities which tend to be social; the central*

*government settlement which is primarily orientated to social issues and education and the shortage of funding and the procurement process that lead to a focus on the financial and economic priorities. It is therefore only to be expected that Local government concentrates its expenditure and policies on the social and economic wellbeing of its constituency.” (A city council)*

## **Communication**

### **Key elements in responses: quantity; quality; clarity; relevance**

2.2.16 The need for far greater and better coordinated communication to explain and promote the benefits that society derives from the natural environment, and the importance of clear, non-contradictory messages using language appropriate for the audience was highlighted repeatedly. The importance of ensuring the messages were made meaningful to the recipient whether it be an individual, local group or business was also highlighted by many.

*“The major challenge will be to weave this clear, unequivocal message into the warp and weft of all Government departments and to cascade it down to local government, business and commerce and into the hearts and minds of the general public.” (A local wildlife charity)*

2.2.17 Respondents also identified the need to increase awareness and understanding of the natural environment. In particular, messages highlighting the health benefits of the natural environment, the wider social benefits, and the cost of inaction were seen as key aims behind increased awareness.

2.2.18 With regard to the use of appropriate language, the term “ecosystem services” was highlighted as a concept about which it might be difficult, but was nonetheless essential, to communicate effectively. Some suggested the term “natural” was inappropriate given the fact that the environment of England is highly influenced by man.

*A major challenge is to communicate the true value of our natural resources in accessible language, tailored to particular target audiences, with an appropriate level of technical detail (A county council).*

### **III. Overarching approach**

- **Enabling delivery and embedding of aspirations for the natural environment.**

3.1 This chapter provides a summary of the responses to the above. Relevant themes are drawn primarily from questions 2b and 4, but also in part, from questions 1.

QU 2b. How should we approach these challenges?  
QU 4. What mechanisms should we focus on to ensure we manage our natural systems more effectively in future?  
QU 1. What do we need to do to embed the true value of our natural resources in decision making at all levels?

3.2 Three quarters of respondents answered question 2b and almost two-thirds addressed question 4. Seven principle themes emerged:

- The nature of, and process for developing, an approach
- Education
- Levers/deliver mechanisms
- Support mechanisms
- Ways of working
- Deliverables
- Farming as *the* key sector

In addition two cross-cutting themes emerged, in responses to several questions in the discussion document, these are outlined subsequently to the above:

- Localism
- Expertise and advice

#### **Approach**

**Key elements in responses: strategic approach; long-term timescale; spatial scale; roadmap; targets; action now.**

3.2.1 The need for a strategic approach to the challenges was highlighted in responses to all three questions. Respondents highlighted the need for any strategy to be long term, holistic and to deal with the causes rather than the symptoms of the challenges facing the natural environment. A fundamental role identified for the approach is that it provides an overarching spatial and strategic framework to give direction, coordination, integration and guidance to policies and actions from national to local levels.

3.2.2 Many responses indicated that a strategy should be underpinned by a road map or plan of action that would include a set a measurable outcomes or targets. There were various suggestions of possible targets, including the doubling of woodland (a Woodland Trust campaign message). Additional suggestions included the need for local through to

national targets, targets linked to international obligations and the development of new PSI targets for public bodies.

*“A strong framework is needed that provides a consistent message across different geographic levels... visions and plans, would provide the evidence base and measurable outcomes against which to assess progress and success.” (A national Biodiversity charity)*

3.2.3 The term ‘roadmap’ was used primarily by those supporting a RSPB campaign, however the need for a plan of action was supported by a significant number of other respondents. It was suggested that the plan detailed the action, ownership and responsibility required to deliver the long term strategy. Additional components included a reporting requirement, identification of costs and long term funding, and an assessment of the relevant delivery mechanisms.

3.2.4 Due to the size of the challenges the actions contained within the strategy would need to be at an appropriate scale, with a landscape scale approach suggested by many. The example of the Wildlife Trusts’ Living Landscapes was highlighted in a number of responses. It was also suggested that in light of the pressing nature of the challenge facing the natural environment and to generate action the strategy would need to contain a call to action, detailing the actions different sectors and groups could take.

*“The Government should adopt a “Living Landscape” approach to provide a national overarching vision and strategic framework to achieve sustainable management of the wider countryside” (A local wildlife charity)*

## **Education**

### **Key elements in responses: education.**

3.2.5 The role of education was raised by many respondents. This was often linked to the challenges, identified in Question 2a, of the lack of engagement by society with the natural environment, and the need for greater understanding by society and amongst decision makers of the benefits of the natural environment.

3.2.6 The majority of responses focused on the formal education system and the education of children, however the importance adult education was also highlighted by several responses. One aspect of the latter was the need to educate politicians, decision makers, business leaders and consumers.

*“Formal education which remains the only guaranteed mechanism through which supportive behaviours and attitudes will be shaped.” (An education and research organisation)*

3.2.7 With regard to children, the importance of outdoor education was highlighted as was support for the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto and an expansion of the Educational Access programme.

## **Levers (Delivery mechanisms)**

3.2.8 Respondents identified a range of different delivery mechanisms or levers, to address the challenges:

### **a) Regulation**

**Key elements in responses: regulation; legislation; designations; planning.**

3.2.8.1 Regulation was identified as a key requirement by a large number of respondents. There were suggestions for new legislation such as an Environment Bill that consolidated existing regulation under a single act. However a larger number of respondents saw the priority as being the need to enforce existing regulation. There was roughly an even split between those suggesting the need for more robust regulation and those calling for a reduction and simplification of the system.

*“It is important that existing regulation to protect the natural environment remains in place as it can provide one of the most cost effective means of safeguarding core areas and threatened species.” (A national wildlife charity)*

3.2.8.2 The importance of designations was highlighted by a significant number of respondents. Calls for the establishment of Marine Protected Areas under the Marine Act was the most frequently cited specific case. However there were many views expressing support for the need to expand the suite of designations to help buffer and link existing sites and bring protection to ‘second tier’ wildlife sites. Opinions expressed the static nature of designations compared to the dynamics challenges facing the natural environment, and the failure of designations to address the changes facing the wider countryside.

*“A greater recognition of the importance of Local Sites is needed, with the abandonment of the misleading concept of hierarchy by the status of designation.” (Individual)*

3.2.8.3 A second topic within this theme, that received significant comments was that of planning (also addressed under questions 9c and 15), including a repeated call for a national strategic and spatial planning framework. Many responses included a request for improved guidance and direction to ensure that biodiversity was given a higher priority within the planning process, with support for a presumption for biodiversity and ecological function rather than for development. An expansion of PPS9 planning guidance was commonly suggested as a mechanism to achieve this.

3.2.8.4 There was a range of suggested changes to the planning system, but a requirement that green infrastructure is included in all new development, received considerable support. Poor enforcement of, and the need for more compliance monitoring around, Section 106 Agreements were also raised. There was also concern that the current approach to planning decisions focused too much on individual animals and species at the expense of ecological communities and habitats.

## **b) Incentives**

**Key elements in responses: incentives; funding; agri-environment scheme funding; investment; CAP reform.**

3.2.8.5 The use of incentives and funding to support the natural environment received widespread support with various suggestions on how change could be best leveraged using public funding. The need for continued funding of Higher Level Stewardship and agri-environment schemes in general was highlighted in numerous responses. A proportion of these were reflecting the call made in a campaign run by the RSPB. On the broader front, the suggestion of a Green Investment Bank to support environmentally sustainable activities received a fair degree of support.

3.2.8.6 With regard to agri-environment schemes, a need for them to reflect a broader range of ecosystem services was suggested in several responses, as was a need for higher levels of cross compliance through the next round of CAP reform.

## **c) Communication**

### **Key elements in responses: communication; advice; guidance.**

3.2.8.7 The need for better, more effective communication was identified by a considerable number of respondents who reflected on the scale of the challenge and the need to help educate and inform society. Communication between government departments was also identified as an area that respondents thought could be improved (and was also highlighted in responses to questions 12 and 13).

3.2.8.8 The need for the provision of high quality advice and guidance and the greater use of the media was also highlighted as being an important delivery tool. The development and use of clearer information tools was suggested by several respondents, with environmental foot-printing, eco-labelling suggested specifically.

*“Good advice and guidance can make or break effective delivery for the natural environment.” (An umbrella organisation representing a number of national bodies)*

3.2.8.9 There were occasional comments on the use of language, with some responses expressing concern over the use of the term “natural” given that the environment of England has been influenced by man for a considerable period.

### **Fiscal measures**

#### **Key elements in responses: taxation; environmental markets; polluter pays; environmental cost.**

3.2.8.10 There was considerable support for the use of a range of fiscal measures to ensure that the value of the use and degradation of the natural environment was reflected in the cost of goods, services and activities. Payment for ecosystem services (PES) and the ‘polluter pays’ principle as mechanisms to achieve this were common suggestions. There was comment on the need for the true cost to be appropriately assigned, with individual versus societal responsibility; diffuse pollution; and overfishing, given as examples of the problem.

*“Those responsible for costs to society should be responsible for meeting those costs.” (A species protection charity)*

3.2.8.11 The use of green taxation and the establishment of environmental markets, including offsetting (expanded in Section VII) to address areas of market failure were proposed in a significant number of responses. The development of frameworks to encourage public-private partnerships and investment were also suggested.

### **Support mechanisms**

#### **Key elements in responses: science & evidence; monitoring; precautionary principle.**

3.2.9 The importance of an evidence based approach to decision making was highlighted by many respondents. Specific areas mentioned where research was needed, included the valuation of ecosystem services, the interaction of ecosystem services with biodiversity, and agriculture. The cost implications of managing and developing an evidence base were highlighted in several responses. A discrete area of evidence that received specific mention was that of long term monitoring with the importance of Local Record Centres in this provision highlighted.

3.2.10 The importance of developing appropriate tools, advice and guidance to communicate to decision makers what the evidence is showing was highlighted in numerous

responses. However there was also recognition that the evidence base is not complete and where this is the case the precautionary principle should be used when making decisions.

### **Ways of working**

#### **Key elements in responses: partnership working; scales of working; volunteering**

3.2.11 In addition to the cross cutting issues surrounding Big Society, the localism agenda and other aspects of how we should work were suggested by many respondents.

3.2.12 The need for improved partnership working between statutory bodies, NGOs and communities was raised repeatedly. The approach of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAPs) partnerships were highlighted in many responses although there was debate on whether it was a good or bad example to follow. There was however support for the idea of building on existing structures and partnerships rather than starting new ones.

*“Partnerships are also key in developing and promoting best practice, avoiding duplication, co-ordinating priority delivery from national to local levels, and increasing efficacy.” (A county Biodiversity Partnership)*

3.2.13 The need for cross boundary partnerships and action was highlighted in several comments, and several alternative scales of operation were suggested as ways of working to overcome this, these included Natural Character Areas, Ecological Restoration Zones and River Basin Management Plans.

3.2.14 The importance of volunteering was mentioned by many, as was the need to encourage this. Several responses expressed a concern that the third sector and volunteers would be expected to pick up additional work as the public sector is cut, and highlighted the need for financial support, advice and guidance.

### **Deliverables**

3.2.15 Many respondents proposed specific changes that would address the challenges identified in Section I.

#### **a) Expansion of semi natural habitat**

##### **Key elements in responses: expansion; restoration; buffering; ecological networks.**

3.2.16 The most frequently desired change on the ground was the need to expand the area of semi-natural habitat, with a shift from protection to restoration, through measures such as Ecological Restoration Zones (ERZs). The need to reduce fragmentation, increase the permeability of landscapes, and increase ecological connectivity through the strengthening of ecological networks was suggested by many. To support this view, many cited the need to implement the findings of the Lawton Review.

*“The Lawton Report contains many recommendations .... and appropriate recognition of this valuable piece of work should be made in the white paper” (A county council)*

3.2.17 The expansion and buffering of protected sites was also highlighted, as was the need to increase the diversity of habitats within landscapes and green infrastructure within urban areas.

#### **b) Improved access provision**

**Key elements in responses: improved access; statutory; permissive; multi-user; lost ways.**

3.2.18 There was considerable support for improved access provision, often linked to the challenge of the public's lack of exposure and engagement with the natural environment identified in Section I. The need to improve and expand both statutory and permissive access provision was raised. Access in both the urban and rural environments was highlighted.

*“A walk in the local park or countryside may be one of the few free leisure opportunities available to people – a fact which further enhances the value of the natural world in contributing to psychological wellbeing and enhancing the quality of life.” (Individual)*

3.2.19 The case for a greater number of bridleways and multi-user routes was also a focus of a campaign by the British Horse Society. Support was expressed by a significant number of responses for the recovery of unrecorded and historic access. There was concern over the speed of the programme and the threat of extinction of lost ways in 2026. Improved coastal access and a Right to Roam similar to that in Scotland were also mentioned; however this was balanced by several comments on the need to manage access on sensitive sites.

#### **c) Population**

3.2.20 In response to the challenge of population a significant number of respondents highlighted the desire and potential mechanisms to stabilise population. This included the encouragement of more open discussion on the subject.

#### **d) International targets**

3.2.21 An area that was highlighted by many respondents was the need to adhere to and deliver our commitment to international targets and treaties (a priority also highlighted in response to question 14). The most frequently cited example being the need for the EU target to halt biodiversity loss by 2020.

### **Key sector - farming**

**Key elements in responses: farming**

3.2.22 The agricultural sector was highlighted in several responses which emphasised its impact on the natural environment. A wide range of measures were suggested to reduce the impact of agriculture on the natural environment largely through extensification of practice.

*“It needs to be more widely acknowledged that over 70% of land in England is managed by independent farmers and landowners. Therefore it is vital that the framework encourages their inclusion at the earliest possible stage so they become fully engaged and enthused about protecting and enhancing the Natural Environment.” (Joint response from land management organisations)*

### **Cross cutting issues**

#### **a) Localism**

3.2.23 Issues surrounding localism and big society were identified as a challenge (Chapter I), as a means of embedding natural value (Chapter II), in the approach that needed to be taken (Chapter III), and as a barrier to thinking big (Chapter VI). Although there was

considerable support for the principle of greater empowerment for communities and decision making at the local level, this was balanced by a significant number of reservations around how it would be implemented and the implications of such a change.

*“My basic concern is that greater emphasis on bottom-up approaches to governance and the cutting back of government departments will lead to a shift towards accepting short-term economic benefit over long-term environmental health.” (A Research Institute)*

*“Our fear is that a devolution of responsibility to the local level will be accompanied by an abdication of responsibility at that level for environmental and other issues that are not of immediate, local concern to communities or authorities.” (A renewable energy pressure group)*

3.2.24 Respondents also identified several requirements that should be put in place to assist implementation, which included; a clear national framework of strategic principles, desired outcomes and targets, funding and support and access to professional expertise and advice.

*“Despite the current desire to reduce regulation and encourage self-generating societal responses, many of the long-term and large-scale challenges facing environmental management will require national-level operating frameworks best designed by government.” (A research body)*

#### **b) Expertise and advice**

3.2.25 A second theme that cuts across many of the questions, although at a lower level was that of the need for access to professional expertise and advice. This was mentioned in relation to the localism agenda, but also to encourage partnership working and to assist businesses to reduce their impact on the natural environment.

## IV Defining success and monitoring progress

- **Measuring success in relation to environmental goals, and what success looked like.**

4.1 This chapter, drawing on responses to question 4a and 4b, therefore provides an analysis of the mechanisms and metrics that respondents considered would enable us to define success and monitor progress.

### Question 4a

What mechanisms should we focus on to ensure we manage our natural environment more effectively in the future. a) how should we define success and b) how can we agree common goals and assess our progress towards them?

4.2 Over three in five respondents addressed question 4a. Four principle themes emerged:

- targets
- public attitudes and engagement
- biodiversity and ecosystem decline
- ways of working and sustainability

It was notable that many of the respondents focused on the mechanisms or approaches to help manage our natural systems in the future rather than on measures of success. The mechanisms have been discussed in Section III (Overarching Approach). Partnership working, regulation/planning and support mechanisms were cited specifically as key if a greater appreciation and understanding of the natural environment is to be achieved.

### Targets

**Key elements in responses: translating international targets; baseline data; SMART targets;**

4.2.1 Respondents frequently pointed to the fact that many targets are set in the international arena and therefore government needs to be clear and structured in what that means nationally for England. How this is broken down for local delivery can then be determined.

4.2.2 There was an almost universal call to establish a meaningful dataset gathered locally but collated in one place, providing a baseline to measure and monitor against. Local Record Centres, which harness local volunteers and expertise, were frequently cited as best practice in data collection.

4.2.3 A number of respondents agreed with the concept of SMART targets, indicators or goals. The form they should take was less clear however, though respondents expressed a desire to include less tangible benefits alongside traditional population counts.

*“A good socio economic indicator would be private engagement in recreational ecosystem services, in terms of spending and voluntary time to demonstrate civil scope for biodiversity maintenance and enhancement” (An academic)*

### Public Attitudes and Engagement

**Key elements in responses: participation; sense of belonging; Outdoor Learning; use.**

4.2.4 Many respondents pointed out their view that there was an increasing number of people involved in the natural environment as volunteers or as part of local community groups, in particular in managing their own green spaces. Respondents suggested that one of the most effective ways to measure success could be to measure the feeling of belonging and caring engendered through such participation. The inclusion of Outdoor Learning in the national curriculum was also seen as key to encouraging and informing the behaviour change.

4.2.5 Appreciation of the natural environment (both terrestrial and marine), and the confidence to use it within a diverse and growing population was seen as key by many respondents. A variety of reasons were cited, including recreation, volunteering, health prescription or employment placements. Making green and blue infrastructure accessible to more people over a wider area was the inferred measure of success.

*“Of particular concern is the plight of children and young people who are increasingly disconnected from direct experience within the natural environment” (Chair of a Biodiversity Strategy group)*

### **Biodiversity & Ecosystem function degradation or decline**

**Key elements in responses: biodiversity decline; wider countryside; Lawton Review; access.**

4.2.6 A clear majority of respondents called for a halt to the loss of species and damage to the habitats which they require. This message was strongly influenced by the RSPB campaign and its volunteer supporters but was also echoed by others.

4.2.7 The existing framework to protect special sites was acknowledged as a start but a requirement to develop a coherent system of designation which avoids overlap or single focus and allows consideration of the non protected surroundings was advocated by many, with the recommendations of the Lawton Review held up as means to delivery.

4.2.8 A large number of people expressed the view that a greater proportion of land managed and accessible to people was a measure of ‘success’.

### **Ways of Working and Sustainability**

**Key elements in responses: utilising amateur expertise; partnerships; sustainable resource use.**

4.2.9 People coming together to share their expertise through recreation and amateur groups and societies was frequently suggested by respondents as a model to enthuse and connect people with the natural environment. This knowledge, if co-ordinated and supported, was recognised as a powerful mechanism for meaningful, collaborative working.

4.2.10 Another majority view was support for public sector, private business and voluntary organisations working together with communities, to a common vision. This, it was felt, can deliver successfully at different scales.

4.2.11 Respondents recognised that our natural resources (both biological and mineral) are finite, and recommended the need for a more sustainable approach if we are to achieve a productive but bio-diverse countryside. Thus sustainability was suggested as another measure of success.

#### Question 4b

What mechanisms should we focus on to ensure we manage our natural environment more effectively in the future: a) how should we define success and b) how can we agree common goals and assess our progress towards them?

4.3 Two-fifths of respondents answered question 4b. Four principle themes emerged:

- ways of working
- engagement and partnership
- baseline and monitoring
- levels of evidence/advice

It became evident from responses that no one approach was sufficient to agree and measure common goals, because of the complexity and unique characteristics of situations. A substantial majority proposed a selection or toolkit of approaches and techniques which could be called upon depending on the individual circumstance.

#### **Ways of working**

**Key elements in responses: national vision; local delivery; best practice.**

4.3.1 Working at different levels in a variety of ways was a dominant theme in respondents' answers. People pointed to a need for government to provide a direction or common vision, in parallel with more regional or local groups taking responsibility to set and deliver goals within their own communities. Key to this was the access to and provision of best practice examples from home and abroad, for example the National Nature Plan in the Netherlands.

#### **Engagement and partnership**

**Key elements in responses: engaging people; media role.**

4.3.2 In developing a more democratic or consultative approach to setting common goals, respondents highlighted the need for a commitment to genuinely engage people. Existing societies and networks gave a basis to develop from, but a wider audience had to be attracted and become involved. Links between communities and the natural environment underpinned many responses, as did the role of the media e.g. BBC 'Springwatch'.

#### **Baseline and monitoring**

**Key elements in responses: better baseline; ecological foot-print; metrics.**

4.3.3 A majority of those responding recommended a better understanding of what we have and the establishment of a baseline to measure change. Measurement of our impact on the environment via ecological foot-printing was suggested, as was the need to establish a common methodology. In terms of measurements there was a range of metrics suggested covering carbon, water, and non-GDP measurements of economic activity.

*"We should measure what we value, not avoid it because of difficulty" (An academic)*

#### **Levels of evidence/advice**

4.3.4 Many highlighted the need for greater information and guidance from acknowledged experts, with improved access to scientific evidence. Time was needed to discuss and agree a plan for action amongst interested parties.

## V. Things to continue; things to do differently

- **What works, and what does not.**

5.1 This chapter provides a summary of responses to these matters. Themes are drawn from questions 3, 3a and 6.

Question 3: What are the existing policies and practises aimed at protecting England's natural assets (including but not limited to those set out on our biodiversity, seas, water bodies, air and soil) that currently work most effectively?

Question 3a: What works less well- what could we stop doing or do differently?

Question 6: What best practise and innovative approaches to protecting and enhancing our natural environment do you think should be considered as we develop the White paper?

5.2 All three question received answers from between half and two-thirds of respondents. Five principle themes emerged in response to questions 3 and 3a with, in each case, positive and negative aspects emerging:

- agri-environment schemes
- designation
- regulation
- planning
- ways of working

A range of issues emerged in response to question 6 (many of which, regarding approach, are addressed in Chapter 3), though none was individually dominant. The message from respondents was to work in partnership at different levels in a logical and evidenced way to make best use of resources available.

In addition a number of cross-cutting themes emerged from these questions:

- scale of delivery
- funding
- advice and guidance
- education
- science and evidence

### Agri-environment schemes

**Key elements in responses: High Level Stewardship; Entry Level Stewardship; carrot and stick.**

5.2.1 The existing suite of agri-environment schemes were recognised by a substantial majority of respondents as good practise, especially the more targeted Higher Level options when these are operating in conjunction with the Water Framework Directive. The broad and shallow approach for the Entry Level Stewardship scheme was welcomed, but many perceived the need for significant revision in order to deliver more value for public money.

*“When agri-environment schemes work properly i.e. when they ensure the right land management options are taken up in the right places and at the right scale they constitute one of the most effective tools for delivering environmental benefits” (A national NGO)*

5.2.2 Respondents also felt that the natural environment is under increasing pressure and the 'do nothing' response was universally rejected. A "carrot and stick" approach was widely seen as a way to shift behaviours towards more favourable practise, for example tree felling licences supported by funding to plant replacements.

### **Designations**

**Key elements in responses: single purpose designations; Lawton Review; protected networks.**

5.2.3 The majority of respondents raising the issue of designations took a view that although the existing designation framework has protected special sites reasonably well, nonetheless a 'single purpose' for designation is no longer appropriate. A review, accepting a shift in the criteria used, and focussing on the principle of operating within environmental limits is proposed; with the findings of the Lawton Review widely supported as a model to follow. Protection should be afforded to natural assets and not just isolated areas, but connected networks.

*"...rely less on the expansion of designation process as the preferred policy model and more on wider countryside measures" (A national agricultural organisation)*

### **Regulation and planning**

**Key elements in responses: effective but simplified planning; enforcement; environmental benefit.**

5.2.4 Respondents saw regulation and planning controls as essential but widely agreed that a process of consolidation and simplification is necessary. An integrated structure for land and sea was seen as beneficial, with the Marine and Coastal Access Act identified as a positive step. It was also recommended that the resulting regulatory platform would need to be adequately resourced to permit enforcement, with the cost of the impact on the environment being borne by the individual or organisation responsible for the damage.

*"a simplification of the governance around biodiversity would release funding for delivery" (A public sector body)*

5.2.5 A substantial number of respondents recommended that the planning system needs to deliver for the natural environment in each planning application; through the application of green technologies such as water harvesting and sustainable drainage and the incorporation of linked green space. An underlying message of 'there are some places not to be developed' was raised, particularly amongst individual respondents.

### **Ways of working**

**Key elements in responses: key role of voluntary sector; using local knowledge; joined-up delivery; Lawton Review; payment for ecosystem services; 'ownership'.**

5.2.6 Respondents noted that the voluntary sector has a key role with its direct links into communities, providing support and information to reach the wider disconnected audience. The private sector, it was suggested, could also offer assistance and partnership, for example through staff volunteering initiatives. The use of local knowledge and skills was a strong theme across a substantial majority of responses, with local record centres widely quoted as good practice which could be built on and collated nationally.

5.2.7 Respondents identified the need for consultation and investment of time with landowners to deliver a targeted Higher Level Stewardship package built on local knowledge.

5.2.8 Aligning delivery between different regulations is also supported as good practice. The Lawton Review was strongly recommended by respondents as a useful framework for improvements in integration of delivery, and as a basis for the expansion of habitat networks to increase the connectivity of the landscape thus increasing resilience of our natural assets.

5.2.9 The increased scale of delivery suggested a more secure future for our ecosystems. However caution was urged by some respondents who noted the need to accept natural fluctuations in species numbers and not to confuse these with damaging trends. A system of payments for the environmental benefits secured is widely supported, however the valuation mechanism remained unclear and in need of determination.

5.2.10 Many respondents highlighted the importance of creating a sense of local ownership and belonging within the Big Society agenda, with green space and green infrastructure suggested as means to engage with communities. The suggestion being that communities were given responsibility for their own surroundings.

### **Scale of delivery**

**Key messages in responses: need for larger scale approach; multiple outcomes.**

5.2.11 The majority of respondents recognised that a larger scale of delivery was necessary, however the scale had to be meaningful to the community involved in delivery and could not be defined by artificial boundaries or borders. The protected landscape model (National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) was presented as a working example of good practise in a significant number of responses.

5.2.12 The pressures upon our landscape were also widely commented on and there was acceptance that a single focus for delivery was no longer possible nor appropriate, and that we need to operate at a multifunctional level to deliver multiple benefits. Existing delivery networks could be extended and centrally collated to allow this approach to be adopted, with local Biodiversity Action Plans also suggested as good practice, if these were applied more spatially.

*“The use of flexibility in ecosystem management targets must be implemented for the benefit of long term ecosystem health and not as an excuse for accepting damaging practises for the sake of short term economic gain” (A research institute)*

### **Funding**

**Key messages in responses: long term funding; offsets and credits; green taxes.**

5.2.13 A large proportion of respondents noted that funding needs to be sourced from a variety of places, as support for the natural environment is a long term commitment and existing grants are too short term. Developing a new funding model is part of this challenge, with the use of offset payments or conversation credits supported by many respondents. Although a number also voice caution over their use, as they may create the “wrong” incentive. The support for green incentives or taxation of environmentally damaging practices is also an underlying message from across the responses.

### **Advice & Guidance**

**Key elements in responses: consistency; accreditation.**

5.2.14 Many respondents felt that an integrated framework of policy and practice needs to provide consistent guidance for regulators and advisers, centrally collated and maintained but accessible to those whose work affects the natural environment. An accreditation standard was advocated as a way of demonstrating the competence of those involved.

### **Education**

**Key elements in responses: formal and informal; inspire action; long-term solutions**

5.2.15 A renewed and enhanced commitment to education and public understanding of the natural environment, how it works and what it means to us as individuals was called for by a substantial majority of responses. Incentivising people to learn and be enthused to take action was proposed as a priority. It was thought that existing groups and societies working in partnerships should take a leading role.

### **Science and Evidence**

**Key elements in responses: sharing resources; best practice; avoidance of duplication.**

5.2.16 Cross-sector working to share resource and expertise was supported by nearly all who highlighted this issue, with the Campaign for the Farmed Environment and Oxford Nature Conservation Forum quoted as good practice examples. The importance of building on existing frameworks was also expressed by a large number of responses, with a recognition that by sharing best practice this could avoid unnecessary duplication.

*“There should be no mistaking the high level and quality of research evidence (including long term ecological research and monitoring), facilitation and mediation required to successfully develop localism” (A research institute)*

## VI. Barriers

- **Important considerations for the realisation of improvements in the quality of our natural environment are the real and perceived barriers to change.**

6.1 This chapter addresses the barriers to progress in relation to better management of the natural environment. Question 12 focussed on what was preventing us obtaining a wider range of environmentally derived benefits, whereas question 13 considered the difficulties associated with managing the environment on a larger, or 'landscape', scale.

6.2 A small number of respondents expressed a view that in some instances or locations, *specialised* land use may be the *optimal* land use, for example nature reserves or high quality agricultural land. However, overall there was little challenge to the underlying assumptions in the questions that current land use was not delivering all the benefits that it could, and that trying to act at a larger spatial scale could bring benefits.

*"The current sectoral approach adds up to a zero sum game that cannot be won: there is simply not enough space to carve the country up between single interest uses."* (Individual)

Question 12

What are the barriers to joining up and seeking multiple benefits from our natural assets?

Question 13

What are the barriers to thinking big and taking a landscape scale approach to managing our natural assets?

6.3 Question 12 received answers from slightly over half of the respondents. Three principle themes emerged:

- disjointed doing (a disjointedness in the way government, society and individuals act)
- disjointed thinking
- funding

Question 13 received answers from almost exactly half of the respondents. With minor variation in emphasis, the same three themes dominated:

- disjointed doing
- disjointed thinking and lack of understanding
- lack of funding and inertia in existing payment schemes

Three other themes emerged, though cited less frequently by respondents:

- land ownership
- valuing environmental services
- environmental damage

### **Disjointed doing**

**Key elements in responses: siloed policy development, advice and delivery; spatial planning at an appropriate scale; cross boundary working; competing organisational interests; land use; development.**

6.3.1 Many respondents pointed to government departments' pursuit of their own goals with little reference to wider and genuinely sustainable outcomes, thus militating against the possibility of integration in public sector delivery. Health, agriculture (different elements thereof), environment and climate change were cited by several respondents. Allied to this general concern over 'silo mentality' were concerns about poor co-ordination and communication, both across government and with local people. Projects where these boundaries *had* been overcome to great effect in terms of benefits to local communities, were often highlighted, but a common complaint was that such initiatives were beset by funding problems and, despite their manifest successes, were rarely 'rolled-out' across wider areas.

*"It takes considerable effort and many agencies and organisations all doing a similar role for different objectives, to consult and contact private land owners or managers. It is a key barrier to delivery for the natural environment due to the number of people involved and the time it takes."* (A county-level Biodiversity Partnership)

6.3.2 Respondents noted though that these problems were not unique to government, with several submissions noting the degree of competition between NGOs, who were often pursuing the same, and limited, sources of funding.

6.3.3 Many responses highlighted that there are genuinely competing uses for land, and that individuals and organisations are pursuing 'maximisation', whether of production, profit or biodiversity, in specific places. This was considered to be a serious barrier to the optimisation of multiple benefits, and a small number of respondents actually advocated 'maximisation' from their varying perspectives – seeing 'multiple benefits' as a threat to the 'best'.

6.3.4 The loss of a regional tier of spatial planning was cited by many as a danger to enhancing of environmental assets, as it is perceived to be a useful spatial scale at which to plan for biodiversity enhancement and its adaptation to climate change. There are clear links between this and concerns over the disjunction between local administrative boundaries and environmental assets and services. Some respondents clearly see 'localism' as a challenge for landscape scale approaches.

### **Disjointed Thinking**

**Key elements in responses: prevailing socio-economic paradigm; short-term and siloed thinking; lack of intellectual capacity; limited understanding and awareness in government; lack of shared vision; limited 'ownership' of environmental problems, benefits and assets.**

6.3.5 Several respondents highlighted the pursuit of personal wealth and national/global growth as a fundamental challenge to securing multiple benefits. Beyond this, and directly analogous to the previous section, a large number of responses focussed on short-term and siloed thinking as the greatest challenge. Such thinking was highlighted within and between government departments, in land use planning and within individuals' own thought processes.

6.3.6 Whilst many pointed to a general lack of familiarity, awareness and understanding of the concepts contained within these questions and/or an appreciation of the environmental issues and environmental services and benefits that are relevant to people; others questioned our ability, individually or collectively, to think in more holistic, integrated, large scale or long-term ways.

*“the lack of understanding about the meaning and use of ‘ecosystem services’ will limit opportunities to work with natural processes at a landscape scale. A step-change in learning will be required across all sectors if we are to break down this barrier and realise the benefits available.” (A local wildlife charity).*

6.3.7 The development of a coherent, overarching vision for the use of land and/or for the environment was frequently cited as one means of counteracting these barriers.

### **Funding**

**Key elements in responses: lack of money; complexity of accessing funding; insecurity of funding.**

6.3.8 Across both questions 12 and 13, the opinion was consistently expressed that there was both a lack of money to achieve the sought after goals, and that such resources as were available were generally too short-term. Only the Higher Level Stewardship scheme with its ten-year agreements was cited as an exception, and even in this case the view was frequently held that the scheme was not designed to deliver the kind of ecosystem services, and landscape scale results, seen as desirable.

*“The maintenance of existing funding for the biodiversity officer and other project officers is essential if the recommendations of the Lawton Review for more, bigger, better, joined habitat work is to be achieved at all.” (A Nature Conservation Forum)*

### **Land Ownership; valuing environmental services; and environmental damage**

**Key elements in responses: private land ownership; fragmented land ownership; appropriate valuation of environmental services; environmental degradation.**

6.3.9 The bulk of other responses focussed on practical and technical difficulties in determining and applying an appropriate ‘value’ to environmental benefits, such that decision makers gave them appropriate weight; patterns of land-ownership, which are often highly fragmented and thus militate against landscape scale approaches; and a legacy of environmental damage, which compromises the ability of landscapes and biodiversity to deliver the ‘multiple benefits’ sought.

## VII. Sectoral approach

- **How the various sectors within our society can together deliver more for the natural environment was a further important focus for the discussion document.**

7.1 This chapter considers questions 7 to 11 of the consultation documents and addresses how the general public, national and local government and the business community can work together to help maintain and improve the natural environment. A number of broad headings are considered:

- Civil Society
- Localism
- Smarter, greener economy

### Civil Society

QU 7. How best can we harness and build on public enthusiasm for the natural environment so people can help improve it through local action, as informed consumers or by shaping policy?

QU 8. What should be our vision for the role of Civil Society in managing and enhancing the natural environment and for engaging individuals, businesses and communities in setting the agenda for that work?

7.1.1 Question 7 received answers from three-fifths of respondents. Six principle themes emerged:

- schools and education
- volunteering
- supporting local projects and initiatives

Three other themes, cited slightly less frequently were:

- working with conservation groups and other bodies involved with the conservation of the natural environment
- government to lead
- funding and advice and support.

Question 8 integrated with Question 7, but took forward how wider society can work in partnership with businesses, communities and government in driving forward a common vision and agenda. Question 8 received 350 responses. Two principle themes emerged:

- partnership working
- government to provide the skills, knowledge and enabling framework

Three other themes cited slightly less frequently were:

- skills knowledge and professional ability

- business engagement
- land management

### **Schools and Education**

**Key elements in responses: school curricula; visits to the countryside; outdoor education; training.**

7.1.1.1 The theme of improving education on the natural environment in schools, ran through a large number of the responses. A particular focus was that the current school curricula did not pay sufficient attention to the natural environment and the need to minimise our impacts upon it. It was felt that the natural environment should be more firmly embedded in these curricula and that teachers needed further training to make this a reality.

*“Educate children about the value of the natural environment, and help them to appreciate its value through school trips, and they will speak to their parents about it and go on to effect change themselves as they get older.” (Individual)*

7.1.1.2 Other significant comments covered the need to make it easier for children to visit the countryside, through farm or nature reserve visits. Many respondents raised the issue of health and safety regulations and insurance costs as obstacles to these aims. There was much praise for the forest and eco-school schemes which bring nature into the school and the classroom.

*“Education is key - at all levels we need to ensure that children and adults have opportunities to enjoy and explore green spaces. There should be a policy to ensure schools deliver effective environmental education - how about all schools having their own Forest School.” (Individual)*

7.1.1.3 Respondents also felt that more could be done through the use of the internet, computer and mobile phone technologies. These offered a chance for all of society to learn more about, or virtually experience, the natural environment.

### **Volunteering**

**Key elements in responses: volunteering; encouraging people outside; funding; inclusive to all society; volunteer leaders/champions; volunteer networks; unemployed and parolees**

7.1.1.4 Respondents expressed significant support for the existing networks of volunteers in the United Kingdom, who are already helping to restore and enhance the natural environment. Specific support was given to the Wildlife Trusts, BTCV and the RSPB and the other voluntary organisations who help to restore nature reserves, urban green spaces and the wider countryside. There was further support for increasing the size of this ‘volunteer army’, by first persuading more people to get out into ‘the great outdoors’ and then involving them with local projects. It was however noted that the maintenance and growth of this sector of society would not increase without support in the form of officer time and funds from national or local funding sources, particularly local government.

*“Community groups, volunteers and other types of local engagement already play a vital role in recording, monitoring and looking after the natural environment. Many people contribute significant chunks of their time each year, either through local ‘friends’ groups, national charities or volunteering and membership organisations. This must be encouraged and supported with the best use made of local talents and skills.” (A county council)*

7.1.1.5 The role of local volunteer leaders or champions was seen by many respondents as key to this process, as these individuals were seen as the glue that held local groups together and persuaded more people to volunteer. It was felt that there was therefore a need to support these individuals, as they were important to the success of Big Society.

*“Increase funding opportunities which can incorporate staffing costs to lead volunteer groups. Establish a programme where staff, students, job seekers etc can engage in volunteering opportunities, through either a formal requirement of the benefit system or through employee days off.” (Individual)*

7.1.1.6 A number of responses also noted that the real challenge was to engage with the traditionally disenfranchised and to attract all sectors of society to volunteering. The use of those on job seeker benefits or parolees were suggested by some as ways to increase the size of the voluntary sector, whilst also teaching land management skills.

### **Supporting local projects and initiatives**

**Key elements in response: conservation projects and support; woodlands; green spaces; allotments and gardens.**

7.1.1.7 This was a very strong theme amongst respondents, as it was felt it was important to support and enhance projects that are working to improve the natural environment at the local/community level. It was these initiatives that would draw in more volunteers and society’s knowledge and experience of the wider natural environment. It was also added that such action at the local level does not occur without adequate support in terms of people’s time and funding.

7.1.1.8 A significant number of responses also noted the key role community woodlands and tree planting have, particularly in light of the government’s aim to expand the area of woodland in the United Kingdom and the role that woodland initiatives (e.g. Community Forests, National Forest) play. There was significant support for local and urban green spaces and the role these play in providing a nature conservation experience in towns and cities. Other significant local initiatives noted were green gyms, the Transition Towns Movement and the role of Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships.

*“We should seek to harness the help of local communities to assist in the management of natural resources. Direct involvement in the management of sites can give local people a sense of ownership and pride which helps to create a sustainable mechanism for managing natural resources into the future.” (A county council)*

7.1.1.9 Finally many respondents noted the role of wildlife friendly garden and allotments as simple but effective ways by which individuals can get involved, whilst also helping the local environment. Support and advice was recommended to maintain and increase their size and number.

### **Working with conservation groups, government to lead, funding and advice and support.**

**Key elements in responses: non-government conservation organisations; partnerships; national and local government strategic framework; funding for local projects; funding for volunteers; environmentally sustainable food; evidence and advice.**

7.1.1.10 Substantial numbers of respondents expressed support and recognition for those conservation organisations which already had a wide breadth of experience in managing local sites, working with communities and volunteers, and providing educational

experiences. It was seen as worth building upon the work that these bodies undertook, to engender further public enthusiasm for, and engagement with, the natural environment. In particular, there was much support for the work of the Wildlife Trusts.

7.1.1.11 There was also recognition that delivery at the local level would still require strategic direction and funding at both the national and local government levels. This theme also arose strongly under Question 8.

*“Innovative and effective improvement and management of the local natural environment is best achieved through local groups who have both the necessary knowledge base and requisite information. It is essential that they have the support from local government and the resources required to implement and lead on local action.” (Individual)*

7.1.1.12 Two other significant issues highlighted by respondents were the provision of improved advice, and support for the wider society. Of particular note were: support for more environmentally friendly and local food production systems and in particular clearer food labelling; and identification of the key role that Local Environmental Records Centres play in providing the evidence base and monitoring the health of the nation’s plants, animals and natural environment.

### **Partnership working**

**Key elements in responses: join up between government, business and community; build upon existing partnerships and networks.**

7.1.1.13 A substantial number of respondents felt that key to achieving a wider vision for enhancing the natural environment, was to build upon and engender more effective partnerships and relationships between the sectors of society that will help deliver this vision: civil society, government, voluntary bodies and business.

*“The natural environment must form an integral part of a broader, long term vision of our way of life. Local groups need to work together with local councils to provide a healthy, natural environment as the basis of a sustainable future world.” (Individual)*

7.1.1.14 More specifically, many respondents expressed the view that there was need for greater join up between central and local government, and local communities as well as greater co-operation between the public, private and voluntary sectors. It was noted, though, that significant partnerships already existed and that it would be appropriate to build upon these. Some also felt that there was need for greater co-operation between the voluntary organisations and Defra’s arms length bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, working to conserve and enhance the natural environment and to promote more effective partnerships with developers, to ensure net environmental gain when planning construction projects.

*“Essentially an initiative is needed which promotes effective partnership working between Central Government, local authorities and communities to create new and protect existing green infrastructure.” (A local council)*

### **Government to provide the skills, knowledge and enabling framework**

**Key elements in responses: government vision/framework; government to set strategic priorities; government support and funding**

7.1.1.15 Many respondents felt that central government needed to set out its vision for the natural environment, and particularly how it will achieve its biodiversity related aims and objectives . A significant number of responses noted the need for both national and local

government to work together more effectively, in order to set up an effective strategic framework for delivering agreed aims for the natural environment.

*“Government must provide a legislative framework and environmental standards to protect the natural environment and resources. Communities should then be empowered to deliver within the national framework, with appropriate guidance and resource provision. Government will need to take responsibility for influencing larger organisations such as multi-national companies where local action is often difficult or unsuccessful. The Government must be receptive to guidance and views from experts and professional bodies involved in relevant action.” (A town council)*

7.1.1.16 Some responses noted their view that it was the role of central government to establish the strategic framework under which local government will operate, and then for local government to provide the co-ordination and funding. The view was also given that central and local government should not pass on the responsibility to civil society or to the voluntary organisations, but should provide the leadership and direction.

7.1.1.17 Finally effective funding for local groups and projects was also a key concern, particularly in light of the potential impact of financial cuts. A common response was for the requirement for central government to ensure a funding framework, through local government, that ensured support for local groups, networks and projects ensuring the success of its vision for the natural environment.

### **Skills knowledge and professional ability, business engagement and land management**

**Key elements in responses: professional expertise; training; business support; community groups; community owned land.**

7.1.1.18 A smaller number of respondents commented that local projects and volunteers would need the professional knowledge, advice and training to undertake local conservation projects. This would include both advice and support for individuals, volunteer leaders, community groups and networks and partnerships. This could involve a poll of conservation group and/or local government officer expertise to train local communities, to provide leadership and support for volunteers.

7.1.1.19 Respondents also noted the need to involve the business sector more in nature conservation measures. There needed to be further encouragement for businesses who invested in the natural environment, though such levers as funding local projects, providing tax breaks for businesses undertaking environmental work, supporting volunteer groups or providing staff for conservation works.

7.1.1.20 Another significant issue was further community engagement in land management and the management of green spaces, nature reserves and agricultural land close to where they live.

*“Voluntary input and engagement requires investment in time and money, and can only be properly achieved by recognising that volunteers are more than unsalaried workers and that their commitment adds significantly to the quality of work we are able to deliver. There is a strong case for strengthening and supporting the NGO and charity sector to enable us to do this even more and even better.” (A local wildlife charity)*

### **Localism**

QU 9. How best can Government incentivise innovative and effective action on the natural environment, across England, at the local level?

a. How best can local government and other local partners work together to improve local outcomes on the natural environment, and pursue a more integrated approach linking a healthy natural environment to economic prosperity, sustainable development and a better quality of life, health and wellbeing?

7.1.2 Question 9 assessed how central government could best encourage effective local environmental action. Questions 9 and 9a were addressed by approximately one-third of respondents. Three key themes emerged:

- partnership working
- governmental leadership
- agri-environment funding.

b. What are the most effective mechanisms for managing the natural environment where cross-boundary issues are involved, and making the link to other mechanisms for economic growth, transport and planning?

Question 9b focused on the methods that could be adopted to ensure that the natural environment was more effectively cared for, when it crossed a number of administrative areas (e.g. counties). One-third of respondents addressed this question. Three principle themes emerged:

- working across boundaries
- working at the landscape/ecological scale
- local authority co-operation.

c. How best can the value of the natural environment be considered within local planning?

Question 9c considered how the natural environment could be better incorporated within the planning system. This question was answered by well over one-third of respondents. Three principle themes emerged:

- environmentally strengthened planning system,
- green infrastructure
- local authority skills and knowledge.

Other themes that had significant responses included ecosystem services, reform of the national planning system and further public participation in the consideration of planning applications.

### **Partnership working.**

**Key elements in responses: partnerships; central government lead; local government lead; funding; agri-environment funding; legislation; regulation; ecosystem services; green infrastructure; cross boundary working; planning.**

7.1.2.1 In common with many of the responses to Question 8, closer and more effective co-operative working and networking between central, local government and local partners was

a core issue for many respondents. In particular, the role of existing Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships was highlighted as a good example of existing partnership working that demonstrates how local government, government agencies and conservation groups and other local action groups can work collaboratively to achieve common environmental aims.

*“There is already much cross-sector working amongst environmental partners to improve local outcomes on the natural environment. This is largely successful because of local authorities providing officer time to guide and advise the partners on strategic and cross cutting issues, and through financial support to the environmental partners to support dedicated staff to develop and deliver programmes of action.” (A county council)*

7.1.2.2 A significant number of respondents commented that, having removed regional governance structures, these needed to be replaced with effective partnership arrangements and networks in order to continue delivering natural environmental objectives. Key to this was ensuring that the emerging Local Economic Partnerships covered the full breadth of sustainable development and had sufficient environmental representation to ensure economic and environmental goals for a local area were in synergy.

### **Government leadership**

**Key elements in responses: national government; local government; government agencies; strategies and frameworks**

7.1.2.3 The responses to Question 9a also closely matched those related to Question 8 and equally stressed the requirement for government both at the national and local levels to develop a vision and strategic framework to deliver their shared goals for the natural environment. There was also support for the work of the national agencies (e.g. JNCC, Natural England and the Environment Agency), who it was felt could also help to design and deliver this framework.

*“The vision should not be reliant on volunteer organisations though. Such organisations cannot operate effectively in a policy vacuum as this would only lead to confusion and potential chaos. Central government and local government must provide the direction, and the support for local society to play an effective part. So Big Society has to be based on a vision of equitable and appropriate sharing of roles and responsibilities.” (A research institute).*

7.1.2.4 Further roles for local government level were also noted several respondents. With the view expressed that local authorities should continue to co-ordinate local action, manage land, deliver public access opportunities and provide funding for local groups and projects.

### **Agri-environment funding**

**Key elements in responses: local authority involvement; local records centres.**

7.1.2.5 A number of respondents felt that it was the responsibility of local government to help deliver or steer the delivery of agri-environment schemes within their local areas and to work more collaboratively with local conservation bodies and land managers. This theme also related effective delivery of these schemes to a robust and up to date evidence base, particularly the continued effective maintenance of Local Environmental Records Centres.

### **Working across boundaries**

**Key elements in responses: mismatch of natural and administrative boundaries; loss of regions;**

7.1.2.6 Many respondents highlighted the need to ensure that the natural environmental goals outlined in the discussion document were effectively co-ordinated across administrative boundaries; as natural or landscape areas rarely followed such boundaries. The need for this co-ordination was reinforced by the removal of the regional tier of government. A sizeable proportion of respondents noted that new arrangements would need to be developed to replace those regional structures that had had been removed.

*“Government should therefore consider placing a duty on local authorities to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other partners and organisations, and incentivising land managers to work together to delivery across their boundaries.” (A national wildlife charity)*

7.1.2.7 This was echoed in respondents’ expressed view that sub-regional forums or networks would not just need to ensure co-ordination at the local level, but also across local boundaries. Many respondents highlighted the conclusions of the Lawton Review, which set out the need to plan for and create habitat restoration at the landscape scale, creating Ecological Restoration Zones across the United Kingdom. A number added that the delivery of these objectives could be developed by building upon the work of the Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships. It was also noted that much could be learned from the protected landscape partnerships, the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, who already work across county boundaries. Similarly the Government’s objectives for water, under the Water Framework Directive, could best be delivered at the water catchment or river basin scale.

7.1.2.8 A significant number of responses concluded that such cross-boundary working would not be possible without increased partnership between local authorities. The further development of effective sub-regional partnerships and increased co-operation and cross-boundary strategies between local authorities, to deliver nature conservation at this landscape scale was seen as important.

*“Encourage a flexible approach with regard to administrative boundaries, whether they are political, regulatory, or involve the ownership of land or other assets. This would ensure that all relevant parties are able to play a full and active role in the management of the natural environment.” (A water company)*

### **Environmentally strengthened planning system**

**Key elements in responses: better protection; embedding environmental objectives; weight given to Biodiversity Action Plans.**

7.1.2.9 A clear majority of respondents felt that the operation of the planning system needed to more effectively protect and enhance the natural environment. A significant number felt that the planning system needed to fully embrace sustainable development principles and that that this could be achieved through the further embedding of national and local biodiversity and landscape objectives within both the new national planning framework and within local plans. Biodiversity Action Plans needed to have a stronger presence and weight within local plans. More specifically (and more particularly within urban areas) existing and new areas of green or biologically important space needed to be protected or created.

### **Green infrastructure**

**Key elements in responses: green networks; green infrastructure strategies.**

7.1.2.10 A similar preponderance of responses highlighted the importance of green infrastructure and the creation of a network of green corridors to enable wildlife to flourish.

Green Infrastructure Strategies were an important tool and could be more closely linked to, or form part of, local spatial plans.

7.1.2.11 Many responses also suggested that new developments should be required to plan-in wildlife friendly spaces and aim for a net gain for the local natural environment. The further development of habitat banking/biodiversity offsetting proposals and payment for ecosystem services was also raised by a smaller group of respondents.

### **Local Authority skills and knowledge**

#### **Key elements in responses:**

7.1.2.12 Over one third of respondents commented that there was a growing shortage of ecological expertise within local authorities and their planning departments. There was need for further ecological training for land use planners and more ecologists employed within these authorities. Similarly, a notable proportion of respondents stated that the full consideration of environmental issues within planning applications relied upon an effective, up to date ecological evidence base.

*“Planning officers should be trained on the importance and value of ecological/ecosystem services and on what developers can do to enhance the environment and contribute to the provision of ecosystem services.” (Individual)*

### **Smarter greener economy**

7.1.3 Questions 10 and 11 addressed how the value of the natural environment could be reflected in the way business is done, and how businesses could be further encouraged to reduce the impact of their activities on the natural environment. Although not addressing the questions specifically, several responses highlighted the potential growth of the environmental services sector and sustainable business practices to assist in the economic recovery and help the UK develop leadership in the field globally.

QU 10. How best could the economy reflect the true value of nature's services in the way business is done, to drive smarter, green growth?

Question 10 received answers from over one-third of respondents. Three principle themes emerged:

- determining and accounting for value
- payment for use of environmental services
- fiscal measures

QU 11. Responsible businesses are already looking for ways to reduce their impact on the environment. How can we encourage more action like this?

Question 11 received answers from two-fifths of respondents. Three principle themes emerged:

- communication
- incentives
- levers and delivery mechanisms

## **Determining and accounting for value**

**Key elements in responses: determine value; ecosystem services; indicators; environmental accounting; auditing.**

7.1.3.1 A frequent comment from respondents was the necessity that the starting point for reflecting the value of nature's services in the way business operates was that "true" value is defined and quantified. In terms of mechanisms, the TEEB and UKMEA approaches were commonly suggested, with environmental and ecological foot-printing also raised as potential methods.

7.1.3.2 Many respondents again identified the use of an ecosystem services as the most appropriate method of ascertaining the value of the full range of services. A similar range of views and reservations as described in chapter I were again reflected here.

7.1.3.3 At the national level, the need for alternative measures to GDP and growth that take into environmental degradation and value were suggested as means of promoting economic sustainability. Allied to this the need for metrics and indicators that take into account environmental and social impacts of economic activity were frequently recommended.

*"For a sustainable economy we need not just count carbon, but biodiversity and ecosystem services too, using whatever methods and tools we have at our disposal. Even if the tools are not perfect it is better to make some assessment rather than assume nature has no value." (An ecological survey group)*

7.1.3.4 Respondents expressed strong support for businesses to adopt accounting, supported by appropriate auditing, that includes the use and degradation of the natural environment. The use of equator principles, triple bottom line and ecological bottom line accounting were all suggested as potential techniques to ensure that the costs to the environment are internalised and reflected in business accounts and planning. However, there was an acknowledgement that the techniques were not yet fully developed for use in the commercial sector.

## **Payment for use**

**Key elements in responses: environmental cost; polluter pays.**

7.1.3.5 Respondents frequently highlighted the need for the cost of the use of environmental services, and environmental degradation to be fully reflected in the cost of goods and services. Linked to the previous theme, there was recognition that transparent methodology would be required to determine both the value and cost of operations.

*"The true cost of fuel and energy use needs to be recognised. It makes no logical sense that an apple brought in the UK from New Zealand, for example, costs the same as an UK apple." (Individual)*

7.1.3.6 A specific example of this approach is the polluter pays principle which was highlighted by many respondents.

7.1.3.7 Respondents acknowledged that such measures impact upon the competitiveness of the goods and services produced, but this would create market pressure to develop goods and services with reduced environmental impact, thus encouraging sustainable practices.

## **Levers and delivery mechanisms**

**Key elements in responses: fiscal measures; communication; incentives; regulation and accreditation; business led initiatives; support mechanisms and ways of working.**

7.1.3.8 A frequent suggestion to encourage change was to use a 'carrot and stick' approach, with support, incentives and investment to encourage best practice, allied to regulation, enforcement and penalties to eliminate poor practice.

#### ***a. Fiscal Measures***

**Key elements in responses: taxation; environmental markets; offsets; levies.**

7.1.3.9 A key theme in response to both questions 10 and 11 was the use of a range of fiscal measures to reflect the impact on the natural environment and influence business behaviour.

7.1.3.10 There was substantial support from respondents for some form of 'green' or environmental taxation to reflect the value of the environmental impact of goods, services and activities. The majority of the responses suggested that taxation should be scaled, variable or tiered to benefit those activities with low environmental impact, with increasing taxation on those activities with higher environmental impacts. The same suggestion was made to encourage more sustainable practices. Other suggestions included the use of tax credits, variable tax allowances and tax exemption to reflect and encourage sustainable business activities. Specific taxes on food miles and carbon were also suggested.

7.1.3.11 One aspect of taxation which was identified specifically in responses, was that of levies on certain activities. Levies on the extraction of peat and a climate change levy were specifically mentioned, often in conjunction with the use of the funds accrued to fund restoration or mitigation. The Aggregates Levy funding of Nature After Minerals (NAM) programme was proposed as a good example to follow.

7.1.3.12 The issue of market failure and how to address it was raised in a large number of responses, with a use of environmental markets as a mechanism to address it often suggested. Markets for carbon trading and ecosystem services were suggested, with the need for well thought-out and designed markets often highlighted. A deregulatory approach was suggested as one possible design.

*"It needs to be easy for businesses to offset environmental impact, for example by establishing schemes such as tree planting, land purchase for water catchment/natural flood plain and others that promote involvement in local environmental projects. Such schemes should ideally be accredited in some way."* (A county council)

7.1.3.13 Respondents most frequently proposed the use of biodiversity and geodiversity offsetting, habitat banking and conservation credits as mechanisms through which environmental markets could operate. However, concerns were expressed that biodiversity offsetting should not be used in isolation; and that offsetting could end up effectively incentivising, or creating pressure for, decisions that would harm the natural environment, for example through the funding of community projects.

#### ***b. Communication***

**Key elements in responses: advice; guidance; best practice; promotion; rewards.**

7.1.3.14 The way information and guidance is provided to businesses, consumers and wider society was identified by respondents as a key aspect for both protecting the natural environment and changing behaviours.

7.1.3.15 A large number of respondents highlighted the importance of the availability and access to high quality and free advice and guidance, with particular mention of the needs of small and medium businesses. Requests for the development of clear and simple tools to help with, for example, carbon and environmental foot-printing and cost-benefit analysis were common.

*“We need sources of information and expertise for business who want to work in a sustainable manner that fully considers the natural environment.” (Individual)*

7.1.3.16 The sharing of best practice and mentoring were highlighted by many as ways forward. The use of case studies, existing business confederations and groups were proposed as possible methods to build on governmental and NGO provision.

7.1.3.17 Respondents frequently highlighted environmental labelling to assist the public in making informed decisions, linking this with the need to change consumer behaviour.

7.1.3.18 The promotion of environmental best practice and achievement was highlighted as a way of both rewarding sustainable business and informing the customer. National and local awards such a Queens Award to Industry with associated positive promotion and media coverage were suggested as potential mechanisms. However an alternative view was also expressed that there should be a naming and shaming of businesses that fail to deliver or cause environmental degradation.

*“It is important for conservation organisations to give credit where due for some very good biodiversity work being done by some businesses”( A county-level Biodiversity Project)*

### **c. Incentives**

**Key elements in responses: incentives; investment.**

7.1.3.19 The use of financial incentives was widely supported amongst respondents, with matched funding, grants and tax breaks as possible mechanisms. Suggestions for what the incentives should be used for ranged widely from the support of best practice, innovation, and partnership working to habitat restoration. However, all focussed on reducing environmental impact or increasing sustainability.

7.1.3.20 Government and public investment in innovation, green infrastructure and a general greening of the economy was also suggested by a considerable number of responses. The establishment of a green investment bank was cited as a potential mechanism.

### **d. Regulation and accreditation**

**Key elements in responses: regulation; legislation; accreditation; targets.**

7.1.3.21 Appropriate regulation was considered as important by many respondents. Enforcement was also raised frequently whilst the need for tougher legislation and regulation was also suggested, though less often. Areas specifically proposed included planning, building regulation, pollution and the management of natural capital.

*“It is widely accepted that a free market fails to address both monetary and non-monetary value of ecosystem services and other forms of human interaction with nature. Regulation plays an essential role in addressing those market failures by ‘imposing’ those values into the market.” (A county council)*

7.1.3.22 The use and encouragement of accreditation schemes was highlighted in several responses, with both mandatory and voluntary options proposed. The development of a British Standard for sustainable development was proposed. The need to change and upgrade existing environmental management systems was also suggested with the expansion and mandatory adoption of ISO 14001 highlighted in several responses.

7.1.3.23 Targets were proposed by a number of respondents as an important delivery mechanism. Both mandatory and voluntary options were proposed, with associated promotion through the publication of league tables to help inform wider society. The use of branding such as the Kite Mark for successful accreditation, and benefits in terms of marketing that this would entail were highlighted. The need for effective auditing was raised alongside many of these options.

#### **e. Business led initiatives**

##### **Key elements in responses : voluntary initiatives; Corporate Responsibility schemes.**

7.1.3.24 Voluntary initiatives were proposed in several responses, however there was disagreement around their effectiveness. The recent example of reduction in set-aside following the replacement of a regulatory requirement with a voluntary initiative was highlighted as an example of the risks around such initiatives.

*“Positive voluntary action by business is to be encouraged.... Backing up these voluntary and best practice approaches, however, it is important that the possibility of legislation or regulation is kept in reserve if progress is not sufficient.” (A rural interest pressure group)*

7.1.3.25 The integration an addition of environment indicators, targets and ambitions into Corporate Responsibility Schemes was a common theme.

#### **f. Support mechanisms and Ways of Working**

##### **Key elements in responses: education and training; partnership working**

7.1.3.26 Education and training were identified by several respondents, the goal being to ensure that decision makers within industry had the necessary understanding and skills to make environmentally informed decisions.

7.1.3.27 Allied to this was a recognition of the need for partnership working. A range of partners and ways of working were proposed largely with the aim on ensuring that business had the best sources of advice and understanding.

## VIII The European and International agenda

- **Our priorities beyond the UK, and how should we minimise our negative environmental impact abroad.**

8.1 This chapter considers questions 5 and 14 of the consultation document, which both focussed on the European and wider international agendas.

### Question 14

What should be the priorities for the UK's role in EU and international action, to protect and enhance the natural environment at home and abroad?

8.1.1 Question 14 received answers from over half of respondents. Seven principle themes emerged:

- biodiversity
- in Europe and CAP/CFP
- UK leading
- climate change
- sharing knowledge and best practice
- environment in decision making
- other international action
- 

Question 5 – How best can we reduce our footprint on the natural environment abroad, through the goods, services and products we use?

Question 5 received answers from slight less than half of respondents. Five principle themes emerged:

- self sufficiency
- consumption
- metrics
- regulation
- advice and guidance

The majority of the responses focused on the goods and services sourced overseas or as imported products which formed part of existing life styles. Strong messages about changing our consumption patterns, reducing waste and adopting a more sustainable life style dominated.

### Biodiversity

**Key elements in responses: biodiversity conservation; action for UK Overseas Territories; prioritised action on key habitats and species; the marine environment; tropical forests.**

8.1.2 Respondents expressed a clear concern that the decline in global biodiversity be stopped and reversed, with Rio+20 being at the forefront of several respondents minds. However many favoured (or perceived a necessity for) a focus on biodiversity 'hotspots' and

critically endangered species. Clearly inspired by an RSPB campaign, the particular responsibility the UK has for its overseas territories, and the wealth of habitats and species found there was often highlighted.

*“As well as tackling over-exploitation of species, the UK should prioritise protection and maintenance of vital habitats for biodiversity abroad” (International animal welfare charity).*

8.1.3 Many different individual habitats and animal groups received particular attention in responses, but concern for tropical forests, the marine environment, and indeed the UK’s own internationally significant biodiversity resources were most often cited. The importing of unsustainably produced tropical hardwoods was a particular concern.

8.1.4 The related issues of invasive non-native species, and bio-security also featured in several responses.

### **In Europe and Reform of CAP/CFP**

**Key elements in responses: CAP/CFP reform; engagement in Europe; environmental protection and related regulation.**

8.1.5 The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy to deliver more for the natural environment dominated responses within these themes. Although a strong message within the RSPB’s campaign, these campaign-based responses were in the minority. Shifting resources from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2, tougher cross-compliance, and greater ‘environmental and public good’, all came to the fore – the latter being mentioned in relation to wider EU budgets too. The Common Fisheries Policy received less attention, but when addressed, the almost universal view was that it had failed to protect fish stocks and the marine environment.

*“CAP and Common Fisheries Policy must continue to be a priority for Europe.” (Individual)*

8.1.6 The role of European Directives in helping to protect the UK’s environmental assets was seen as positive by respondents (Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive), and many advocated our positive engagement in developing new legislation generally, and issues such as soil conservation and air quality, in particular. A notable exception to this positive view, came in relation bio-fuels, where the environmental costs of greater biofuel use were seen to have outweighed any benefits.

*“This most public document seems to treat legally binding European obligations as something to “work towards” and could be seen to demonstrate a laissez-faire attitude towards European law.” (An environmental protection pressure group)*

### **UK Leading**

**Key elements in responses: UK leading internationally; UK getting it right ‘at home’ first.**

8.1.7 A large number of respondents put emphasis on the role of the UK as a leader on the environmental agenda. Many saw our efforts on Climate Change as an example of good practice that should both be maintained, and extended into a number of other areas, principal amongst these being reversing the decline of biodiversity.

*“The UK’s reputation for leadership on climate change should be maintained” (A county council)*

8.1.8 However several respondents put a different emphasis in their comments, suggesting with particular respect to biodiversity, that as well as making our best efforts on the international stage we should also ‘get it right’ at home first.

*“Show leadership and reverse UK deforestation” (Individual)*

### **Climate Change**

**Key elements in responses: more renewables (though less palm oil); reduced use of fossil fuels; mitigation and adaptation; global treaty.**

8.1.9 Respondents highlighted a need to increase our renewable energy capacity and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, but were concerned about potential negative impacts, not least expressing a concern over the impacts of palm oil production on tropical forests.

8.1.10 There was a strong desire to see progress made, nationally and internationally, on greenhouse gas emissions reductions. The need to ‘pre-adapt’ society and the natural environment came strongly.

*“We must ensure that carbon trading agreements really achieve objectives and not just provide a means for any energy intensive sector to off-set their carbon rather than change their behaviour” (A regional forestry advisory committee)*

### **Sharing Knowledge and Practice**

**Key elements in responses: technology; skills; knowledge; best practice.**

8.1.11 A frequently expressed view was that the UK should be prepared to share its expertise, skills, knowledge around the world, in particular with developing nations, but also across the European Union.

*“The UK does have a host of good practice that it needs to disseminate at the EU and international level. We need to be a facilitator for joint research programmes...” (Individual)*

### **Environment in Decision Making**

**Key elements in responses: environmental ethics; knowledge and evidence in decision making; effective valuation of environmental assets and services.**

8.1.12 There were two key strands to respondents’ comments. First, that the environment must be brought much more to the centre of policy development and decision making processes, both by the application of existing knowledge and evidence, and by a change in our ethics. This was seen as being in the interests of human kind, and of the natural environment itself (there were links between these observations and some of the comments categorised against the following theme – ‘Other International’); and second that we must find a way of appropriately valuing environmental assets and outcomes, such that they are given due weight alongside economic and social development.

*“Argue, argue, argue. Have the scientific evidence (so fund this) to support your case. Be prepared to stick your heels in.” (Individual)*

*“Supermarkets and large retailers must continue to be challenged about their ethics and sources of things they aim to sell us with a greater corporate responsibility for the people and environment from which they have (been) obtained.” (Individual)*

### **Other International action**

**Key elements in responses: equity and sustainability in international trade and finance; population control; millennium development goals; effective application of international law and standards; links between environmental quality and poverty relief.**

8.1.13 Respondents provided a great breadth of comment about what could and should be done on the international stage. However a number of commonalities did emerge. These can be summarised as:

- greater fairness in our trading relationship with developing nations, this being linked to a desire to see 'true' or 'environmental' sustainability as a key driver for decisions around international trade;
- the related issues of resource depletion and population control as critical drivers of environmental quality;
- support for the Millennium Development Goals and links between environmental degradation and social deprivation – the view being that they could and should be addressed hand in hand;
- and finally that existing international laws, protocols and conventions across a great range of issues (Convention on Biological Diversity; CITES; Aarhus Convention; Convention to Combat Desertification; Kyoto Protocol; and others) should be supported, implemented and enforced.

*“The Government should engage fully with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the Aarhus Convention and CITES. Defra should also work to ensure that all of these processes, and the UNFCCC and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) processes, are joined up and make the links between environment, biodiversity, climate change and poverty.” (An umbrella organisation representing a number of national bodies)*

### **Self sufficiency**

**Key elements in responses: domestic production; environmental standards.**

8.1.14 The substantial majority of respondents addressing question 5, encouraged a shift in origins of product from overseas to domestic production, any exception being penalised in cost if not derived under equal or better environmental standards than those set in the European Union. The emphasis was to promote sustainable products, locally sourced to reduce 'carbon miles'.

### **Consumption**

**Key elements in responses: amount consumed; supply chains; waste; internalising environmental cost; awareness.**

8.1.15 The majority of respondents sought action to reduce what society purchased; to use sustainable supply chain based products; and reduce the amount of waste. Waste from 'built in obsolescence', from excess packaging or over-buying all need to stop were all highlighted as problem issues in responses. To address this, respondents recommended that the environmental impact be built into the end-product's price, and more readily by increasing public awareness. The 'Fairtrade' model was recognised as gaining momentum and had broad understanding. It was noted that the products were accessible, therefore making the 'switch' to such products relatively easy.

*“consumption of resources at such high ranges - along with the rapid waste associated with many manufactured goods, which are in turn hard to repair or re-use has negative effects for our natural environment whether through emissions to air, water, land and soil, and the extraction, use and disposal of raw materials and energy in production and consumption process” (An Environmental pressure group)*

### **Metrics**

**Key elements in responses: measuring foot-print; true cost.**

8.1.16 The majority of respondents prioritised the need to measure the ecological footprint of the products we use. The 'cost' was to be a true value of the production of the product incorporating water footprint, carbon footprint etc. Opinion was divided on the best method.

*“to reduce a footprint consumers should either cut consumption or change their consumption pattern (A Research Council)*

**Regulation**

**Key elements in responses: review and enforce; restrict imports; public sector procurement**

8.1.17 Regulation is an area where the majority of respondents concurred: the dominant view was that it needs to be reviewed and enforced. Some responses suggested that we should decide which products, given the evidence available, did not come up to the standards set for production in the EU and exclude them from our market. The example of palm oil was given. Otherwise respondents recommended that we be 'bold' and ban products deemed scientifically to have a negative/ unsustainable impact on the environment

8.1.18 Respondents recommended that the government should take a lead and apply green procurement policy across the public sector.

**Advice and Guidance**

**Key elements in responses: information provision; consumer understanding; common accreditation standard.**

8.1.19 Information was a major area of discussion by respondents, focusing primarily on labelling information which had to be clear, consistent, and understandable to consumers. An accreditation standard for products was suggested, and support was voiced for a single standard to be established, rather than the perceived ad hoc approach currently developing.

## IX. Mapping priorities

- **Ensuring recommended priority actions have been captured.**

9.1 This chapter summarises respondents' recommendations on priority action for the White Paper, based on responses to question 15. Identified priorities are summarised below, alongside the Chapter and section of this report where they emerged in responses to earlier questions.

Question 15.

If you could choose just one priority action for the Natural Environment White Paper to drive forward locally, nationally or internationally – what would it be?

9.2 Question 15 received answers from nine-tenths of respondents. The range of recommendations was vast, however 13 principle themes were identified.

9.3 Over a quarter of respondents recommended some form of action that would directly benefit biodiversity. The vast majority of the rest addressed themselves to mechanisms that would in turn deliver biodiversity benefits (such as maintaining spending on agri-environment schemes; improving our environmental databases; enforcing environmental law and developing new supporting legislation).

9.4 There were other related responses on climate change, population control, education and awareness, leadership and vision, access and rights of way.

THEME	RESPONSES	REPORT SECTION
<b>Biodiversity, Habitats &amp; Species</b>		
Protect biodiversity	160	1.3.4; 3.2.21; 8.1.2; 8.1.7
Implement Lawton Review	46	3.2.16; 5.2.3; 5.2.8; 7.1.2.7
Develop landscape scale approach	108	3.2.4; 5.2.3; 5.2.11; 6.3.6; 6.3.8; 7.1.2.7;
Restore, recreate habitats/networks	113	1.3.5; 3.2.16; 7.1.3.19
Green Corridors and hedges	21	5.2.5; 7.1.2.9&10
Woodlands and trees	40	7.1.1.8
Marine environment	23	1.3.6; 3.2.8.2; 5.2.4; 8.1.3
Other specific habitats	33	8.1.3
<b>Climate Change</b>		
Mitigation	44	1.3.1; 1.3.8; 8.1.9&10
Adaptation	12	1.3.1; 1.3.8; 3.2.8.2; 5.2.8; 6.3.4; 8.1.10
<b>Population Control</b>		
UK	16	1.3.2; 3.2.20
Global	22	1.3.2; 1.3.8; 3.2.20; 8.1.13
<b>Access and Rights of Way</b>		
Develop, integrate, make safe	72	3.2.18&19
<b>Farming and Agri-Environment</b>		
Maintain/enhance AE funding	66	3.2.8.5; 5.2.1; 6.3.8
Sustainable farming	28	1.3.8; 3.2.8.6; 3.2.22; 7.1.1.12; 8.1.5
Greater recognition for land managers	14	3.2.22; 5.2.7
<b>Funding</b>		
Funding to support delivery	95	1.3.15; 3.2.3; 3.2.8.5; 3.2.23&24; 5.2.4; 5.2.13; 6.3.1; 6.3.8; 7.1.1.4,7,11 & 13
Levies, taxes and other fiscal	21	2.2.8; 3.2.8.10&11; 5.2.13; 7.1.1.19; 7.1.3.9-12
<b>Education</b>		
Formal education	47	3.2.5-7; 5.2.15; 7.1.1.1

Engagement with nature	45	3.2.5; 3.2.8.8; 3.2.18; 5.2.6; 7.1.1.2,4,6,9&20;
Awareness	16	1.3.6&7; 1.3.10; 1.3.14; 2.2.7; 2.2.16-18; 3.2.5; 3.2.8.7&8; 5.2.15; 6.3.5&6; 7.1.1.12
<b>Environment in Decision Making</b>		
Culture change in decision makers	92	1.3.7; 1.3.11&12; 2.2.1&2; 2.2.10;2.2.14&15; 3.2.6; 3.2.9&10; 6.3.5; 7.1.3.4; 7.1.3.17; 7.1.3.26; 8.1.12
Valuation of environment	28	2.2.4-9; 2.2.13; 3.2.9; 5.2.9; 6.3.9; 7.1.3.1,2,4&5; 7.1.3.6,12&13; 8.1.12,15&16
<b>Local Authorities and Planning</b>		
Planning law/policy/guidance	36	3.2.8.2-4; 5.2.4&5;7.1.2.9&10; 7.1.3.8; 7.1.3.21
LA delivery and co-ordinating role	38	3.2.12; 5.2.5; 7.1.1.4; 7.1.1.16; 7.1.2.4-6,8,10&12;
Obligations/bonds/off-setting	17	3.2.8.4; 3.2.8.11; 5.2.13; 7.1.2.11
<b>Monitoring and Research</b>		
Road Map and Measureable outcomes	75	3.2.2
Biological records	19	3.2.9; 7.1.1.12; 7.1.2.5
More environmental monitoring and research	18	3.2.9
<b>Green Infrastructure</b>		
Green Infrastructure	33	3.2.8.4; 5.2.5; 7.1.2.10; 7.1.3.20
<b>Enforcement</b>		
Enforcement/strengthening of legislation	83	2.2.8; 2.2.12; 3.2.8.10; 5.2.4; 7.1.3.6&8; 7.1.3.21; 8.1.13&17
<b>Supporting Legislation</b>		
Legislation to protect and enable restoration	72	3.2.8.1; 8.1.6; 8.1.17
<b>Leadership &amp; Vision</b>		
Leadership, vision and framework	52	2.2.10&11; 3.2.1-4; 3.2.24; 6.3.7; 7.1.1.11,15&16; 7.1.2.3

## X. Campaigns

10.1 In response to the Discussion Document, a number of organisations launched email and letter-writing campaigns to encourage their members to share views with us – largely on single issues of key concern. In total, over 5000 responses were received. As part of the campaign, some correspondents were also motivated to provide us with more detailed responses outlining their views on other areas of concern in relation to the natural environment. These views were also considered as part of our analysis. Defra is grateful for the comments received and for those members of the public that took the time to contact us.

The main issues that emerged in these campaigns were:

- Woodlands. This campaign requested a doubling of the size of England's native woodland by 2050. Correspondents highlighted views about the associated benefits this would have on mitigating and adapting to climate change, improving public health and addressing biodiversity loss. The campaign urged increased tree planting, and protecting and restoring existing woodlands.
- Recreational horse riding. Supporters of this campaign gave opinions supporting improved countryside access for horse riders, noting the importance of recreational horse riding to the rural economy and the need for safer off-road access. A number of ideas were expressed about how this could be achieved.
- Geodiversity. A number of correspondents highlighted the value and importance of geodiversity in underpinning the natural environment.
- EU 2020 biodiversity target. This campaign requested a roadmap to meet the EU target to halt the loss of biodiversity and begin its restoration by 2020 and to take action on the international stage by setting an example in UK overseas territories.