

**Annex 2**



**Performance Report as at 31 March 2009**

# Natural England Balanced Scorecard – March 2009


	2008/09
<b>One Organisation, One Purpose</b>	<b>G</b>
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<b>Outcome 1</b> Healthy Natural Environment	<b>AG</b>
<b>Outcome 2</b> People Value and Conserve	<b>G</b>
<b>Outcome 3</b> Sustainable use	<b>AG</b>
<b>Outcome 4</b> Secure Environmental Future	<b>G</b>

	2008/09
<b>Creating Environmental Leadership</b>	<b>G</b>
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<b>Authoritative Champion</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Strong Stakeholder Relationship</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Advocating Natural Environment</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Stakeholders Trust Evidence and Knowledge</b>	<b>G</b>

	2008/09
<b>Delivering our Business</b>	<b>G</b>
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<b>Business Processes</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Resources and Efficiency</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Customer Services</b>	<b>G</b>

	2008/09
<b>Building Capability</b>	<b>G</b>
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<b>People Leadership</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Strengthening Capability</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Organisational Contract</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Developing Skills</b>	<b>G</b>

<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>1.1.1 Landscape and Geodiversity</b></p> <p>We have completed year 1 of the Peat Project, finalised the specification for Condition and Quality of England’s Landscapes, started to implement the Geodiversity Evidence Review Action Plan, advanced the Landscape Evidence Review and completed reports on integrating landscape and geodiversity and on rewilding.</p> <p>We have made progress with all planned policies - consulting on Future Landscapes, drafted a Protected Landscapes policy, advanced the Soil policy to the Board Outcome Group and identified Geodiversity policy needs. We have established Regional Landscape and Geodiversity Partnerships in all Regions and completed 16 regionally led European Landscape Convention (ELC) projects. We produced the first Natural England ELC action plan and completed ELC guidelines for others.</p>
<p><b>AG</b></p>	<p><b>1.1.2 Protected landscapes</b></p> <p>The high level national agreement with AONB's is at final draft and due for sign off in May. We have sent “Letters of intent” for new 3-year agreements to all 36 AONBs. Secretary of State confirmation of South Downs National Park now allows us to progress consultation on designating Lakes-Dales gap. We have digitised 70% of Local Geological Site boundaries (against a target of 75%) and captured 70% of the related data.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>1.2.1 Biodiversity</b></p> <p>During the year we launched the England Biodiversity Delivery framework we are now establishing Biodiversity Integration groups. We met our target of 65% of BAP habitat under favourable management taking the total area to 53,434 ha. We exceeded our target on priority species with 72% of those for which we have the lead on-track to meet recovery plan objectives.</p> <p>We exceed our target on farmland bird options. An additional 2,296 ha in quarter 4 took our total to 5,057 ha (12% above baseline). ‘Wetland Vision’ funded 140 ha of peatland restoration and land purchased has enabled 300 ha of new wetland creation.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>1.2.2 SSSI</b></p> <p>We achieved 88.4% of SSSI in target condition exceeding our renegotiated target of 88.2%. We fell just short of our 92% target (or 1,220 ha) of NNR land in target condition achieving 90.4%. We met 100% of SSSIs with Conservation objectives delivering 3,500 conservation objectives and 2,500 condition assessments in the final quarter. We have also delivered against the recommendations set for us by the NAO following their audit of the programme</p>
<p><b>AR</b></p>	<p><b>1.3.1 Marine Protected Areas</b></p> <p>We have met all our marine targets except the submission of Departmental Briefs to Defra for two new Special Protection Areas (SPA). These have in principle agreement but the need for further work has been identified. As a consequence, we are unable to begin informal consultations with stakeholders on either the new SPAs or the new Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). We have made good progress on securing an effective Marine Bill, developing four regional Marine Conservation Zone projects and the necessary guidance to support their work, promoting favourable condition for existing marine SACs and SPAs, and raising public awareness of undersea landscapes.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>1.3.2 Marine Biodiversity</b></p> <p>We have met the overall target establishing a Marine BAP workstream and preparing an action plan to guide its work; we have initiated a series of marine BAP projects, some through our Countdown 2010 programme; and we have agreed with Defra an overall measure of the health of the marine environment based on the</p>

 length of fish (trophic index).

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<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>2.1.1 Understanding and Appreciation</b></p> <p>We increased the numbers of health walks by 15% (28% above baseline) and increased participation in health walks by 20% Target (37% above baseline). Negotiations for expansion of healthy walking with the DoH are close to completion with level of funding agreed at £7.7 million over three years. Initial evaluation support the independent monitoring findings that Walking for Health engages sedentary people from hard to reach areas, and enables/motivates them to walk. We will launch the Natural Health Service with a manifesto in the first quarter of 2009 highlighting the importance of access to Green Space for health and well being.</p> <p>We completed national survey on changing patterns of use of natural places amongst children and adults. Five regional schools pilot projects running to schedule and on budget. Base-line survey of children's involvement with nature completed at three sites. 20 schools signed up to the programme. First activities commenced but this has not yet led to a measurable increase in the level of awareness.</p> <p>We have completed stage one of the Big Wildlife Garden (formerly Virtual National Nature Reserve) website and opened it for user testing. We have tested and evaluated Ecoteering and commenced Licensing discussions with third parties.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>2.1.2 Access to Nature</b></p> <p>Target met and delivery of the programme is on target. We awarded £7.038m to 23 projects against a target of £7m awarded to 60 projects. We awarded 2 Flagship grants to the Woodland Trust and LEAF with a total value of £2.17m and £932,314 to the Campaign for National Parks has been to continue delivering 'Mosaic' - a project to build ethnic minority capacity for engagement with National Parks in 20 cities. We are working towards a geographical spread of grants across the country and have to date awarded at least one grant in each region. The profile of Access to Nature and Natural England is increasing as grants are being awarded.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>2.2.1 People Actively Engaged</b></p> <p>We achieved a 6.4% increase in the number of Natural England Volunteers, exceeding our target for the year of 2%. We advised Defra on the design and delivery of their "Muck in 4 life" volunteering campaign. Secured £100k from Defra to devise a deliver a capacity building training programme for the sector. Defra have adopted our 10% increase in volunteers target for their campaign. We established five regional volunteering partnerships to test ways of increasing the number and diversity of volunteers and established a corporate volunteering partnership with Norwich Union. We have agreed, with members of the national Environmental Volunteering Group, to collect data from across the sector in England, to enable a clearer picture of volunteering activity to be gained</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>2.3.1 Access Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Our evidence to the two pre-legislative scrutiny Committees was fully reflected in recently published paper outlining contents of 'section 3A Order' (giving effect to the new rights). We consulted with over 100 stakeholders on the scope and nature of the final draft of the coastal access scheme and we completed Access audits with all 53 Coastal Access authorities. Environmental enhancement review paper complete.</p> <p>We delivered all draft Regional Maps with consistent data-sets and developed final guidance on the use of maps. We consulted on a policy review of routes and trails and have drafted recommendations.</p>

### **2.3.2 Champion NNRs**

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We have completed the selection of 25 “Destination” NNRs (those offering the greatest potential for high visitor numbers) and assessed current levels of provision against a visitor service standards framework on all but 2, with outline plans developed to address these gaps over the next two years.

We have completed work to develop investment options on 4 candidates for Champion NNR status including initial engagement with potential funding partners.

G	<p><b>3.1.1 Regional and Local Spatial Frameworks</b></p> <p>This year we completed three regional pilots, 11 green infrastructure spatial strategies, 17 implementation projects and engaging all 9 regions around Sub National Review. The ParkCity Green Infrastructure Conference jointly organised with CABE, and our green infrastructure guidance and case studies, consolidated our reputation with stakeholders and public profile on this issue. We have a clear strategy for multi level governance and the Spatial targeting contract produced a comprehensive database of resources in use to enable spatial targeting of our work by outcome.</p>
AG	<p><b>3.1.2 Land Use Planning</b></p> <p>We responded to 92% of casework within the agreed deadline and five projects have piloted approaches and linked past effectiveness to the development of future tools and methods of engagement. The findings of these reports will be incorporated into a national approach to be undertaken in 2009/10 to help ensure we meet the set target for responding to 95% of casework on time.</p>
G	<p><b>3.2.1 Agri environment Development</b></p> <p>Maps are now available for HLS priority areas and information on where agri-environment funds are spent is now available through our improved Nature on the Map website. Agri-environment schemes are now our main delivery mechanism for SSSI condition improvements. We completed the design for Uplands ELS in December 2008, and is now in IT development for launch in early 2010.</p>
G	<p><b>3.2.2 Agri environment Delivery</b></p> <p>We achieved 65.1% against a target of 65% UAA coverage and are on track for 70% at the end March 2011. We spent £155.3m of UK RDPE funds against a 2008/09 budget of £155m. The programme to implement changes recommended by the ES Review of Progress is underway, with the first tranche of new land management options released in April 2009. We also developed an approach to restore the benefits of Set-aside: XCI. This and an agriculture industry voluntary alternative are part of a public consultation due to conclude in July 2009.</p> <p>We delivered 16,608 land management advice contacts, 25% over our target. We successfully committed the £5m Catchment Sensitive Farming capital budget. We exceeded targets for contracted advice - 2,346 one-to-one advice visits (target 2,000) and 375 group advice events (target 300) Successful delivery of first phase of NVZ advice programme 7,550 attendees at events against a target of 6,000. 75% rated advice 'good' or better.</p>
AG	<p><b>3.3.1 Sustainable use of the Sea</b></p> <p>Significant progress on developing the Marine spatial Planning programme with two active projects in Dorset and the Solent, and an EU funded 'Interreg' project for the North Sea. We have established working relationships with the renewables sector both nationally and regionally. Through the link with MPA/MCZ projects we are bringing a range of different business sectors together to get win/win options for marine development.</p>
AG	<p><b>3.3.2 Marine Statutory Casework</b></p> <p>We have made progress with input into Marine Site Management Schemes, estuary, inter-tidal and port casework, offshore aggregate dredging licence renewals. The nature of the work means a small number of large and complex cases can disproportionately affect our performance against our target.</p>

G	<p><b>4.1.1 Integrated Vision for the Natural Environment</b></p> <p>We have started conversations with stakeholders and staff to prompt thinking about the long term future of the natural environment to help us create a vision for the natural environment in 2060 and how the natural environment will contribute to the needs of society. In this year we have invested considerable amount of time planning, testing and refining our approach to creating the vision. This includes a highly successful engagement programme around the uplands vision, as a result the product has the support of upland stakeholders. We have now established our approach and the initial land use strategy provides the underlying evidence.</p>
G	<p><b>4.2.1 Long-term Challenges for the Natural Environment</b></p> <p>We have a set of 4 scenarios built on evidence gathered about global drivers and then refined and tested by staff, stakeholders the public. Natural England's Scientific Advisory Committee (NESAC) have endorsed the Scenarios and they offer a compelling picture of what England's natural environment could look like in 2060. On Horizon scanning, we held a successful "Futures Exchange" held with outputs received being used to inform the Futures Synthesis Report.</p>
G	<p><b>4.2.2 Responses to changing needs of the environment</b></p> <p>Land Use Policy Group worked to launch a vision for the future of CAP. We have also made good progress in the work with Defra and partners in developing solutions for set-aside mitigation. To inform future engagement and advocacy, we have started work on a report on the 'Value of a Healthy Natural Environment' which will be produced in 2009/2010. We have supported Defra in the identification of potential 'Green Jobs' initiatives. This work is centred on the concept of ecosystem services. We have taken this policy to the Board and in 2009/2010 when we intend to move beyond concepts into practical demonstration.</p>
AG	<p><b>4.3.1 Climate Change Adaptation</b></p> <p>Our adaptation policy has progressed at both the UK and EU level. We chair the adaptation sub-group of ENCA and hosted a high-profile MEP reception on the EU White Paper in Brussels. Defra's Adapting to Climate Change team have taken account of our key advocacy message on the critical role a resilient natural environment plays in delivering sustainable adaptation. We are also advocating that Government should undertake a strategic assessment of the energy policy instruments that can deliver a sustainable low carbon energy mix, while minimising environmental impacts. We are finalising a methodology that will set out how environmental impacts should be considered alongside the potential for renewable energy generation. A key data source will be our wind opportunities guidance, which is due for consultation this summer.</p>
G	<p><b>4.3.2 Climate Change Mitigation</b></p> <p>We have made good progress on the three core strands of this target in the last quarter of 2008/09. Working with Defra and other external partners, we have developed a long list of potential indicators of climate change adaptation. Our draft methodology for identifying areas vulnerable to climate change is now ready for peer-review and we have now secured additional funding from Defra for additional monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions from peat.</p>

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#### **4.3.3 Tools for Raising Awareness of Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation**

Target met. At the end of March we published our four Climate Change Character Area reports covering different landscapes (i.e. Cumbria High Fells, Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase; Shropshire Hills; and the Norfolk Broads) which represent ground-breaking research into the impacts of climate change on the natural environment at a local level and the possible adaptation responses. We achieved good coverage of the launch across a range of national and regional channels and addressing several misconceptions. Next year, this project will cover all regions, taking in new Character Areas and pilot at a regional scale.

<p>G</p>	<p><b>A1.1 Authoritative Champion</b></p> <p>The Public element of the Reputation tracker research shows prompted awareness has risen from 21% to 28% (the highest increase among our comparator organisations) above the 25% target set for the year. Familiarity has risen from 61% to 66%. Favourability remains at 89% (a positive result as favourability tends to decline with a rise in familiarity amongst government agencies). Coverage of Natural England in national print media increased by 39% and by 40% in regional print. Volume across all media increased by 73% for the full year.</p> <p>These good results must not obscure the fact that we have a long way to go in building our reputation. Further clarity on our positioning in a crowded marketplace, and clarity of messaging will be crucial in underpinning the External Affairs plan.</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>A1.2 Strong Stakeholder Relationships</b></p> <p>We exceeded targets achieving 89% (42 of 47) of our Advocacy Objectives and agreed Joint Goals with 22 stakeholders (two more than planned).</p> <p>Highlights this quarter include the Water Companies Dinner, the meeting with the CEOs of 8 key VCO's and the ParkCity Conference with CABI on the importance of green infrastructure to the sustainability of cities. We hosted a reception for 40 representatives from the EU institutions, the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee and several Member States in the European Parliament on 4 March, on the theme of 'Adapting to Climate Change: Taking forward an eco-systems approach for Europe'. The CEO's engagement programme with the Shadow Front Bench continued and she met peers in connection with the Marine and Coastal Access Bill.</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>A1.3 Advocating Natural Environment</b></p> <p>Target met. We delivered a creative policy postcard campaign, regional policy briefings and a host of internal news and team briefing content to highlight policy context of messages. This has resulted in an improvement in staff confidence advocating policy and from 32% to 70% and an increase in confidence advocating purpose from 60% to 72%, just short of our 75% target.</p> <p>A remarkable turnaround for this target in the final quarter of the year but we have a further work to do on improving confidence in advocating our purpose.</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>A1.4 Stakeholders Trust our Evidence and Knowledge</b></p> <p>By the third quarter we had exceeded our target for the percentage of stakeholders believing we take evidence-based decisions (71% against 60%)</p> <p>Use of our evidence website pages has met target with a high level external interest (Nature on the Map 745 average daily sessions; Web map 217 average daily sessions; 31,546 unique users of the technical publications on-line catalogue; 83,507 unique MAGIC users in the last quarter).</p> <p>All Regional State of the Natural Environment reports have been approved for publication and launch events are presently taking place.</p>

<p>G</p>	<p><b>C1.1 Business Process</b></p> <p>We achieved transfer of the operational control of Genesis achieved on 1 January, having met all negotiating criteria with Atos Origin and a Licensing Agreement with Defra. The first results of a partnership index to gauge our relationship with key suppliers, produced in quarter 4. Desk top services performed well with over 30% increase in customer satisfaction levels which are now over 80% and delivery systems have all been stable throughout the period and met SLAs. New releases of Genesis in February significantly eased the burden of processing on Teams. Confidence in SSD to deliver its strategic vision for service development, however, continued to be low and efforts have continued to consider options to secure a better and more cost-efficient service.</p> <p>We have continued to raise awareness of health &amp; safety issues and responsibilities, and to progress training of staff in new risk assessment procedures and we 275 staff have been trained on Health &amp; Safety risk assessments and 117 staff attended fire warden training. There has been a 16% reduction in incidents from 2007/8</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>C1.2 Resources and Efficiency</b></p> <p>Our final out-turn is predicted to show us delivering on our financial performance targets for our £231m revenue budget and our £6.1m capital budget. Internal financial management has improved through better management information, the Business Accountant network and the commencement of training of budget holders. We have delivered our RDPE budget of £355m and our Grant in Aid budget of £220m. We have exceeded our cash efficiency target by 14% delivering £5.7m of cash efficiencies in procurement, estates rationalisation and corporate services review. We have delivered an additional £3.1m of external funding growth for the natural environment ahead of £2m target.</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>C1.3 Sustainability</b></p> <p>We have achieved a 19.8% reduction in CO2 against our 2007 baseline. This exceeds our interim target for 2008/09 (10%) and is chiefly due to the estates rationalisation programme. Teams now have travel emission baselines and targets to achieve a 20% reduction in our travel emission. All offices have Sustainability Management Plans and we are taking the lead on the Defra estate in this. During the year we achieved level 2 of the sustainable procurement flexible framework.</p>
<p>G</p>	<p><b>C1.4 Customer Services</b></p> <p>By the end of March 2009 we had delivered a 30.56% (c£3.9m) reduction in the administrative burden placed upon our customers through a mixture of consolidation of schemes and through changing the way we work with our customers. We have received positive feedback following a BERR led review of our compliance with the “Hampton Principles” on better regulation.</p> <p>We dealt with 88 % of Freedom of Information and EIR requests within 20 working days and a responded to a further 8.8% within agreed extended deadlines (40 working days). We responded to 100% of 18,977 queries received by General Enquiries, 99% of 5,139 access enquiries, 87% of 10,582 Wildlife enquiries and 58% of 604 CEO/Chair enquiries within 10 working days.</p> <p>We have standardised our approach to prioritisation of customers based on each Tactical Plan and workshops with representatives front line teams led to a framework for Customer Account Management ways of working in Natural England and a Guide to Customer Account Management for Advisers.</p> <p>The ‘mystery caller’ found that 88% of calls made were successful in getting through on the first attempt and 90% were answered within 6 rings. The ability of the advisors to answer questions or deal with the enquiry was rated as good to excellent for 84% of calls. A Farmers Feedback exercise, found 75% of the comments favourable, courtesy (99%), competence (91%) and responsiveness (84%) of our Advisers. We will develop an action plan in response to the areas of customer concern.</p>

<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>B1.1 People Leadership</b></p> <p>Over the year we have run twelve team leader workshops and established the team leader role and expectations. We have completed a series of 6 Manager workshops and the ELG development programme continue. As a result 66% of people now feel their Team is well managed against a target of 65% and the combined positive response rate for the questions 'My Executive Board Member listens' and 'My Director/Head of listens' was 35% equalling our combined end of year target.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>B1.2 Strengthening Capability</b></p> <p>We have put in place a Workforce Strategy and developed People Plans for all teams. We have put in place successors for business critical roles, established a baseline for development moves, and a network of diversity champions and ambassadors. We have made good progress and have established the platform for a distinctive approach to ensure the organisation has the capability to continue to be successful.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>B1.3 Organisational Contract</b></p> <p>44% of people feel a strong sense of belonging to the organisation and perhaps of equal importance the number who offered a negative response is perhaps as low as could be expected even in well established organisations.</p> <p>The pulse survey results demonstrate that the first phase of transformation has been successful. Our most important ways of working are properly established and our organisational profile, identity and confidence continue to grow. There remains variability in the results between different teams and it is essential that we continue to embed new approaches and continue to support people through continuing change.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p><b>B14 Developing Skills</b></p> <p>54% responded positively to the question "my performance has improved as a result of the skills I have developed over the past year" - exceeding the target set at 40%. The induction events programme received extremely positive feedback and we achieved 83% of new starters attending (target 90%). We are well on the way to establishing the induction event as a valued part of the induction process.</p>

## Outcome 1 Q4 Regional Highlights

The Yorkshire and Humber Government and Maritime team, working with the North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee, local fishers and businesses, facilitated approval of a proposed byelaw to create the first ever no-take zone in the North Sea stretching 700m seaward off Flamborough Head covering 1 square km of sea and shore

East Midlands' success at influencing the Highway Authorities on delivery of Rights of Way Implementation Plan was highlighted at the National Awards in Leicester. The East Midlands was the only region with 100% cover by the statutory deadline, and the Lincolnshire plan was one of only five in the country deemed 'Excellent'

Pam Warhurst chaired the North West Regional Landscape Partnership conference in March. Delegates debated the integration of landscape, biodiversity and green infrastructure priorities for the new Regional Strategy. Keen interest was generated in the regional landscape framework, notably from the Head of Planning at NWDA.

North West region have succeeded in negotiating a voluntary agreement that will significantly reduce pollution in Esthwaite Water by removing a fish farm from the lake. The agreement was supported by the Environment Agency, the National Park and Cumbria Wildlife Trust. We are working with the business to help ensure a sustainable future for the remaining fishery.

In February Eastern Region's Ely Pits and Meadows in Cambridgeshire, important for geology, bitterns, marsh harriers and bearded tits, got national and regional media coverage as it became the first SSSI to be designated by Natural England.

Characterising London's natural landscapes: The London region has developed the "London Landscape Framework" - a comprehensive suite of landscape types and "natural signatures" which enable the capital to be recognised for its natural environment not just the built environment. This is the first time such work has been developed for an urban setting and demonstrates Natural England's leadership in this context.

The 'Wild London' Team secured a commitment from London Fire Brigade to join the London Biodiversity Partnership and establish an SLA with the Regional Record Centre. They will also link with us on their 'Green Champions' staff scheme after training 150 firefighters to promote the environment and wildlife.

Peregrines at the Houses of Parliament. Natural England successfully negotiated permission from the Palace of Westminster to install a nest box for two roosting peregrine falcons. We subsequently persuaded Emily Thornberry MP to place an Early Day Motion, drafted by us, in the House of Commons stating "that this House welcomes the arrival of two peregrine falcons to the Palace of Westminster; notes that peregrine falcons are a protected species; further notes that peregrines breed in late March and April and congratulates the Palace authorities and Natural England on providing a nesting box for the pair; and wishes these two new residents all the best in their new home and hopes there will soon be a clutch of eggs". Our draft appeared with only minor amendments and 49 members have signed it so far.

In the West Midlands a BBC Gardener's World Special featured Fenns Whixhall and Bettisfield Moss NNR and interviewed NNR manager Joan Daniels, in a peat gardening feature on the government's target for 90% peat free growing matter by 2010.

The South West Farmland Birds Initiative is a pioneering partnership project which delivers the farmland birds PSA target by building in specific measures in Environmental Stewardship schemes and targeting increased ES uptake in key areas for farmland birds across Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset. The project, which this year has delivered 1200 hectares of in-field arable options, is an important partnership between Natural England, Defra, the RSPB, 4 AONBs, FWAG, GCWT, Plantlife, the Ministry of Defence, the National Trust, landowners, farmers and rural communities. Waitrose have expressed an interest in the project, which will be formally launched on 30th April in Wiltshire with a keynote launch speech by acting Chair, Poul Christensen.

In the South East Region we had a successful conclusion to the South Downs National Park Inquiry. The confirmation that there will be a new National Park, covering the key areas recommended by Natural England for inclusion, represents a huge outcome for the natural environment. Our work over the last year presenting the detailed case for the inclusion of the Western Weald has resulted in our advice being accepted and all major areas of high landscape value being included.

South East Region piloted a new approach to undertaking condition assessment of SSSI. Using a dedicated project teams the region completed 1,984 assessments as part of Natural England's national delivery of 4,000, providing the bulk of the work required to comply with NAO requirements. The pilot

demonstrated huge productivity gains, but also provides a means of demonstrating far higher levels of consistency and independent audit; this will form the basis for delivery across Natural England in the future.

## **Outcome 2 Q4 Regional Highlights**

Yorks and Humber has awarded its first Access to Nature grant to “*Wheely Natural*” to fund adapted bikes, nature trails, structured cycling sessions and talks, to give people in Grimsby with sensory impairment and disabilities the opportunity to bike into their local parks and countryside to enjoy and learn about the natural environment.

In the North West region a very successful GP informal physical activity referral scheme is up and running in Carlisle, attracting good publicity for Natural England. The region achieved a 24% increase in the number of health walks and the number of walkers participating exceeded expectations.

The ‘Building Natural Connections’ project in the North West Region involves a wide partnership including local schools, Liverpool John Moores University, Forest School, Forest Education Initiative, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts and BTCV and is encouraging children to play more in the natural environment both in and out of school using the Mersey Forest as a setting.

The Active London team in London region, with NHS London, secured 195 health walks for 25,000 people in 17 London boroughs during March as part of the 2012 health legacy programme. The team has also written a ‘Go London’ fact sheet that makes links to WHI and disseminated it through all London’s GP surgeries.

London’s first Access to Nature award of £97,000 went to the Abney Park Cemetery Trust. The project supports community engagement in Green woodworking, creating habitats, healthy walks, gardening, tree care and having fun with nature through forest schools.

In March the West Midlands held the first community event under the **Natural Connections** (pilot) project at Hulme Quarry NNR in Stoke-on-Trent. 10 local schools are already taking part and the event offered families the opportunity to build bird boxes, dens, sand sculptures and go on a scavenger hunt. The project, which connects people to the environment and shows them the effects of climate change, culminates in a major event planned around World Environment Day in June.

The West Midlands allocated £270,000 through HLS agreements to improve **educational access** facilities on 18 farms providing 9 classrooms, 16 washrooms with disabled access, a trailer for getting groups around the farm, bird hides, pond dipping kits, green houses, raised growing beds and chicken coops. Eight further projects are planned.

The South West Region awarded £8 million in **Access to Nature** grants to the Salisbury Arts Festival for arts projects to engage people in urban areas in the natural and historic environment. The projects included Wiltshire Wildlife Trust’s work with Army families in creating nature areas close to army bases, and South Gloucestershire Council working to help connect people with their local green spaces in priority neighbourhoods.

South East Region has recently concluded a successful public inquiry (PI) to complete a section of the Thames Path National Trail. Called on a short notice to attend the PI our case was accepted and the necessary order given.

South East region has piloted the concept of Red Letter days on Thursley NNR, attracting commercial interest for days out experiencing the natural environment; learning from this programme will be used across the wider NNR series.

## **Outcome 3 Q4 Regional Highlights**

Yorks and Humber region has committed £1m in new Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Conservation Plans for historic and treasured Barns in the Yorkshire Dales after consulting the National Park and visiting 70 farms and 100 buildings

The Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) project in North West region has developed market drop-ins at Kendal, Penrith and Cockermouth to improve engagement with the farming community, and to advise on Capital Grant Scheme applications, CSF and other relevant opportunities.

300 delegates in the North West Region attended three senior level green infrastructure seminars and three workshops for planning officers in the region. As a result four sub-regions are now developing green infrastructure frameworks and Lancashire is the first County in the region to complete a strategy for green infrastructure.

The Secretary of State referred to the East Midlands Biodiversity Opportunity mapping project (which we run jointly with the Wildlife Trusts) as ‘an impressive biodiversity mapping project’ after seeing a demonstration.

In January the East Midlands Region launched a pilot project to help reverse the decline in farmland birds in the Lincolnshire Fens by fast-tracking farmers into Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). Within just 8 weeks of the launch there are two agreements in place, seven nearing completion and a further five in the pipeline.

North East region has secured an HLS agreement with the Grassland Trust covering a series of nationally important Magnesian limestone grassland SSSIs in the region where individual agreements with each owner have not proved possible.

London Region managed the two day international Park City Conference in Partnership with CABE in March for over 150 regional and local government delegates involved in planning, regeneration, strategy, housing, highways and health to discuss the importance of Green Infrastructure. Helen Phillips and Richard Simmons (CEO CABE) opened the conference. Margaret Beckett MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning gave the keynote address and the Mayor of London provided a foreword. John Vidal, Environment Editor of the Guardian chaired the sessions and covered the conference in his column.

West Midlands region secured £150k of additional external funding from English Heritage to help restore Blakemoore Gate Cottages as part of the Stiperstones NNR ‘Once upon a Hill’ project.

In South West Region the ‘Two Moors Endangered Butterfly Project’ concluded in March having provided habitat management advice on 140 sites covering 1,500 ha resulting in 880 ha of habitat management for Marsh and Heath Fritillaries and HLS agreements for 20 holdings. We will use this experience to develop a suite of spatially targeted, integrated delivery projects to deliver our new spatial approach to targeting HLS.

South East region processed over 6,000 items of statutory casework over the last year, completing their advice on 97% of these items within the agreed deadline. This represents over a third of all the planning advice issued by Natural England nationally.

#### **Outcome 4 Q4 Regional Highlights**

North West Region published the final report on the Cumbria High Fells (CHF) climate change adaptation pilot project in March and agreed with the Lake District National Park a new joint project called “Functioning of the Fells” to take the CHF work forward in the context of an ecosystem services approach. The pilot has helped the region to secure funding from the North West Development Agency to develop an Adaptation Strategy for the natural environment.

East Midlands region has provided £250,000 of ‘Wetland Vision’ funding to double the area of wetland BAP habitat in the Lincolnshire fens. Our money helped lever in a further £2 million funding from other partners including HLF, Environment Agency and Lincolnshire County Council

In the East of England in March we secured good coverage of the climate change adaptation messages following the launch of the climate change report on the Norfolk Broads which outlined the future challenges the Broads will face. We successfully managed to correct several misconceptions arising from unofficial early versions of the report through good liaison with local communities, MPs and key stakeholders.

West Midlands Region published the **Shropshire Hills Joint Character Area** pilot project findings and achieved coverage in eight regional papers and a slot on BBC radio. The National Trust have already committed to using the findings to guide the management of their Shropshire sites

The Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase climate change study in South West region presented detailed, interactive, visualisations of how the natural environment can adapt to climate change, and has helped to influence the Forestry Commission to create a new Ancient Woodland Priority Area centred on Cranborne Chase. The project’s Final Report, published and distributed to local MPs, regional and local decision makers, was covered on ITV and BBC regional news, local radio bulletins and in newspaper articles.