

Natural England Board



Minutes of the fifth Natural England Board meeting – 6 June 2007

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

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:

- Transition Programme
- Environmental Stewardship Delivery Reform
- Risk Management
- Board Outcome Groups

1) Welcome from the Chair

- a) Apologies from Sarah Burton and David Hill.

2) Stakeholder Engagements

The Board:

- a) Noted steps being taken to secure stakeholder engagement in the delivery of Natural England's Strategic Direction.
- b) Noted engagements carried out/planned by Chair and Deputy Chair between 18 April and 6 June 2007.

3) Chief Executive's Report

The Board:

- a) Noted the summary of current strategic issues and a full end of year summary of Natural England's performance for 2006 – 2007. The Board were updated on the following strategic issues:
 - i) Approval of Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007 to 2013. The overall budget for the period 2007 to 2013 has been approved by Defra and the Treasury.
 - ii) Review of Environmental Stewardship (ES). Natural England and Defra will jointly undertake the Review throughout 2007 with any proposed changes notified to the Commission in January 2008.
 - iii) Launch of consultation on Coastal Access. We are expecting the public consultation to be launched later in June.
 - iv) Launch of the Planning White Paper. The Planning White Paper was published on 21 May 2007. We will be submitting our response by the 17 August 2007 deadline.
 - v) Launch of the Energy White Paper. The Energy White Paper was published on 24 May 2007 and we will be responding to the consultation.
 - vi) Defra Renew. The Project will be completed in four to six weeks.
 - vii) Update on Spending Review. There has been no announcement yet from Defra on the outcome of the Spending Review for 2008/09.
- b) Reviewed and discussed delivery against our Strategic Direction, and noted:
 - i) the very significant progress made by the organisation in its first year and recommended that Chair should write to all staff to that effect;
Action: Chair
 - ii) that strategic communication of our achievements will help to gain external profile and recognition;
 - iii) that the Transition Programme is beginning to translate considerable effort into positive outcomes;
 - iv) our efforts to improve performance from Defra SSD, and the risks to service delivery, should be reflected in the strategic risk register;
 - v) the transition workshops provide an opportunity to update staff on our first year's performance;
 - vi) the budget has required us to adjust resource allocation between work areas.
- c) Noted the unaudited financial position for Natural England for 2006/07;
- d) Agreed that the Audit Committee on 18 June has delegated authority to recommend that the Annual Report and Accounts are signed off by the Chief Executive/Accounting Officer;
- e) Noted the balanced budget position for 2007/08;
- f) Noted there are no items requiring Board approval to comply with the Financial Memorandum and Scheme of Delegation.

Action: Board Services to circulate CEO's presentation to the Board.

- 4) Draft Climate Change Policy
The Board:

- a) Noted the draft policy on climate change, in particular that:
 - i) it is necessary to consider climate change in the context of our overall purpose;
 - ii) that this is an umbrella policy, focusing on adaptation and mitigation;
 - iii) that the draft policy will lead to a range of policy positions
- b) Discussed the paper. Key points were:
 - i) further consideration needs to be given to how we will meet our targets for reducing our own greenhouse gas pollution;
 - ii) that climate change should be a key feature of Natural England's Science Strategy;
 - iii) that Natural England has a key role in mitigation and adaptation to climate change through land management;
 - iv) that we have an opportunity to promote better public understanding of climate change by highlighting the potential impacts on our wildlife and landscapes through our advocacy work;
 - v) that our position on nuclear energy will be considered in a separate energy policy;
 - vi) that we need to demonstrate that habitat connectivity and permeability enables species migration
- c) Agreed
 - i) that Natural England should consult with a range of stakeholders on the draft policy;
 - ii) the final policy is signed off by Chair following feedback from the Board at this meeting.

Action: Executive Board

5) Policy Development Priorities in Natural England 2007- 08

The Board:

- a) Noted the policy priorities for Natural England's policy development for 2007/08 and the timetable for debating these.
- b) Discussed the paper. Key points were:
 - i) that policy development should be integrated with our science strategy;
 - ii) that our urban policy should be aligned with our policies on health, recreation and education as these develop;
 - iii) the Royal Commission's Report on the Urban Environment is being considered as we develop our policy on the urban environment;
 - iv) we should continue our work in other areas of policy development alongside the in year priorities;
 - v) noted the policy process is underpinned by comprehensive guidance and is critically challenged by internal experts and overseen by Board Outcome Groups.
- c) Agreed to endorse the five policy priorities for 2007/08 as outlined in the Paper.

6) Marine Consultation Response

The Board:

- a) Discussed the paper. The key point was:
 - i) that in addition to responsibility for identifying Marine Conservation Zones, our response to the White Paper will recommend that Natural England also has responsibility for designation of MCZs, rather than simply advising Defra, and also enforcement;
 - b) Agreed to endorse the response as summarized in this paper, and amended to take account of Board feedback.
- 7) Scope of Natural England's Health Policy
The Board:
- a) Noted the proposed scope of Natural England's health policy.
 - b) Discussed the paper. The key points were:
 - i) that it is important to make a clear distinction between our roles to improve people's health and our role to improve access to greenspace;
 - ii) we need to define how and why access to the natural environment provides different benefits than sport and exercise alone;
 - iii) we need to strengthen the evidence base on the contribution of natural environment in human wellbeing and mental health
 - c) Agreed to endorse the scope of Natural England's health policy, taking account of the views of the Board.
 - d) Noted that the policy will be further developed and brought back to a future meeting of the Board

Action: Executive Board

Action No.	Action owner	Action	Status
1.	Chair	Write to all staff regarding progress made in our first year.	Complete
2.	Board Services	Circulate the CEO's presentation to the Board with the minutes of the meeting.	In progress
3.	Executive Board	Arrange for the final climate change policy to be signed off by Chair.	In progress
4.	Executive Board	Prepare a paper to be taken to a future meeting of the Board concerning the Board's role in SSSI designation.	In progress