

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Natural Environment White Paper: Stakeholder Workshops.

1 and 4 November 2010

Defra held two workshops for stakeholders on the Natural Environment White Paper in Birmingham and Bristol. There was an open invitation to the workshops and invitations were sent to defra stakeholders and to those who had requested to be 'kept in touch' about the White Paper. Each workshop had around 55 participants.

This note sets out the activities that were held and gives an overview of some of the discussions which were held. The views noted here are a summary of the opinions of a range of individuals and organisations and do not represent Government policy.

Defra would like to thank all those that participated in the workshops.

The workshop comprised the following activities.

Speech and Q+A by Richard Benyon, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, gave an overview of his vision for the White Paper. In particular, he highlighted the opportunity the White Paper presented for our generation to change the way we view and manage the natural environment. His speech was followed by a question and answer session which covered a variety of topics.

Presentations: Natural Value and the Big Society

During the workshops, two presentations were given by Defra staff. One on valuing the natural environment; the other on Big Society and policy thinking over the long-term.

Activity One: Where we've come from, where are we going?

This warm-up activity asked participants to reflect on some of the key challenges we've encountered in the past and what the response has been from society, NGOs and policy-makers. It then asked participants to think about the future and reflect on what challenges we may face and what our responses should be.

Participants identified a range of possible future challenges and drivers which may influence policy making. This included: population growth; increased demand for resources; environmental security; environmental impacts on Developing countries; changes in technology; and changes in lifestyles and levels of affluence. Participants identified a range of possible responses which included looking at our approach to land management, a greater emphasis on sustainability, and looking at the role of education, technology and research. There was a discussion about legislative and regulatory responses that might be needed, along with behavioural and cultural change by business, land managers, consumers, and communities.

Activity Two: Offers and Asks

This activity asked participants to consider their 'ask' of Government on the natural environment and if that 'ask' was achieved therefore what their 'offer' could be. The idea was to engage participants in thinking about Big Society policy making.

The 'asks' of Government were themed around providing leadership and setting appropriate overarching strategies, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and embedding the concept of valuing the benefits that the natural environment provides. The 'offers' from the Big Society were around informing and educating the public, investing in and developing human capital, and provide delivery on the ground of the overarching strategies.

Activity Three: The Big Ideas

This activity asked participants to put forward their one big idea for the White Paper and then discuss and challenge those ideas in groups.

The ideas related to a cross section of natural environment policy with many of the ideas focussing on volunteering, education and involving the Big Society, dissemination of information and advice, and developing partnership working at local, catchment and landscape scales. There were thoughts about increasing the use of technology, and on the concept of natural value.

Natural Environment White Paper: Biodiversity Workshop

9 November 2010

As well as workshops on the full range of issues to be addressed through the Natural Environment White Paper, Defra also held an event which focused on biodiversity policy in London. This focused on the new global and EU biodiversity targets, the new England Biodiversity Strategy, biodiversity offsets; and the 'Making Space for Nature' Review. Invitations were sent to stakeholders with a particular interest in the future approach to biodiversity, and the workshop had about 65 participants from a wide range of organisations.

This note gives an overview of some of the discussions that took place. This is a summary of the opinions of a range of individuals and organisations and does not represent Government policy.

Defra would like to thank all those that participated in the workshop.

The workshop comprised the following activities:

Speech and Q+A by Richard Benyon, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, highlighted the success in reaching a global agreement at the CBD Conference of Parties in Nagoya, and the role of the Natural Environment White Paper in translating the agreements/targets from Nagoya into relevant Government strategies and policies including a new England Biodiversity Strategy. He also noted the important roles that the National Ecosystem Assessment and the response to the 'Making Space for Nature' review would have to play. His speech was followed by a question and answer session that covered topics including the spending review, agri-environment schemes and forestry.

Presentation and Q+A: Making Space for Nature Review(Professor Sir John Lawton)

Professor Sir John Lawton gave a presentation on the 'Making Space for Nature' review, which he had chaired, and set out the role he hoped it would play in the biodiversity element of the Natural Environment White Paper. He answered a variety of questions relating to the report.

Activity One: Group exercise on recommendations in 'Making Space for Nature' report followed by plenary discussion.

This activity asked each table to identify their priorities for the Natural Environment White Paper in light of the recommendations in the 'Making Space for Nature' report, and to consider potential opportunities/barriers to their being achieved.

Participants identified a range of priorities and opportunities. These included: a review of

Agri-environment schemes; a new Land Act; a spatial approach to tackling environmental issues; a planning system that supports biodiversity; and an annual assessment of natural capital to capture values. They also identified a number of potential barriers, such as: the need for greater 'environmental literacy'; a lack of communication between local and national levels; and difficulty in accessing information and evidence. Participants also expressed their views on the need for urgency, new funding mechanisms, and the engagement of local communities in delivering these priorities.

Presentation: NEWP update and next steps (Natural Environment White Paper Team, Defra)

The Natural Environment White Paper team gave an update on the process and confirmed the next steps, including how the responses to the consultation process were being dealt with. A report on the consultation responses is now available here:

<http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

Activity Two: Break-out Sessions

The aim of these parallel interactive sessions was to capture thinking on three key biodiversity issues.

Developing biodiversity offsets (Andrew Dodd, RSPB)

Participants identified potential opportunities for net biodiversity gain at a local, regional and national level and the opportunity for a 'market-based approach'. They suggested that a transparent system linked to the planning system was needed, including a regulatory framework to allow for clear measurement and monitoring.

Priorities for a new EBS (Paul Cobbing, GOWM)

Participants identified a range of issues including the need to better value the natural environment, the importance of local delivery and the need to tackle some of the underlying causes of decline. They suggested that the new Strategy should aim for greater progress towards biodiversity outcomes, such as improving the extent of priority habitat in good condition, and delivering improved species conservation through habitat management. Participants recognised the importance of functioning and resilient ecosystems in achieving this. They also discussed the need to improve public understanding of the issues.

Planning ecological networks and ERZs (Pete Brotherton, NE)

Participants recommended a national framework within which ERZs could develop and flourish. They identified a need for ERZs to have clear objectives; the ability to fit in with existing mechanisms and a clear delivery framework with measures of success. Participants also felt it would be important to encourage a diversity of approaches at a range of scales.

Activity Three: Report back and plenary discussion on issues from workshops/next steps

The plenary session involved a discussion on the key points raised by each group. The Minister returned to hear part of this discussion.

There was an emphasis on the importance of understanding 'place', the use of a spatial approach, and existing evidence on land use to inform policy in future. Other key points included: the need for stricter planning guidance; greater environmental intelligence/literacy amongst the public; innovative financing and collaborations with local groups.