

5.7 Overview

Many risks and pressures on England's natural environment are well-documented and their future impacts can be predicted with some confidence, although others are less clear. A large body of evidence makes it clear that pollution remains a major risk and also helps to underpin actions such as on catchment-sensitive farming. We have clear evidence about a range of invasive species and their impacts on the environment. More widely the scale and impact of expected increases in population and development are clear. While we understand the marine environment less well than the terrestrial, the impacts of practices such as commercial fishing on species and habitats are well-documented.

Climate change provides new risks and pressures, both on the natural environment and how it is viewed and managed. It affects other risks: for example, warmer temperatures encourage the spread of new invasive species and diseases. Concerns about climate change affect energy issues, resulting in uncertainties and risks associated with new development and technologies. There are opportunities as well as risks associated with changing land use in response to the growth of biofuels. While a body of evidence is building about the direct effects of climate change, especially on coastal environments, we need a more complete picture of its likely impact under the range of scenarios currently expected. We will need this picture as we shape our vision for the natural environment and the types of land use and land management that will deliver it.

Chapter 5 Pressures and risks

Evidence gaps

Areas where we believe we need more evidence on the condition of England's natural environment, how it is used and the most effective mechanisms to address the challenges we face.

- 1 Evidence on the geographical distribution of pressures on the natural environment.**
- 2 Evidence on environmental capacity and cumulative impacts from multiple pressures.**
- 3 More evidence on the impacts of pressures, including climate change, on the natural environment (terrestrial and marine) at a regional as well as national level; identifying areas most vulnerable to climate change.**
- 4 Better, more systematic, recording of non-native invasive species.**
- 5 Evidence on uptake of renewable energy options and impacts on the natural environment.**
- 6 Evidence on global, national and regional pressures driving land use change.**
- 7 Sufficient horizon scanning and futures capacity focussed on the natural environment to identify pressures at an early stage.**