

# Natural England Board



## Minutes of the tenth Natural England Board meeting 30 April 2008

| <u>Members attending</u>        | <u>Executives:</u>  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Martin Doughty (Chair)          | Andrew Wood         |
| Peter Allen                     | Dave Webster        |
| Melinda Appleby                 | David Young         |
| Sarah Burton                    | Guy Thompson        |
| Poul Christensen (Deputy Chair) | James Marsden       |
| Roger Clarke                    | Tom Tew             |
| Lynn Crowe                      |                     |
| Merrick Denton-Thompson         | <u>Secretariat:</u> |
| Tony Hams                       |                     |
| David Hill                      | Becky Jones         |
| David Macdonald                 | Roy Hymas           |
| Christopher Pennell             |                     |
| Helen Phillips (CEO)            |                     |
| Pam Warhurst                    |                     |

Prior to the Board meeting, a Board briefing session was held at which Board members were updated on Natural England's work in the following areas:

- Natural England's Transition Programme: Programme Update;
- Board Member Advocacy;
- SSSI – NAO audit and notification programme;
- National Park update;
- Natural England's Work in the Uplands: an update;
- Hard Choices and Corporate Plan 2008 to 2011.

1) Welcome from the Chair

- a) Apologies from Doug Hulyer and Michael Depledge.
- b) There were no amendments to the Register of Interests.

## 2) Stakeholder Engagements

The Board noted the stakeholder engagements carried out by Chair and Deputy Chair between 13 February and 30 April 2008, and planned engagements between 30 April and 25 June 2008

## 3) Hard Choices

The Board:

- a) noted the hard choices proposed for the 2008/09 budget to align spend with Natural England's priorities as set out in our Strategic Direction and our Corporate Plan for the period 2008 to 2011;
- b) endorsed the budget priorities for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11;
- c) endorsed the budget strategy to give three year funding agreements to key partners.

Key discussion points were that:

- the Board is very disappointed by Defra providing a one year rather than a three year budget;
- good management of the natural environment requires long term planning and this is supported by our budget strategy;
- the risks to the organisation of making three year funding commitments to stakeholders are outweighed by the benefits that financial security will give to our relationship with core partners and thereby the delivery of our Strategic Direction;
- our funding strategy is aligned with our ambition to uphold the highest standards of business ethics.

**ACTION:** Chair to write to the Minister regarding the Board's decision.

## 4) Natural England's Strategic Direction and Corporate Plan

The Board noted the previously signed off Strategic Direction 2008 -13 and the 2008-11 Corporate Plan.

## 5) Chief Executive's Report – End of Year Performance

The Board:

- a) Reviewed performance of delivery against our Strategic Direction in Quarter 4 and in 2007/08, and noted:
  - by the end of Quarter 4, out of 63 targets, 2% were red, 10% were amber red, 46% were amber green and 43% were green;

- overall, we delivered on 87% of our targets/target milestones by the end of the financial year;
  - of the 63 targets only seven, with red or amber red status, have been identified as needing significant management focus in the new financial year.
- b) noted the Chief Executive's summary presentation of performance in 2007/08. A copy of the presentation is available on our website.
- c) Welcomed the success in creating a £8.5 million provision for for voluntary redundancies and re-structuring early in the following year, particularly given the tight budget settlement for 07/08 and the considerable record of achievements in that year.
- d) noted our current strategic issues:
- badgers and bovine TB;
  - set-aside;
  - climate change bill;
  - marine bill;

6) The Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration

The Board:

- a) noted the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) and considered how we should respond to the Government's consultation;
- b) agreed that the SNR is an opportunity to shape the RDAs objectives, so that sustainable development is an overriding principle.
- c) agreed that we should develop a common position with the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission, and others where appropriate such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the Sustainable Development Commission, to ensure that the growth agenda recognises the economic and social benefits of the natural environment and the disbenefits of not doing so;
- d) agreed that we should explore mechanisms to encourage RDA's to focus more on quality of life for all, and the contribution of the natural environment to it, through performance measures such as the Regional Index of Sustainable Economic Wellbeing;
- e) agreed that we should accelerate our engagement with all Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

- f) noted that our response to SNR will incorporate Board members comments, and our response will be circulated to Board members.

**Action:** Executive Board

7) Natural England's Draft Policy on Green Travel

The Board:

- a) considered the options outlined in the Draft Green Travel Policy Options Paper;
- b) endorsed the quality of the evidence base and its presentation;
- c) endorsed the concept of team carbon budgets;
- d) agreed that there needs to be a practical approach to implementing the policy;
- e) supported the planned consultation with staff;
- f) agreed the need to be explicit about the fact that work life balance is an important context for the policy and that the implementation of the policy needs to take this into account;
- g) agreed that, initially, the scope of the policy should not include travel to work or apply to our suppliers. However, these areas should be addressed at a later stage;
- h) agreed that this policy should link work practices, such as determining meeting times, to the effective use of public transport;
- i) noted the current extent of travel for internal meetings. However, the importance of face to face meetings to build relationships in the first instance before then using technology was highlighted;
- j) agreed that the availability of bike sheds and the active selection of venues without car parking should be encouraged.

8) Organic Farming – a policy scoping paper

The Board:

- a) considered the scope of Natural England's policy on organic farming to inform our draft policy on a more sustainable agriculture;
- b) agreed that before any further consideration of organic farming, it will be necessary to assess the full range of farming systems and the benefits and impacts they have on the natural environment, in the context of:
  - the global market for food and fuel;
  - the need for agriculture to be profitable; and,

- consumer preferences.
- c) agreed that a thorough assessment of the full range of farming systems against these criteria will underpin our policy on a more sustainable agriculture.

**Action:** Executive Board to undertake this assessment to inform the draft sustainable agriculture policy, to be brought to a future Board meeting.

9) Natural England's Draft Policy on Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management

The Board:

- a) considered a draft policy for Natural England on flood and coastal erosion risk management;
- b) endorsed the draft policy subject to further acknowledgement of the impacts on people and communities;
- c) agreed that the policy should be signed off by Chair.

10) Natural England's Draft Policy on the Impacts of Climate Change on Biodiversity

The Board:

- a) considered Natural England's draft policy on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity. Key discussion points were that:
  - the policy should highlight any potential opportunities for biodiversity as a result of climate change, in addition to the current focus on threat and loss;
  - the links between biodiversity and landscape character should be highlighted;
  - we should ensure that the work we are doing on uplands and climate change is referenced in this policy;
  - reference should be made to the island nature of Britain and the impact this may have on the ability of biodiversity to adapt;
  - the policy should have greater emphasis on new species as a result of climate change.
- b) agreed that, subject to the amendments proposed by the Board, the final policy is signed off by the Chair.

11) Audit and Risk Committee: Report on meeting held on 10 March 2008

The Board:

- a) noted the Chair's report, and the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee on 10 March 2008.

12) Memorandum of Understanding between Natural England and English Heritage

The Board:

- a) noted the terms of the MoU and the Chief Executive's intention, in consultation with the Chair, to sign on behalf of Natural England;
- b) noted current areas of co-operation that will provide the foundation for future joint working;
- c) requested a meeting of Board members from both Natural England and English Heritage.

**Action:** Executive Board to arrange a meeting of the Boards.

13) Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the tenth Natural England Board meeting held on 30 April 2008 were confirmed.