

## NATURAL ENGLAND BOARD

**Meeting 5**  
**6 June 2007**

Paper No: **NEB P07 20**

Title: **Policy Development Priorities in Natural England 2007/08**

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### 1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to outline the policy priorities for Natural England's policy development for 2007/08 and the timetable for debating these.

### 2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Board endorse five policy priorities for 2007/08.

### 3. Introduction

3.1 At its October 2006 meeting the Board agreed the policy priorities for 2006/07. These are listed at Annex 1. In line with the policy development process (agreed at the first meeting of the Natural England Skeleton Board and appended at Annex 2) an analysis has been undertaken of the policy needs for 2007/08. To guide priorities we have drawn on the following:

- *Strategic Direction* and the draft Corporate Plan;
- Subject-based policy reviews;
- known initiatives in Government and Europe;
- views from key stakeholders;
- regional requirements to enable them to contribute effectively to regional issues;
- discussions at the Board Outcome Groups.

3.2 The policy areas that have been identified are to inform:

- the delivery of environmental outcomes through our Strategic Direction;
- policy opportunities (i.e. events we need to influence);
- policy statements to provide a clear statement of Natural England's policy as a basis for regional and national activity and to inform our emerging advocacy strategy;
- operational policies to agree our approach to certain work areas (e.g. targeting of agri-environment schemes, approach to wildlife licensing and control).

3.3 The priorities have been structured around our strategic outcomes and the areas of activity within the Corporate Plan. However, it is recognised that there are strong inter-relationships across the four outcomes and in developing policy these need to be taken into account.

- 3.4 A number of high level areas have been identified, nested within these are some specific topics that will need to be addressed. This paper focuses on the requirements for the coming year, although it is recognised many of these broad areas will require ongoing development and evolution.
- 3.5 We need to ensure that policies are informed by clear strategy about what we are seeking to achieve through our policy work. The December Board agreed a key set of strategic opportunities, which would need to inform both the Corporate Plan and our policy development.

#### 4. Proposed priority areas for Natural England policy development

- 4.1 We propose that the five policy priorities for 2007/08 should be;
- Marine;
  - CAP reform;
  - Spatial planning and land use;
  - Climate change;
  - Urban environment.
- 4.2 Three of these priorities (Marine, CAP reform and Climate change) represent a direct carry forward from our work in 2006/07, as these areas continue to be of critical importance for our work. The inclusion of spatial planning and the urban environment reflects the increasing significance of these areas for us, but still demonstrate a high degree of continuity with the land use priority from 2006/07. Coastal access has dropped off the priority list, reflecting our success in securing Ministerial agreement to our broad proposals. It will, of course, continue to be the focus of considerable activity. Annex 3 shows progress against the 2006/07 priorities and our plans to engage the Board on the 2007/08 priorities.
- 4.3 We have not identified a clear priority within Outcome 2 but see that a number of the proposed policy priorities, notably urban, spatial planning and CAP reform, underpin achievement of our objectives for enjoyment of the natural environment. In 2007/08 our priority for Outcome 2 is the evidence gathering, analysis and thinking to inform a Natural England perspective. This will enable us, in 2008/09, to bring sharper focus to Outcome 2.
- 4.4 The policy priority under Outcome 1 centres around the **Marine Bill** and **Marine White Paper** which we are seeking to influence. The EC Maritime Green Paper and Common Fisheries Policy mid-term review present other important policy opportunities for Natural England to achieve its objectives.
- 4.5 There are two unique and immediate opportunities under Outcome 3 to shape future land use and management; **CAP Reform and the Planning Bill** – these are both priority policy development areas for Natural England.
- 4.6 Under the CAP reform heading the aim is to maximise the environmental benefit from the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13 (work being undertaken through the CAP major project). Our review of Environmental Stewardship will make a major contribution to achieving this aim. Our immediate opportunity to make progress lies in the CAP Health Check process, which the European Commission will be running through 07/08. We are unlikely to secure major structural changes at this stage, but there are some significant threats and opportunities to address. The Health Check also represents a significant influencing opportunity as we develop the case for more profound change in 2013 and beyond. The Board will see four draft policy positions on key issues for the Health Check process later in the summer.
- 4.7 There are many pressures on land use from planning and infrastructure development activity and a number of Government reviews leading to change at national through to local level. We need to define our position around the planning framework and describe an approach that will enhance the natural environment and people's access and enjoyment of it.

- 4.8 The main priority under Outcome 4 is **Climate Change** adaptation and mitigation, not least as this impacts on all other policies but also because of the opportunity offered by the draft Climate Change Bill and Energy White Paper. As highlighted in Board Paper [Climate Change], we will need policy positions on energy and how different forms of generation from micro-generation to nuclear impact on the natural environment and the articulation of our position and approach on renewables in particular.
- 4.9 Our **Urban and Urban Fringe policy** is linked to the proposed development of our position on the Planning White Paper. The drive for embedding an ecosystem approach and a growing emphasis on urban environments mean that the time is right to influence the urban green infrastructure debate at national and local levels. An agreed clear policy position will set the parameters for the development of specific, topic-related Policy Position Statements such as urban and urban fringe biodiversity, the benefits of brownfield land in the urban and urban fringe.
- 4.10 While this exercise has identified the priority areas for policy development in response to important opportunities in 2007/08, it has also identified the need for work on evidence gathering and background analysis in preparation for work areas in 2008/09 and the need for policy statements on a range of topics to aid delivery. As noted above, this is particularly true of areas within Outcome 2. For example, we will need to complete our work supporting the development of Defra's Diversity Action Plan; press ahead with the development of an interactive website supporting the public's access to a whole range of recreational opportunities in the natural environment "Outdoors Online"; and will complete work on major policy reviews of access and recreation which will be discussed in Board Outcome Group 2 later on in the year.
- 4.11 Annex 4 shows our plans to engage the Board Outcome Groups on the 2007/08 policy priorities and other policy areas.

## **Annex 1**

### **Policy Priorities 2006/07**

These were set out in a paper to the October Board as:

1. CAP reform with a particular focus on the EU Rural Development Budget and RDPE including the targeting of ES.
2. Coastal access to enable us to present advice to Ministers on options.
3. Marine development of Natural England's policy position on progressing the establishment of Marine Protected Areas and policy on particular aspects of the Marine Bill.
4. Climate change – a scoping paper setting out the parameters and focus of the work to December Board.
5. Land use with an emphasis on green infrastructure, particularly in respect of our work in the Growth Areas and Growth Points and linking to our health and environment campaign.

## **Annex 2**

### **Policy Process**

#### Stage 1: Policy needs analysis

This stage should result in agreement by the Board to Natural England's policy development priorities. It involves:

- Horizon scanning and scenario planning for the long term future of the natural environment;
- An analysis of the key areas where significant change is needed in order to advance our outcomes and objectives;
- An assessment of the current opportunities to influence government policy, regulation and spending priorities in these key areas.

#### Stage2: Policy scoping

This stage will result in agreement on the scope of individual policy positions. It will ensure that Natural England's policy development is focused on the conservation, management and enhancement of the natural environment. It will also provide a focus for the development of the evidence base needed to support our policy position.

#### Stage 3: Policy position development

This stage will result in agreement by the Board of Natural England's policy position on a particular issue. This policy position will be underpinned by evidence and used as the basis for our policy advocacy.

#### Stage 4: Policy advocacy

This stage will result in the development and implementation of a policy advocacy programme. It will target current opportunities to advance debate on the issue both within government and more broadly. The programme will involve partnerships with other organisations with related interests and be supported by an effective communications strategy.

#### Stage 5: Policy review

This stage will result in an assessment of the effectiveness of our policy development and advocacy work. It will provide a key input into future policy development priorities.

### Annex 3

#### Board Engagement in Policy Process 2007/08

Policy Priority	Needs Analysis	Policy Scoping	Policy Position Development	Policy Advocacy	QA & Policy Review
<b>CAP Reform</b>	Policy priorities paper to October 2006 and June 2007 Boards	RDPE Consultation Response May 2006 Board. Vision for CAP June 2006 Board	Future of Farming workshop April 2007. Draft policy positions on key issues for CAP Health Check (future of set-aside, cross-compliance, modulation and decoupling) to Outcome Group 3 June 2007.	To be developed around policy positions for CAP Health Check. Land Management Campaign	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 policy priorities
<b>Marine</b>	Policy priorities paper to October 2006 and June 2007 Boards	Marine policy review to Outcome Group 1 March 2007. Draft response to Marine White Paper to Outcome Group 1 May 2007.	Response to Marine White Paper to Board June 2007.	Timing dependant on progress with Marine Bill. Marine Campaign – sustainable fishers strand	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 policy priorities
<b>Climate Change</b>	Policy priorities paper to October 2006 and June 2007 Boards	Scoping paper to Board December 2006.	Draft climate change policy position to Outcome Group 4 May 2007. Draft climate change policy position to Board June 2007.	To be developed around consideration of Climate Change Bill.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 policy priorities

<b>Spatial Planning &amp; Land Use</b>	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board, and considered under "Land Use" by October 2006 Board.	Response to Barker Report February 2007 circulated to Board members. Planning & Transport policy review to Outcome Group 3 June 2007.	Response to Planning White Paper to Outcome Group 3 June 2007. Draft environmental quality in spatial planning policy position to Outcome Group 3 Sept 2007. Draft environmental impacts of transport policy position to Outcome Group 3 Sept 2007. Draft cumulative impacts and environmental capacity policy position to Outcome Group 4 Jan/Feb 2008.	Timing dependant on progress with Planning Bill.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 policy priorities
<b>Urban Environment</b>	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board, and considered under "Land Use" by October 2006 Board.	Urban policy review to Outcome Group 4 June 2007 and Board Workshop July 2007.	Draft health policy position to Board June 2007.	Health Campaign	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities
<b>Coastal Access 2006/07</b>	Policy priorities paper to October 2006 Board	June 2006 Board	Agreed advice to Minister to Board February 2007.	Timing dependant on launch of Defra consultation and any subsequent legislation.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities

## Annex 4

### Board Outcome Group Engagement in Policy Process 2007/08

Policy Priority & other policy areas	Needs Analysis	Policy Scoping	Policy Position Development	Policy Advocacy	QA & Policy Review
<b>Outcome Group 1</b>  <b>Marine</b> Biodiversity Landscape	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board.	Marine policy review March 2007 Draft response to Marine White Paper May 2007. Biodiversity policy review Sept 2007. Landscape policy review June 2007.	Response to Marine White Paper to June 2007 Board. Draft Habitats Directive Review policy position Nov 2007?	Timing dependant on progress with Marine Bill. Marine Campaign – sustainable fishers strand.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities.
<b>Outcome Group 2</b>  <b>Coastal Access 2006/07</b> Health, Access & Recreation	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board.	Health, Access & Recreation policy review May 2007.	Agreed Coastal Access advice to Minister to Board February 2007. Draft Health policy position to Board June 2007. Draft recreation policy position July 2007.	Coastal Access timing dependant on launch of Defra consultation and any subsequent legislation. Health Campaign.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities.
<b>Outcome Group 3</b>  <b>CAP Reform</b> <b>Spatial Planning &amp; Land Use</b> Coastal Management Freshwater	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board.	Land Management policy review May 2007. Planning & Transport policy review June 2007. Regional & Local	Draft policy positions on key issues for CAP Health Check (future of set-aside, cross-compliance, modulation and decoupling June	To be developed around CAP Health Check. Timing dependant on progress with Planning Bill. Land Management	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities.

Land Management Regional & Local Government		Government policy review June 2007. Freshwater policy review Sept 2007. Coastal Management policy review Sept 2007.	2007. Draft environmentally sustainable farming policy position Sept 2007. Response to Planning White Paper June 2007. Draft environmental quality in spatial planning policy position Sept 2007. Draft environmental impacts of transport policy position Sept 2007.	Campaign.	
<b>Outcome Group 4</b>  <b>Climate change</b> <b>Urban Environment</b> Energy Sustainable Development	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board.	Climate Change scoping paper to Board December 2006. Urban policy review June 2007 and Board Workshop July 2007. Energy policy review June 2007.	Draft Climate Change policy position May 2007. Draft Climate Change Policy Position to Board June 2007. Sustainable Development policy position Nov 2007.	To be developed around consideration of draft Climate Change Bill.	To inform Board's consideration of 2008/09 Policy Priorities

NB: Priority Policy Areas are shown in bold in column 1.