

Annex 4

Commercial Training Provision

1 Introduction:

- 1.1 There is an opportunity for Natural England to develop and provide commercial training products, initially in two areas: (1) Wildlife Licensing and (2) Species Protection. According to the Scheme of Delegation, implementation of charges for services should be approved by the Board and Defra.

2 Background:

- 2.1 For both Species Protection and Wildlife Licensing, we have recognised that there is a demand from businesses (e.g. ecological consultants, legal profession, planners and developers) to have a greater level of technical understanding to be able to prepare applications more efficiently (thereby reducing cost and risk), and that Natural England has the expertise to provide this.
- 2.2 Business cases are in development for both products. Our minimum aim will be to ensure that sufficient income can be generated to fully finance the ongoing costs of delivering this training, with the intention of generating a net surplus. As a result of the training, we anticipate downstream benefits from higher quality licensing applications and reduced planning casework. For example, in 2009 the Wildlife Licensing team processed 1000 resubmissions and modifications. If better quality applications were received resulting in a 10% saving in processing time and a 20% reduction in resubmissions, this would provide savings of £84K.
- 2.3 There is work to do to validate demand assumptions, identify the best delivery model and establish whether these can be aligned to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes of relevant professional institutes. We are seeking Board approval now so that we can plan for implementation in early 10/11.
- 2.4 These proposals will be developed in accordance with the five principles of commercial partnership agreed by the Board in July 2009. In particular, by providing access to our expertise through generic training packages in a commercial market, we can ensure that:
- our positions as a regulator and statutory consultee are not compromised;
 - the opportunity to access our expertise is equally available to all businesses;
 - the value of our expertise is recognized and fairly rewarded.
- 2.5 The development of commercial training products in association with CPD providers allows us to demonstrate environmental leadership and to reinforce this through others such as Local Planning Authorities.
- 2.6 There may be further worthwhile opportunities beyond these two areas, so we seek approval for charging for all commercial training that fits with the agreed principles of commercial partnership. In parallel, we are seeking the relevant approval from Defra.

3 Board Action:

- 3.1 To approve the charging for commercial training in the two areas identified and others that fit our agreed principles of commercial partnership.