

Natural Environment White Paper – update for Landscape Institute members

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) was published on 7 June 2011. This note offers an analysis of the paper for LI members. The LI has submitted a short response to the EFRA Committee inquiry into the Natural Environment White Paper based on this analysis.

Official pages on NEWP can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

- Section 1 and 2 lists initial thinking on the strengths and weaknesses of the NEWP.
- Section 3 highlights potential opportunities for LI members.
- Section 4 highlights potential opportunities for the LI itself.
- Section 5 extracts the Barriers and Recommendations chapter of the LI's original GI position statement published in 2009, and explores how progress has been made in the context of the NEWP.

1. **Stronger points**

The following parts of the White Paper appear to be positive and fit well with what we have been advocating over the last two/three years:

- Recognition of the intrinsic value of nature.
- A more precise approach to the value of the natural environment, i.e. putting a price on what nature contributes, in the form of the UK National Ecosystems Assessment.
- One of the aims of the White Paper is to strengthen connections between people and nature.
- Promotion of action across sectors – nature at the heart of Government, business and local communities.
- Government wants to facilitate 'greater local action to protect and improve nature'.
- Commitment to take a strategic approach to planning for nature within and across local areas.
- Retention of natural environment protection and improvement as a core objective within the planning system.
- "Economic growth and the natural environment are mutually compatible. Sustainable economic growth relies on services provided by the natural environment".

- “High quality natural environments foster healthy neighbourhoods; green spaces encourage social activity and reduce crime. The natural environment can help children’s learning”.
- “We should be thinking not of isolated spots of green on a map of England but of a thriving green network linking wildlife sites with farmland, forestry and urban parks and gardens across the country...Connections can be made over land; through water or by air; or through continuous green corridors or stepping stones, to create a dynamic and resilient landscape”.
- “Integrated action at a ‘landscape-scale’ is often the best way to achieve multiple benefits”.
- Government wants “...to encourage local authorities to promote multifunctional development so that we get the most from land...”
- Commitment to work with local communities to support local engagement in landscape planning, including the updating of the landscape character area profiles (Natural England undertaking this) to help people make informed decisions about developments in their area.
- “We need urban green infrastructure to complete the links in our national ecological network...Urban green infrastructure is also recognised as one of the most effective tools available to us in management environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves”.
- UKNEA highlights reduction in quantity and quality of urban green space over past half century. Green infrastructure benefits in urban areas are unevenly distributed – 1 in 6 urban local authorities says its green spaces are in decline.
- “We want urban green spaces to be recognised as an essential asset and factored into the development of all our communities. They will be managed to provide diverse functions for the benefit of people and wildlife...They will continue to play a key role in regeneration projects...supporting local economic growth”.
- “Urban green space...is often perceived as a liability, generating concerns about management costs and other risks. There is strong evidence for the economic and social benefits of green infrastructure”.
- “SuDS... an example of green infrastructure and an illustration of opportunities to achieve multiple benefits from the management of land...Well designed systems can increase habitats for biodiversity and provide additional green space for communities to enjoy, as well as increasing the resilience of built areas to a changing environment”.

2. Weaker points

- Biodiversity offsetting.
- Emphasis on local business, citizens and interest groups to take the lead. Although this is in line with ‘Big Society (of which there is only one mention in the entire White Paper), there is no mention of the funding required to do this. It also fails to state that private ownership of significant amounts of land is one of the key obstacles to connected multifunctional landscapes.

- There is no reference to the European Landscape Convention of which the UK is a signatory.
- No reference is paid to the need to coordinate work between Government departments – particularly at the policy level, between Defra, CLG and HM Treasury.
- There is no indication of how implementation can be carried out.
- There is little detail on the relationship between the intent of the White Paper and the forthcoming NPPF.

3. What are the opportunities for Landscape Institute members?

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)

LNPs will be established to strengthen local action across administrative boundaries, aiming to raise awareness about the services and benefits of a healthy natural environment. They will be encouraged to form links with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). It is envisaged that approximately 50 will be established. They will comprise people from local authorities, civil society organisations, businesses, statutory authorities, land managers and local environmental record centres as well as people from communities.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/local-nature-partnerships/lnp-fund/>

UKNEA (UK National Ecosystems Assessment)

Further funding is to be made available to develop practical tools to assist decision makers in applying the lessons of the UKNEA.

4. What are the opportunities for the Landscape Institute?

- A competition being run by Natural England to identify 12 initial Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) and will provide £7.5 million to support this, the aim of which would be to enhance and reconnect nature on a significant scale.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/nia/>

- Helping local authorities use their new duties and powers on public health – Public Health England will publish practical evidence about improving health, including through access to a good natural environment.
- A set of key indicators will be developed by spring 2012 to track progress on the White Paper – for the LI to monitor and use as a tool in commenting on Government performance/in consultation and inquiry responses.
- Forthcoming Water White Paper will consider mechanisms to encourage retrofit of SuDS on both community and individual property scales.

- The natural areas at the edges of our strategic roads and railways cover approximately 60,000 hectares. Better management of these green corridors could connect and enhance fragmented habitats. Government will work with transport agencies and delivery partners to contribute to the creation of coherent and resilient ecological networks. Will host a stakeholder forum with environmental organisations to inform future priorities for the enhancement of these green corridors.
- Community Organisers Scheme has been established (through Locality) to identify local leaders, projects and opportunities and empower the community to improve their area.
- Consultation on proposals for new Green Area Designations will take place later this year. Green spaces will be identified in neighbourhood plans and local plans which complement and do not undermine investment in homes, jobs and other essential services.
- Establishment of a Green Infrastructure Partnership with civil society and local authorities to support the development of green infrastructure in England. It will consider how green infrastructure can strengthen ecological networks and improve communities' health, quality of life and resilience to climate change.
- Establishment of an Ecosystem Knowledge Network, run by an independent organisation. This network will involve Government's environmental bodies and include local projects, drawing on practical experience to share learning and good practice on the subject of landscape-scale approaches to restore nature.

5. How does the NEWP compare against the Recommendations and Barriers published in the position statement in 2009?

NB: Recommendations were made during the previous Government. Therefore some are dated, such as those relating to National Planning Policy Statements.

Barriers identified in LI's <i>Green infrastructure: connected and multifunctional landscapes</i> (2009)	Recommendations made in same position statement	Natural Environment White Paper statements/commitments which shows progress towards overcoming barriers
A lack of understanding of GI and the importance of multifunctional land use planning and connectivity between spaces	National Planning Policy Statements on GI should be developed to ensure that it is a central and formative elements of spatial planning. Such guidance would need consistency in defining GI and provide support for the range of benefits that it can provide without being too prescriptive	NEWP clearly understand the importance of GI and multifunctional and places a strong emphasis on the importance of connectivity. Establishment of GI Partnership is just one of the commitments which is aiming to assist in GI delivery
A planning system which does not have sufficient force or resources to turn GI strategies into completed projects	Significantly improve the impact of local authority building control in post-completion compliance test new developments	One for the NPPF?
A shortage of professionals, including landscape practitioners, who have the skills needed to plan, design and manage successful GI	Greater investment in cross-professional training to encourage improved, joined up working between the different disciplines involved in GI planning, design, implementation and management	n/a
An increasingly urbanised society has led to detachment from the natural environment, which is seen as a place to be visited rather than an integral part of daily life	Develop a strong vision and communication strategy for the natural environment with which to engage with the general public and business	The NEWP sets out a strong vision for the natural environment, the importance of placing it at the centre of decision making (particularly economic) and the importance of reconnecting society.
Inadequate investment in the long-term management of GI assets means that benefits are less likely to be realised and/or deteriorate over time. This in turn leads to a lack of appreciation of the vast potential that these assets	Include robust arrangements for effective implementation and sustainable long-term management in GI strategies	It has been recognised in the NEWP that long term management and maintenance of GI is an issue which needs to be overcome. This may be something that the GI Partnership will be exploring.

<p>have to offer, with a consequent lack of investment in the future</p>	<p>Consider the income generating opportunities to be gained from GI assets, such as biofuels, food production and space for events, so that profits can be reinvested into ongoing maintenance and management</p> <p>Adequate resources for GI provision and management. Require and enforce GI and afford it a level of recognition and investment comparable with that of traditional 'grey' infrastructure components and be the starting point from which other development takes place</p>	<p>This is covered in the NEWP, Chapter 3: Growing a green economy</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>A culture of short term thinking means GI, a long term contributor to many environmental, social and economic issues, fails to receive sufficient support</p>	<p>Integrate GI into related policy agendas such as housing, health, climate change, sustainable transports, tourism and recreation</p> <p>Inspire clients and employers to consider the multiple benefits of a GI approach</p>	<p>NEWP helpfully outlines some policy agendas which the natural environment can contribute to; i.e. health, education and the economy</p>
<p>Investment is often needed in GI before growth occurs, therefore planning gain via S106 Agreements is not always sufficient</p>	<p>Develop a national funding stream for strategic GI investments through CSR and annual budgets</p>	<p>Not covered</p>
<p>Administrative boundaries can limit the area that needs to be considered for effective GI implementation</p>	<p>Use GI strategies to identify and plan for a multifunctional approach to open space planning, as a sub-regional level where appropriate</p> <p>Use spatially defined GI strategy to inform the LDF process</p> <p>Adopt a GI strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document in each Local Planning Authority area</p> <p>Identify the GI resource within</p>	<p>Government says in the NEWP that it is "committed to take a strategic approach to planning for nature within and across local areas" – perhaps await the outcome of the Localism Bill and the content of the NPPF?</p> <p>Perhaps work for the GI Partnersihp?</p> <p>Perhaps work for the GI Partnersihp?</p>

	local authority areas and put in place measures to overcome any deficit in functionality and benefit delivery	
Standards based approaches to open space have in the past tended to place undue emphasis on quantity rather than quality and on single land use land allocations rather than rich, multifunctional green space	Better representation of quality of landscape and GI should be included in assessments of the performance of local authorities	Not covered
It is often difficult to quantify the full economic benefits to be gained from GI Private sector bodies are not widely convinced of the commercial benefits of becoming involved and therefore making land available for multifunctional land use	Increased investment into researching the economic benefits of GI, not just green space	Publication of UKNEA, plus commitment in NEWP to further this work with development of tools to inform decision making.

20 June 2011