

Working with the grain of nature:

A biodiversity strategy for England

The England Biodiversity Group's annual stock take 2002-3

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1. **Executive summary**

This report describes progress during the first year of implementation of England's biodiversity strategy, *Working with the grain of nature*, and responds to the Secretary of State's requirement for an annual stock take. This stock take is accompanied by *Measuring progress: baseline assessment*. This is the set of biodiversity indicators promised by the strategy. Overall the England Biodiversity Group considers that a good start has been made across a broad front. In summary:

- **Agriculture:** Reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy agreed in June will reduce unhelpful features considerably and the review of agri-environment schemes is expected to result in better and more widespread incentives for stewardship of the countryside.
- **Water and wetlands:** Some good progress in legislation and policy has been made for water and wetland biodiversity. Building biodiversity into catchment planning and management remains a key challenge, particularly for the wider countryside outside protected sites, and action is now needed to tackle the impacts of diffuse pollution on water and wetlands.
- **Woodland and forestry:** Woodlands will benefit from better protection and management as a result of closer links with agri-environment schemes and the major reviews of native woodland policy and woodland grants. The challenges remain to reverse the impacts of previous afforestation programmes, secure better protection of woodland from development and understand the causes of decline in woodland birds.
- **Towns, cities and development:** The revision of PPG9 on nature conservation is well underway and a new planning policy statement will be issued for consultation shortly. Opportunities have been taken to work with the new CAGE space to bring biodiversity into urban green space and to adopt accessible green space standards.
- **The coasts and seas:** Under the Review of Marine Nature Conservation, the pilot project in the Irish Sea is making progress in examining the integration of biodiversity objectives into marine environmental management at a regional sea scale
- **Local and regional action:** We have linked biodiversity to the main drivers of local policy, for example in Community Strategies and local government performance measures, and reinforced the regional biodiversity networks. The challenge will be to sustain the engagement of local and regional partners and influence policies into the future.
- **Economics and funding:** All the sources of funding to achieve biodiversity objectives are being reviewed to establish the balance

between the need for new funding against the application of existing programmes. Research is underway to better understand the value of biodiversity in economic decisions.

- The engagement of business: The Company Law Review has given the opportunity to promote awareness of biodiversity in businesses and to understand whether biodiversity is a 'material issue' in terms of the proposed Operating and Financial Review
- Education and public understanding: We are developing an approach to communication which supports the needs of the various themes of the strategy and helps the whole partnership to face outwards to public and media in a more co-ordinated and complementary way.
- Children and young people: We are completing Phase 1 of a project which has worked with children and young people to find a way of giving them a voice in the long term development and implementation of policies for biodiversity.

Despite this early progress, there is still much to do, particularly in terms of progress across sectors and agencies to ensure that ecosystem services and functions are recognised and utilised long-term and at the appropriate scale.

2. Introduction

2.1 The biodiversity strategy for England was published in October 2002. As she launched the strategy, Margaret Beckett, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, asked the England Biodiversity Group to take stock of progress every year and to publish a full report in 2006. This report responds to the Secretary of State's request, taking account of progress with implementing the strategy in the year since publication.

2.2 The strategy undertook to develop and publish a set of biodiversity indicators within a year. *Measuring the progress of the biodiversity strategy for England: baseline assessment* is published alongside this stock take and presents indicators, with trends where possible, in most of the strategy's thematic areas. In some cases it shows where indicators are still under development and the work that will be necessary to complete the set.

Directions of progress

2.3 *Working with the grain of nature* set out a vision for the comprehensive integration of biodiversity into policies and programmes at all levels of administration and in all parts of society:-

A country – its landscapes and water bodies, coasts and seas, towns and cities – where wild species and habitats are part of healthy functioning ecosystems; where we nurture, treasure and enhance our biodiversity, and where biodiversity is a natural consideration of policies and decisions, and in society as a whole.

2.4 The strategy was published at an important moment. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had just agreed a global target to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. With our partners in the European Union we were embarking on fundamental reviews of the Common Fisheries and Agriculture Policies. Implementation of the Water Framework Directive was getting underway. Substantial reforms of the planning system, regional and local government and new policies for urban regeneration and sustainable communities were in the pipeline. These and many other issues relevant to the achievement of our biodiversity goals formed the backdrop to the first year of implementation of the strategy. They have presented opportunities as well as challenges to the start of our work in realising our vision. The sectoral reports that follow give brief accounts of the progress made in the key policy areas towards our biodiversity objectives. They also give information on the specific steps that have been taken, particularly under the cross-cutting themes, to advance new ideas for biodiversity and make links across society as a whole.

2.5 At the same time, there have been significant developments in specific policies for conserving biodiversity. For example the review of non-native species reached its conclusions in March 2003; the list of habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity conservation required by s74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 was published in December

2002; the regional seas pilot scheme in the Irish Sea has made substantial progress in considering the implications of management systems affecting marine biodiversity, and efforts have been reinforced to achieve the Government's Public Service Agreement target of bringing 95% of SSSIs into favourable condition by 2010.

2.6 In July 2003 the Government published new targets to measure progress in conserving and enhancing biodiversity on the Government estate. The new targets were included in the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate. Departments and their Executive Agencies will report publicly on targets including:

- A target to assess and improve the condition of Government-owned SSSIs;
- A requirement for all Departments who own sites of significant biodiversity interest to produce biodiversity action plans; and
- A biodiversity target to be included in contracts for new and refurbished Government buildings.

2.7 The Convention on Biological Diversity calls on contracting parties to adopt an Ecosystem Approach. The principles of this approach are at the heart of the philosophy of *Working with the grain of nature*. Its essence is a holistic view of the conservation of biodiversity in the maritime, rural and urban landscapes, realising the value of biodiversity for social and economic as well as environmental purposes. More needs to be done, particularly in terms of co-operation across sectors and agencies, to ensure that ecosystem services and functions are recognised and utilised over the long-term and at the appropriate scale. The England Biodiversity Group believes that the strategy presents the best opportunity to apply the Ecosystem Approach in practice in England.

2.8 In keeping with the way the strategy was prepared, partnership remains central to its implementation. In the year since publication, the England Biodiversity Group (EBG) has sought to ensure that there are effective systems in place to work towards implementation, to hold all the members of the partnership (including the Government) to account, to identify milestones and to measure progress. The EBG has established work streams for each of the policy and cross-cutting themes in the strategy. These work streams are often led by and invariably include key players from the partnership. Each work stream reports its progress quarterly to the EBG which exercises a scrutiny and challenge function. A high-level delivery group is also in place to ensure continuing ownership of the strategy across Government and to ensure that existing and developing policies are used to best effect to implement it.

2.9 The indicators that have now been established, together with those that are still in development, will be central to the ongoing assessment of progress towards our biodiversity objectives. The important headline indicators of wild bird populations (H1), SSSI condition (H2) and progress with species and habitat action plans (H3) have where possible been broken down to show the

relative positions in the main policy sectors of the strategy. This is a baseline assessment, in most areas drawn from data produced before the strategy began to be implemented. Taking the progress with BAP priority habitats and species as one of the key indicators of progress, as at the end of 2002 over 40% of species and habitats were beginning to show positive trends. By contrast, progress with others was slower than originally anticipated and lack of information was a significant obstacle to progress. Other headline indicators are:

- H4 Area of land under agri-environment schemes
- H5 Biological quality of rivers in England
- H6 UK fish stocks fished within safe limits
- H7 Delivery of local biodiversity targets in England (in development)
- H8 Public attitudes to biodiversity

2.10 The biodiversity strategy for England has a long-term and ambitious vision. Its realisation will take time. Some progress has been made in this first year to begin the process of integrating biodiversity more comprehensively into policy and to establish frameworks to measure success. In many cases, trends will take some time to be perceptible and considerable work remains to be done to ensure that we have all the information necessary to make the assessments required to understand the conservation status of our priority species and habitats. The partnership for biodiversity in England is committed to ensuring that continued implementation of the strategy remains a priority.

3. **Agriculture**

An economically viable agriculture industry in which farmers and growers maximise, and are valued for, their contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity associated with farmed and semi-natural habitats.

3.1 **Progress since October 2002**

- The area of agricultural land under stewardship agreements continues to increase.
- The status of farmland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species and habitats is improving but plant diversity in fields and field margins continues to decline. It is too soon to say whether the apparent stabilisation shown by the latest farmland bird population figures reflects a long-term trend.
- The Government has negotiated, within the mid term review, for changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that are potentially of greater benefit for biodiversity than might have been expected. Decoupling, so that CAP payments are no longer related to the volumes produced, could also result in significant changes to farming systems beneficial to biodiversity. Farmers will more easily be able to contemplate less intensive practices and methods to facilitate their stewardship of the environment alongside production.
- The CAP reform settlement includes increased flexibility that will enable us to continue to enjoy the biodiversity benefits of set-aside and particularly of long term set-aside and field margins.
- CAP reforms include a transfer of resources that will permit an expansion of agri-environment schemes.
- The reforms provide an opportunity to make more rigorous environmental standards a basic condition of CAP support.
- The Review of Agri-environment Schemes and the pilot Entry Level Scheme have proceeded successfully and proposals for the future are being formulated that will give better incentives for stewardship of the countryside over a much greater proportion of farmed land.
- The implementation and review of the EIA regulations for the use of uncultivated and semi-natural areas will support more sustainable agriculture.

Chapter 3 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

A1 Population of farmland birds in England

A2 Condition of farmland SSSIs in England

A3 Status of farmland Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats in England

A4 Trends in plant diversity in fields and field margins in England

A5 Extent and condition of farmland habitat features in England

3.2 Challenges in the year to October 2004

The main challenge will be to implement the CAP reform settlement in a way that that satisfies our biodiversity goals and secures the necessary funding. Practical difficulties in designing workable controls and incentives are considerable.

3.3 Longer term prospects

Provided we are successful in designing detailed CAP support and agri-environment schemes that work well the prospects to 2006 are good, but at that point further major CAP reform will be essential to maintain progress. The recent changes to CAP support may have unexpected results and the effects of climate change are also difficult to predict.

4. **Water and wetlands**

Healthy and biologically diverse rivers, lakes and wetlands in a landscape managed for the sustainable use of water. This means a holistic approach to land and water management, with active support from local communities, recognising and benefiting from the social, economic and environmental gains.

4.1 **Progress since October 2002**

The Government's strategic framework for water policy, '*Directing the Flow*' was published in November 2002. It complemented the biodiversity strategy for England and set the context for progress in this work stream area:-

- A start was made in developing pilot biodiversity plans for river basins.
- There has been progress in developing biological water quality objectives under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and in agreeing water quality targets for designated sites.
- The Water Bill, tackling the impacts of water resource use and abstraction, has received Royal Assent.
- Biodiversity, including in wetland SSSIs and Natura 2000 sites, is a driver in the current Periodic Review of Water Prices (PRO4).
- The Environment Agency's review of consents affecting SPAs and SACs has made further progress.
- The fourth otter survey of England showed continuing healthy recovery from the strongholds in South-West and Northern England although survey results show continuing significant declines in breeding birds of wet grasslands.
- Joint working was established between Government, the industry and environmental groups to increase the use of peat-free alternatives in growing media. The 'Plantfinder' is being developed to help identify alternatives.

Chapter 4 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- W1 Populations of water and wetland birds in England
- W2 Condition of water and wetland SSSIs in England
- W3 Status of water and wetland Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats in England
- W4 Trends in plant diversity on river banks and stream sides in England
- W5 Nutrient levels in rivers and lakes in England (provisional)
- W6 Numbers of rivers in England with sustainable salmon stocks

4.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

The Government's consultation on Diffuse Water Pollution from Agriculture will be crucial to developing the policy, legislative and economic instruments needed to address diffuse pollution in wetlands. A comprehensive new strategy for flood management will be developed which seeks to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services alongside the needs of people and

property. The policy environment will change through the WFD Regulations and the enactment of the Water Bill. We need both designated sites and wider biodiversity to be properly reflected in the 2005-10 environmental investment plans for the water industry. The benefits of a whole catchment approach should be promoted by demonstration projects and the development of tools to integrate targets for wetland habitats and species into decisions on land use and water management. Unless this happens, integrated action to tackle wetland habitat restoration and protection in a sustainable way in and beyond designated sites will not be addressed.

4.3 Longer term prospects

Substantial ongoing benefits will accrue from the new and planned legislative and investment frameworks. But further significant challenges remain. Despite advances in integrating biodiversity, policy progress with habitat creation remains slow. Climate change impacts are unpredictable. Water and wetlands are particularly vulnerable to extreme drought or flooding events as well as to problems from non-native invasive species. Development pressure will stretch already scarce water resources in the south-east and give rise to expectations about flood defence. So truly integrated land and water management is an urgent need. Appropriate development control, agricultural land management reforms and sustainable use of water resources must be fully delivered to achieve the objectives of the strategy.

5. **Woodland and forestry**

Woodland and forest managed and created to enhance both woodland and non-woodland species and habitats, that at the same time provide sustainable goods, environmental services and recreational benefits enhancing people's quality of life

5.1 **Progress since October 2002**

- Woodland protection and conservation is being integrated into agri-environment schemes, including buffer strips, small-scale woodland creation and farmland trees.
- A new package of incentives for woodland creation as part of the England Woodland Grant Scheme is being developed.
- The survey of ancient woodland on the FC estate was published and new policy and practice on ancient and native woodland conservation is under development.
- Research and monitoring is underway to understand the possible causes of the decline of woodland bird populations.
- The potential for adding value to wood and wood products is being pursued through assessments of the potential for chemical production from wood and the use of wood in heat and power plants.
- Woodland's contribution to the quality of life is promoted by the 'Woods for people' pilot in SE England testing owners' attitudes to and needs for public access.

Chapter 5 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- F1 Populations of woodland birds in England
- F2 Condition of woodland SSSIs
- F3 Status of woodland Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats in England
- F4 Trends in woodland plant diversity in England
- F5 Area of ancient woodland in England (provisional)
- F6 Public enjoyment of woodland in England

5.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004.**

A priority is the completion and launch of a new Forestry Commission policy for ancient and native woodland with associated implementation measures, including the targeting of the England Woodland Grant Scheme. We will also develop new policy on the removal or reduction of plantations in order to restore important non-woodland habitats. In addition we aim to explore further the use of wood as a renewable fuel, and improve awareness of the health benefits of woodland. We want to promote urban woodland, and develop regional woodland biodiversity targets.

5.3 Longer term prospects

The fundamental challenges identified in the strategy – the declining economic viability and capacity in the forestry sector – have been exacerbated by a further decline in timber values. The inherent conflict therefore remains that we need active but low-intensity management in many woods to prevent further decline, but capacity, and owners' motivation to do so are reducing. Controlling deer and other, non-native, animals and plants remains a fundamental challenge, particularly taking account of public perceptions. In addition, it will be important to improve the baseline and monitoring data for woodland BAP priority habitats to enable confident judgements to be made about their status.

6. **Towns, cities and development**

Towns and cities which have a place for wildlife, and in which a flourishing biodiversity makes a real contribution to the quality of life of urban residents, workers and visitors. Development that makes minimal impact on wildlife habitats and contributes to the conservation of biodiversity.

6.1 **Progress since October 2002**

- A new Planning Policy Statement for biodiversity to replace PPG9 is in preparation with the aim of public consultation by the end of the year.
- Accessible natural green space targets are being implemented as a key component of a number of open space strategies across the country.
- The biodiversity of brownfield sites is increasingly recognised through publications such as Butterfly Conservation's 'Brownfields for Butterflies'.
- Guidance on Design for Biodiversity has been produced by a partnership of the London Development Agency, the Greater London Authority and English Nature.
- CABE Space has been established to champion open space issues and is ensuring input on biodiversity through its Strategic Enablers and standards advisory group.
- Heritage Lottery Fund is working with English Nature and other to maximise the benefits for biodiversity in its green space programmes.
- Green roofs have been promoted through publications from the City of London and English Nature and a conference held by Sheffield University.
- Research on the biodiversity of urban gardens in Sheffield has been completed as part of the NERC URGENT programme and is to be expanded across UK.

Chapter 6 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- T1 UK population of birds in towns and gardens (provisional)
- T2 Condition of SSSIs in urban areas in England
- T3 Proportion of households undertaking wildlife gardening in England
- T4 Ease of access to local green space and countryside in England
- T5 Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans with biodiversity policies and targets in England

6.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

The recently established work stream group for this part of the strategy will build on its review of priorities within the programme and develop a programme of action. Its focus will be to examine ways of better mainstreaming biodiversity into the development planning process as a whole, including development planning by the Government itself. It will identify more specifically the economic value of biodiversity in urban areas. In collaboration

with CABE space it will also aim to establish a series of specific targets relating to the role of biodiversity in the urban renaissance.

6.3 Longer term prospects

A key challenge will be to ensure that biodiversity is central to the realisation of Government's vision for sustainable communities, including the Thames Gateway and the other growth areas. The scope of urban biodiversity needs wider recognition, rather than through single broad habitat type and handful of species currently identified as comprising urban biodiversity. Above all existing good practice integrating biodiversity into towns, cities and developments should become widely adopted practice to realise biodiversity as an important element of the quality of the urban environment.

7. **The coasts and seas**

Clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas and a coastline which reconciles human needs with the conservation and restoration of wildlife habitats as far as possible through natural processes.

7.1 **Progress since October 2002**

The priorities have been to take forward the initiatives outlined in the Government's strategy for the marine environment (*Safeguarding our seas* published in May 2002) and developing an ecosystem-based approach to deliver our vision. In particular we have seen the following developments:

- Under the Review of Marine Nature Conservation, a pilot project in the Irish Sea is examining the integration of biodiversity objectives into marine environmental management at a regional sea scale.
- The seven completed pilot Coastal Habitat Management Plans (ChAMPs) around the coast of England aim to reconcile the requirements of Natura 2000 sites with natural coastal processes and coastal defence.
- The UK Small Cetaceans Bycatch Response Strategy works towards the reduction of bycatch – mainly dolphins and porpoises – to the lowest possible level.
- The UK's best-known cold water coral reef, the Darwin Mounds, has received emergency protection. An EC Regulation, made at the UK's request, bans damaging fishing activity within the area. Consultation has begun to designate the site under the Habitats Directive.

Chapter 7 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- M1 Populations of coastal and sea birds in England (provisional)
- M2 Condition of coastal SSSIs in England
- M3 Status of coastal and marine Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats in England
- M4 Marine biodiversity (to be developed)
- M5 Inputs of hazardous substances to the UK marine environment
- M6 Levels of cetacean bycatch in UK waters.

7.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

The completion of the Irish Sea pilot project will require consideration and action on its outcomes. Likewise, the results of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management stock take project will be pursued. There will be a consultation on the recommendations from the Government's review of the complex regulatory controls on development of marine and coastal waters. We must work with European partners to implement the revised Common Fisheries Policy, take forward the second round of site licensing for offshore wind farms and, internationally, apply OSPAR Annex V and develop the EU marine strategy. These initiatives should together help identify what legislative and policy changes will be necessary to achieve the coherent legal and

administrative system for nature conservation in the marine environment as aimed for under the strategy.

7.3 Longer term prospects

The Ecosystem Approach will underpin the administrative and legislative framework for marine and coastal biodiversity. We expect to see greater integration in the management of the coastal zone including a more efficient system for controlling development in the marine environment that takes full account of biodiversity. We will make a full contribution to establishing a network of well-managed marine protected areas by 2010. But the knowledge gap in the marine environment remains a significant impediment to understanding and to measuring impacts and improvements.

8. **Local and regional action**

The full integration of biodiversity considerations within regional and local policies, strategies and programmes. Healthy and broad partnerships that champion, promote and enhance local and regional biodiversity and its distinctiveness and help deliver national priorities.

8.1 **Progress since October 2002**

The strategy recognised the vital role of local and regional partnerships to help give effect, on the ground, to its holistic vision. Implementation has concentrated on building biodiversity into the Government's priorities for local and regional governance in England. In particular:

- The Government announced the subsuming of Local Biodiversity Action Plans into Community Strategies; to help understand this we are preparing guidance on the relevance of biodiversity as part of local quality of life.
- We have encouraged exchange of ideas and good practice between Regional Biodiversity Forums to influence the incorporation of biodiversity into regional social and economic drivers, indicators and reporting.
- We are developing concepts for applying the Ecosystem Approach in each Region at a landscape scale.
- We are gathering examples and developing expertise on biodiversity indicators to measure local government performance, including through Local Public Service Agreements.
- *Natural Partners* was published illustrating how local biodiversity partnerships influence key local economic and social sectors as well as working towards their species and habitat targets.

Chapter 8 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

L1 Condition of SSSIs in local authority ownership in England

L2 Community Strategies with biodiversity policies, objectives and action (to be developed)

L3 The degree of integration of biodiversity policies, objectives and targets in regional programmes and strategies (to be developed)

8.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

Building on our initial work, we expect to promote further understanding of how biodiversity can be part of Community Strategies, as they develop and improve. We look forward to the roll-out of the web-based Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) in Spring 2004 to enable local and national partnerships to share information and report progress against their targets. We will develop further advice on the ways regional bodies can integrate biodiversity into their policies and activities. One of the biggest challenges will be to identify measures of local authority biodiversity performance which could

be incorporated into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework.

8.3 Longer term prospects

Local and regional biodiversity partnerships should be increasingly working as an integral part of their communities. Using a solid information base they should be able to communicate biodiversity's relevance to local quality of life, to integrate it into the fabric of local and regional decisions and to measure success. The full integration of biodiversity into Community Strategies is an ambitious but realisable goal. Opportunities to apply the Ecosystem Approach to a series of landscape scale projects within the regions should be seized.

9. **The economics and funding of biodiversity**

A holistic view of the implications for biodiversity of our decisions, taking account of the full economic costs and benefits to the economy, the environment and society as a whole, including future generations. Identifying and applying sources of funding as appropriate to achieve our biodiversity objectives.

9.1 **Progress since October 2002**

The past year has seen a number of important developments that will impact on the way economic decisions affecting biodiversity are made. A start has also been made in understanding biodiversity funding needs. The following developments are noteworthy:

- Potentially the biggest benefits for biodiversity could come from the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy including the decoupling of subsidies and production, changes in the rules for cross compliance, use of modulation and national envelopes.
- Following its review, the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme has been amended explicitly to support biodiversity projects in the vicinity of landfill sites. Designated environmental bodies now need to be strongly encouraged to support the implementation of the new biodiversity objective.
- A joint Treasury/Defra group is considering the use of economic instruments to address the environmental effects of agriculture.
- We have scoped and quantified the main funding sources for biodiversity as a prelude to identifying funding gaps and means of filling them. This is particularly important at local level where continuity of funding to support the capacity of local partnerships remains fragile.
- Research is underway to assess the quality of the environment (including biodiversity) in economic development and regeneration and to establish a means of valuing changes in biodiversity.
- The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund has been a significant source of new funds

It has not been possible so far to develop meaningful indicators for this work stream. This will be a priority for the coming year.

9.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

A priority for the year is to ensure the potential for biodiversity gains is fully reflected in the delivery of the new discretionary elements of the CAP reform. We also expect to refine our understanding and evidence of the funding needs of biodiversity to contribute as appropriate to the Spending Review 2004. To ensure that the tools are available to integrate biodiversity into decision-making, we will work on a low-cost biodiversity valuation framework for use in policy and regulatory appraisal.

9.3 Longer-term prospects

We would expect in the coming years to have a clearer picture of the extent to which biodiversity objectives should be achieved through specifically targeted programmes as distinct from a more biodiversity-orientated application of other main programmes. We also aim to refine our understanding of how biodiversity is valued by people so that these values can be explicitly incorporated into public sector decisions and applied to economic instruments influencing the operation of the market.

10. **The engagement of business**

We want to see companies automatically engaging in the management of and reporting on biodiversity as an integral part of their business operations and processes.

10.1 **Progress since October 2002**

A primary objective for this work stream area has been to ensure that the business community itself set the priorities for action and consequently was fully engaged in their delivery. Strong participation from key business sectors in the partnership gives us confidence that our outputs will be relevant from a business perspective. Action has concentrated on the following areas.

- Raising awareness of biodiversity in the most relevant sectors of the business community by helping to make the case for business action on biodiversity.
- Providing biodiversity case studies in the water and food retailers and process sectors at the request of the DTI's Operating and Financial Review (OFR) working group on materiality. This will guide Directors' consideration of the extent to which biodiversity is material to their businesses, and thus whether they should report annually on biodiversity policies and performance in their OFR.
- Development with Earthwatch and Business in the Community (BiTC) of the indicator on biodiversity engagement in Business in the Environment's annual index of Corporate Environmental Engagement and BiTC's index of Corporate Responsibility.
- Improvement of the indicator on the condition of SSSIs in business ownership and development of the business component of the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).

Chapter 9 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- B1 Condition of SSSIs owned or managed by companies in England
- B2 Company participation in Business in the Environment (BiE) Index of Corporate Environmental Engagement
- B3 Company contribution to Local Biodiversity Action Plans in England

10.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

We will build on current work to improve the understanding of companies in key sectors about whether biodiversity is material to their business. This will be complemented by a series of regional workshops leading to a national conference. We will also help to develop standards, tools and principles to assist fund managers in assessing biodiversity performance and risk by working with the UK Sustainable Investment Forum. Practical guidance will be prepared on the management and assessment of company landholdings for biodiversity.

10.3 Longer-term prospects

In the longer term we want to develop common standards and performance criteria for biodiversity in business, in certification systems and in advice on reporting and disclosure. Constraints to this will be the diversity between businesses, even within sectors, as well as competitive considerations. A key challenge is to extend development of the business case to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises through local biodiversity partnerships and advice on supply chains.

11. **Education and public understanding**

A society in which people recognise, value and take action to maintain and enhance biodiversity as part of their everyday lives – in the same way that they might address health issues, the community in which they live, or their economic circumstances.

11.1 **Progress since October 2002**

The priority in this year has been to establish a clearer set of priorities and focus than was set out in the chapter in the strategy on education and public understanding. To be effective, programmes of education and communication must be targeted and well-crafted, supporting the implementation of other themes and, at their best, leading a wider social debate on the future of England's biodiversity. Work has concentrated on the following areas:

- The assessment of the nature and extent of existing levels of effort in education and communication with a view to a better co-ordination of effort between Departments, agencies, NGOs and the media.
- Establishing fundamental links with the sectoral themes of the strategy to produce broad education and public understanding plans for each one.
- Developing links with the Department for Education and Skills in the context of their Sustainable Development in Education Action Plan.
- Recognising the importance of the media and marketing profession in building and maintaining public support, we have identified the need for a series of focused workshops to improve the engagement of this sector.

Chapter 10 of the baseline assessment gives information on:

- P1 Number of visits to nature reserves in England
- P2 Volunteer time spent in conservation activity
- P3 Membership of biodiversity organisations (to be developed)

11.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

By the time of the second report, we expect to have developed sector-specific education and public understanding action plans. We should also have a better understanding of the range of activities and programmes currently underway in England and to have identified gaps and opportunities for better co-ordination. The marketing and media workshops planned for early 2004 will lead to progress in understanding current marketing approaches, further training and development possibilities and co-ordination of delivery.

11.3 **Longer-term prospects**

There are significant challenges ahead in seeking to ensure that society values biodiversity more. Government Departments, such as DfES, DCMS and ODPM also have a part to play in this. The critical role of real-life

experiences in the development of positive attitudes to nature sits within a context of growing alienation from such experiences. There are also great challenges to be faced by the nature conservation sector itself in becoming more socially inclusive. In the light of these and other challenges, we need an open and informed public discussion.

12. **Engaging children and young people**

The strategy makes a commitment to establish a mechanism to involve children and young people in the development of policy on biodiversity. The project recognises the interest many young people have in the natural world and is part of Defra's wider commitment to give young people a real say in the policies and services that affect them. This is an important element of the education and public understanding work stream.

12.1 **Progress since October 2002**

A pilot project has consulted children and young people on the best way to engage with them on the development of biodiversity policy. Working with NGOs and young people's groups the project is using a range of approaches to involve those young people who already have an interest in the topic as well as those who have little awareness of biodiversity or what they can do to promote its conservation. Focus groups, workshops, a questionnaire and an interactive website are all being used to discover young people's priorities. A report on the outcomes of the research will be published by the end of 2003 but early feedback suggests that there are significant problems in raising interest or understanding of biodiversity across the range of young people.

12.2 **Challenges in the year to October 2004**

We will build on the outcomes of the pilot project to consolidate our plans to give children and young people a voice and work with them to develop their interest and engagement in biodiversity issues.

12.3 **Longer-term prospects**

Participation by children and young people is not a one-off event but a process which requires on-going effort and investment. The participation process should contribute to better informed, active citizens and to more responsive policy making.