

Natural England Board



Meeting: 9
Date: 13 February 2008

Paper No: **NEB PU09 04**

Title: **Policy Development Priorities in Natural England 2008/09**

Sponsor: **Andrew Wood, Executive Director Evidence & Policy**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to outline the policy priorities for Natural England's policy development for 2008/09 and the timetable for debating these.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Board endorse policy priorities for 2008/09.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. At its June 2007 meeting the Board agreed the policy priorities for 2007/08. These are listed at Annex 1. In line with the policy development process, an analysis has been undertaken of the policy needs for 2008/09. To guide priorities we have drawn on the following:
 - refreshed Strategic Direction;
 - 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. In identifying the policy priorities for 2008/09 we have deemed 'priority' to be determined as areas where:
 - we do not have an agreed policy position;
 - there are major opportunities, such as new legislation, which we wish to influence;

- we wish to highlight or launch new Natural England policy which is key to delivering our outcomes.
- 3.3. The key challenges for the natural environment include halting the decline in biodiversity, adapting to climate change, protecting the marine environment, developing a strategy for land use and ensuring that more people can enjoy the benefits supplied by the natural environment more often. We will address these challenges in a variety of ways, including where appropriate by developing policy.
- 3.4. Within the priority areas there are some specific topics and opportunities that will need to be addressed, for example responding to the EU Health Check. 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.

Annex 2 shows progress against the 2007/08 priorities.

4. Proposed priority areas for Natural England policy development

4.1. We propose that the five policy priorities for 2008/09 should be:

- CAP reform;
- planning and development- both terrestrial and marine;
- climate change;
- energy;
- access to the natural environment.

Annex 3 shows our plans to engage the Board on the 2008/09 priorities, including the use of BOGs to develop papers.

- 4.2. The first three areas represent a carry forward from our work in 2007/08 (and 2006/07) as these areas continue to be of critical importance for our work, although there are shifts in focus under the broad headings. The Urban Policy Priority is now subsumed within the Planning and Development Priority. The only priority we are dropping from the new programme relates to our Marine work. This is not due to any diminution in importance and we will continue to develop our thinking in this area. But with the Board's endorsement of our Policy, on Marine Protected Areas, and with the forthcoming publication of the draft Marine Bill, our emphasis during the next year will shift to Advocacy.
- 4.3. We have made considerable progress in collating evidence, developing our stance on CAP and influencing reform. At EU level the CAP Health Check forges ahead continuing to present an opportunity to shape future EU policy that will influence land management. In addition to responding to this we need to think ahead and develop policies which will enable us to respond to developments in Europe, and so build support for more profound change in 2013 and beyond. CAP reform therefore remains a priority policy development area for Natural England.

- 4.4. The previous eighteen months have seen a major initiative by government to make the spatial planning process more responsive to national needs and in particular, to the needs of economic growth. We have engaged closely involved in these planning reforms, in particular the Planning Bill we are currently assessing our reaction to the contents of the Bill and expect to have finalised our policy on this by the end of 2007/08.
- 4.5. Planning is essentially the decision making framework for the terrestrial and marine environment, our aim is to see that the value of the natural environment is fully recognised in planning and development decisions. In order to achieve this we need to define our position around the many aspects of planning including; housing; green infrastructure; sustainable coastal management; marine spatial planning; energy and transport demands. In 2008/09 there will be further opportunity to shape decision making around development and use of land and marine environment, for example the National Policy statements and marine planning system. As the new marine and terrestrial planning arrangements are finalised and implemented we will need to develop policy guidance to articulate what we wish to achieve at local and regional level. Alongside this, we will be developing our response to the sub-national review and our general approach to the multiple layers of regional local governance including local area agreements.
- 4.6. Climate Change adaptation and mitigation continues to be a priority area for policy development, not only as this impacts on all other policies but also because of the opportunities offered by the ongoing development and implementation of the Climate Change Bill and associated statutory guidance, EU white paper on Climate Change Adaptation, the delayed introduction of the Energy Bill (Spring 08) and UK Adaptation Programme. Moreover, we now need to move our thinking beyond the principles governing our response to climate change adaptation and mitigation to a consideration of the impacts of the practical application of those principles on all our work.
- 4.7. We are recommending the addition of Energy Policy to our priorities, both because of its significance to other priority areas – climate change and planning and development – and because of the challenge it poses to the delivery of our integrated remit. In this respect, the Severn Barrage serves as a paradigm, offering potentially significant benefits to climate change mitigation through its contribution to clean energy production while posing major threat to specific habitats, species and landscapes on the Severn Estuary as well as to the Severn as a unique natural resource. We expect to bring draft policies on wind, wave and tidal energy to the Board in the next few months, and we will need to consider taking a position on the Barrage in the light of those policies.
- 4.8. Our thinking on access to the natural environment has been driven so far by inherited initiatives and the developing of our thinking on coastal access. During the next year we will need to articulate our rationale for encouraging access, with its links to understanding, education and health, and develop thinking on our role in respect of the provision and promotion of recreational facilities. Some of this work, will relate more closely to our operational roles than to pure policy development, but these need to be understood together.
- 4.9. During the development of our thinking on these priorities, we considered including biodiversity as a priority. We concluded that it should not be a priority area, however, because we believe it should be a cross cutting check

on the robustness of all our policy areas. Landscape fulfils a similar function (although we have a fairly well developed programme of policy development in this area) and we aim to see access to the natural environment in a similar way.

Annex 4 shows the current status of our policy priorities by strategic outcome and where different policies are in the development process.

Annex 1:

Policy Priorities 2007/08

These were set out in a paper to the June 07 Board as:

- 1 To influence the Marine Bill and Marine White Paper plus the EC Maritime Green Paper and Common Fisheries Policy mid-term review.
- 2 To maximise the environmental benefit from the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13, via review of Environmental Stewardship and engagement with CAP Health Check process.
- 3 Spatial planning and land use; to influence the Planning Reform and Government reviews leading to change at national through to local level.
- 4 Climate Change adaptation and mitigation, opportunities as offered by the draft Climate Change Bill and Energy White Paper.
- 5 Urban and Urban Fringe policy and the Planning White Paper, an ideal opportunity to influence the urban green infrastructure debate at national and local levels.

Policy Priorities 2006/07

These were set out in a paper to the October 06 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: Board Engagement in Policy Process 2007/08

Policy Priority	Needs Analysis	Policy Scoping	Policy Development	Policy Advocacy	Outcomes
CAP Reform	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	CAP reform roadmap to October Board LUPG Conference CAP Health check Submission Set-aside submission CAP Policy Position Statement
Marine	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	MPA conference Draft Marine bill influencing UK leadership on MPAs MPA Policy Position Statement
Climate Change	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.	Climate Change policy Successful influence of Climate Change Bill External consultation on four response strategies Bioenergy policy Climate Change Policy Position Statement

					Bioenergy Policy Position Statement
Spatial Planning & Land Use	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.	Planning bill influence Greenbelt think piece Landscape Policy Position statement Coastal access Policy position Statement
Urban Environment	Policy priorities paper to June 2007 Board, and considered under "Land Use" by October 2006	Urban policy review to Outcome Group 4 June 2007 and Board Workshop July 2007.	Draft health policy position to Board June 2007.	Health Campaign	Health Policy to Feb 08 Board Sustainable Communities work mainstreamed across Natural England Health Policy Position Statement* Housing and Green Infrastructure Policy Position Statement*

	Board.				More sustainable Agriculture Policy Position statement* (*due Feb 08)
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Annex 3: Board Outcome Group Engagement in Policy Process during the first half of 2008/09

Policy Priority & other policy areas	Needs Analysis	Policy Scoping	Policy Development	Policy Advocacy	QA & Policy Review
Outcome Group 1	Policy priorities paper to February 2008 Board	Draft landscape Policy to February 08 Board	Policy Timetable to February BOG	To be developed around Policy position Statements and the Engagement plan	To inform Board's consideration of 2009/10 Policy Priorities.
Outcome Group 2	Policy priorities paper to February 2008 Board	Draft Health Policy to February 08 Board	Policy Timetable to February BOG	To be developed around Policy position Statements and the Engagement plan	To inform Board's consideration of 2009/10 Policy Priorities.
Outcome Group 3 CAP Reform Planning & Development	Policy priorities paper to February 2008 Board	Housing and Green Infrastructure draft Policy to February 08 Board More sustainable agriculture draft policy to 08 February Board Flood and Coastal Erosion risk management draft policy to May Board	Policy Timetable to February BOG	To be developed around Policy position Statements and the Engagement plan	To inform Board's consideration of 2009/10 Policy Priorities.
Outcome Group 4 Climate change	Policy priorities paper to February 2008 Board.	Future landscapes draft policy to May Board	Policy Timetable to February BOG	To be developed around Policy position Statements and the Engagement	To inform Board's consideration of 2009/10 Policy Priorities

		Biodiversity and Climate change draft policy to May Board		plan	
		Wind energy draft policy to May Board			

The policy timetable will need to remain flexible to take account of opportunities arising from the Engagement Plan.

Annex 4: Current status of Policy Priorities

Policy	Current Status
Outcome1:	
Landscape	Draft Landscape Policy to external stakeholder consultation – February 08 Draft Landscape Policy to Board - February 08
Marine	Marine Protected Areas policy –signed off by Board-December 07
Outcome 2	
Health	Draft Health Policy external stakeholder workshop – October 07 Draft Health Policy to Board - February 08
Coastal Access	Coastal Access signed off by Board - February 07
Access to the Natural Environment	Under development
Outcome 3	
CAP Reform	Natural England position established through papers to the Board in 06/07 Draft More Sustainable Agriculture Policy to Board-February 08
Spatial Planning & Land Use	Draft Spatial Planning Transport Policy to Board - June 08
Housing and Green infrastructure	Draft Housing and Green Infrastructure to Board - February 08
Outcome 4	
Climate Change	Draft Climate Change Policy to Board – June 07. Sign-off by Chair
Energy - Bioenergy	Bioenergy Policy to Board - December 07 with Chair for sign-off. Bioenergy Policy to external stakeholder consultation - February 08
Energy – wind energy	Draft Wind Energy Policy to PSG - January 08 Draft Wind Energy Policy to Board - May 08
Energy - tidal energy	Draft Wave and Tidal Energy Policy to PSG -March 08 Draft Wave and Tidal Energy Policy to Board - June 08