

Date: 19 November 2018



Chris Murray
Head of Strategic Planning
Hampshire County Council

4th Floor,
Eastleigh House,
Upper Market Street
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9FG

By email only, no hard copy to follow

Dear Chris,

Thank you for inviting Natural England to contribute to the Commission of Inquiry for the future of Hampshire to 2050. Natural England welcomes the opportunity to be part of this process and strongly supports the need to consider and strategically plan for the future.

We have summarised our submission in this part of the letter but have provided more detail to some of the specific questions more relevant to our remit in Annex 1. We have also provided more details about Natural England's purpose and remit in Annex 2 in case helpful to the Commission. At this stage; we consider it unlikely that we will wish to give evidence at the hearing in December but would gladly provide any further necessary clarifications in writing to the Commission beforehand, as required.

SUMMARY

Hampshire's environment is one of its strongest assets. It has a diverse range of terrestrial, coastal and marine habitats and protected landscapes which make it a very special place for wildlife and people. These special qualities are at risk from a number of significant challenges such as increased developmental pressure, changes to land management practices, poor air and water quality and climate change. These challenges have caused a significant loss of biodiversity; a trend which continues despite examples of good practice and localised success. The loss of biodiversity is not just intrinsically bad, we know that it has negative economic and social effects as well. We welcome the establishment of the Commission to investigate how we can collectively and strategically respond to these challenges upto 2050.

In January 2018; the Government published its 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP)¹ which sets out how the environment will be improved over the next generation. Its central aim is to leave the environment in a better state than it was found. Natural England strongly supports this ambitious plan and believes Hampshire should aspire to deliver many of the outcomes contained within.

Natural England has focussed this response on 3 key strands of the 25YEP: 1) recovering biodiversity, 2) connecting people with the environment and 3) the use of natural capital.

Recovering biodiversity:

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

Natural England strongly supports embedding the principles of delivering a net gain in biodiversity. In short this aims to reverse the loss of biodiversity by seeking to move decision making away from ensuring no net loss of biodiversity to a point where we seek to deliver a net gain every time. Whilst well meaning, attempts to ensure no net loss of biodiversity have not prevented further declines and certainly won't be sufficient to enable the recovery of biodiversity. Whilst Natural England recognises that we are presently some way from delivering net gain in this manner; we believe Hampshire can learn from best practice elsewhere and use the increasing number of policy drivers (such as inclusion within the newly published National Planning Policy Framework²) to move towards this approach.

Alongside net gain, Natural England believes we need to increase the scale of which we approach conservation. Hampshire already has a large network of designated sites protected under nature conservation legislation. We need to frame these sites within a much bigger landscape if we are to enable the recovery of biodiversity.

To support the development of the network approach in Hampshire, the Hampshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has prepared a planning policy framework and Local Ecological Network (LEN) map. This policy encourages all Hampshire Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to incorporate the local ecological network map within their new development plan documents and in their day-to-day decision-making on development proposals. It also provides the underpinning evidence base and policy framework for environmental net gain which is actively being pursued by the Hampshire LNP given that the Chief Executives of the Hampshire Councils have approved in principle the development and implementation of a net gain policy for Hampshire.

We can create or enhance new areas for wildlife using future changes to land management practices, mitigation measures secured through the planning system and other drivers. As well as helping to restore biodiversity, this will support and create vibrant, attractive, healthy communities whilst maintaining the special qualities for which Hampshire is well known.

Connecting People with the Environment:

Natural England strongly believes in the importance of connecting people with the environment; without this connection it is unlikely people will support taking action to protect and enhance it. Natural England is working on a number of projects to increase access to the countryside; the largest of which is the establishment of the England Coast Path³ – a continuous path stretching the whole way around the English coastline.

The health benefits of getting outdoors are now well understood; being outside improves mental and physical health. This could become increasingly seen as a cost effective solution to worryingly increasing trends in obesity, diabetes, heart disease and mental health throughout our population. Natural England would like to see greater join up between the environment and health sectors to the mutual benefit of both. This is increasingly important for children and we need to create more opportunities for them to spend time outdoors living happy and healthy lives.

Natural Capital:

2

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast>

Natural capital is a relatively new tool which has been developed to enable decision makers to better recognise and value the role the natural environment plays in our lives. Traditionally economic decisions have not considered the costs or benefits of the environment, typically through the services that it provides (known as ecosystem services). Ecosystem services such as air and water filtration, plant pollination and coastal defences play an important role across Hampshire and would be expensive to replace using solely anthropogenic means.

By using natural capital, decision makers are able to better understand the potential costs and impacts and therefore should be able to make better decisions. This could mean preventing damage to vulnerable habitats or choosing a different path when responding to an issue. For example water companies could build new infrastructure to reduce nitrate levels from drinking water to meet regulatory requirements. A natural capital assessment might show that implementing catchment measures (such as planting trees around boreholes) could have the same effect and be cheaper with both biodiversity and access benefits as well.

Natural England would like to see the greater use of natural capital in decision making, although we recognise that this is a new tool and will take some time to be better understood and used more frequently.

The 25 YEP provides Government's view on how the environment could be improved and a number of policy drivers have now been either put in place or are being developed. Hampshire is facing significant challenges now and in the period upto 2050. We will need to think creatively and respond innovatively to these challenges if we are to maintain the characters and features which its residents and visitors admire and enjoy.

Natural England would be very happy to work with the Commission, its contributors and other statutory and non-statutory organisations to take forward any actions or recommendations.

I hope that this response is clear and helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss in further detail, or if any aspect requires clarification.

Yours Sincerely



Graham Horton
Manager
Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Email: Graham.Horton@naturalengland.org.uk

Tel: 0300 060 4851 / 07917 520702

ANNEX 1

Theme scope and key questions

1. Natural and historic environment

- **What are the elements of Hampshire's natural and historic environment, including landscape features that create the quality of place?**

Natural England will leave it to others to more fully describe the elements of Hampshire's environment and landscape which create a strong sense of place. However in brief; Hampshire's environment is one of its strongest assets. It has highly diverse, internationally important habitats including the chalk downs and rivers, the heaths and woodland of the New Forest and the coastal and marine habitats of the Solent and its harbours. Approximately one third of Hampshire is either within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park which is recognition of its high landscape value. Its southern climate and diverse range of habitats means that Hampshire has the greatest species diversity of any county in Britain. More information about its special qualities is outlined in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan⁴.

The habitats and species present in Hampshire are nationally and internationally recognised for their importance and are protected by several legislative drivers. These designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites) provide an important network⁵ of protected areas across Hampshire.

There are important areas for wildlife outside of these sites, some of which are formally recognised as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) whilst others are currently undesignated and unprotected. All of these areas, designated or not, help to give Hampshire its strong sense of place and contribute to its high environmental value.

- **What are the impacts from a changing climate and natural environmental hazards (such as drought and flooding) and how will they be managed (e.g. Natural Flood Management, coastal defences)?**

Our changing climate present a number of risks to Hampshire and its residents; the extent and magnitude of these are outlined in the most recent IPCC report⁶ which outlines the risks of a 1.5° C rise in global temperatures. Hampshire will not be immune from these changes and the extreme weather of 2018 provides a strong indication to Hampshire's residents of what is likely to occur. Extended periods of drought, greater temperature extremes, wildfires and significant periods of heavy rainfall are likely to place greater stress on communities, wildlife and the provision of crucial infrastructure such as clean water and sewage removal. It highlights the need to increase our resilience to climate change. If we can increase our resilience we may be able to minimise the severity or frequency of the impacts of a changing climate.

An example of this is Natural Flood Management which uses natural means (such as leaky dams, or the reintroduction of beavers) to slow the flow of water thereby reducing peak flooding levels and helping to protect communities downstream. These measures also typically bring a host of other benefits such as increased biodiversity and decreased pollution levels. Natural England recognises and understands the importance of man-made solutions but we believe that working

⁴ <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/HampshireBiodiversityActionPlanVolume1.pdf>

⁵ This network can be viewed on www.magic.gov.uk

⁶ Global Warming of 1.5° C. IPCC. 2018. <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

with nature to create resilient ecosystems should complement more traditional forms of response and will bring a host of additional benefits to society.

Another example is the increasing prevalence of droughts as the climate warms and the population of Hampshire grows. Hampshire is already considered to be water-scarce. There will be an increasing need to use water more sustainably; this will include options such as reducing household water consumption and increasing the amount of water re-use. Natural England believes that by investing to create a healthy natural environment will enable Hampshire to meet this challenge. By investing in the sustainable management of our river catchments we can ensure that water is both cleaner and more plentiful. Examples of this include using wetlands and reed beds to filter greywater and waste water. This can reduce our dependence on abstraction points which is particularly important for our precious chalk streams.

Natural England thinks that by investing in the natural environment we can increase its resilience and make Hampshire and its communities more able to respond to the changing climate.

- **How will the competing demands on countryside and farmland impact on the environment (landscape, biodiversity, heritage, water management etc.)?**

The demands on our countryside are likely to change substantially by 2050; however the way they will manifest themselves is uncertain and will depend on various macro-economic, demographic and societal changes. We will need to find a balance so that we use the countryside in a way which means all of society benefits, particularly when that land use is subsidised through public finances. Natural England will leave it to others to describe the types of which changes might occur and instead focus on the principles of how we should respond. However it is important to recognise that these changes may not lead to a linear or anticipated change in behaviour and as such it is difficult to predict how competing demands will play out. For example, the level of interest in the provenance of our food has never been greater (with increasing shifts towards locally grown; ethically-sourced food) yet at the same time for many people there is still a great disconnect between the source of their food and its impacts upon the wider environment.

Natural England believes we need to increase the scale at which we approach conservation. Hampshire already has a large network of designated sites protected under nature conservation legislation. We need to frame these sites within a much bigger landscape if we are to enable the recovery of biodiversity. We need to increase the number, the size and better join up existing designated protected areas in principle with the recommendations in the Making Space for Nature report (Lawton et al., 2010⁷). The Government's 25 YEP commitments for a Nature Recovery Network and an additional 500,000 ha of priority habitat represent a major initiative toward meeting the challenge and securing the necessary "step-change" in conservation.

We can create or enhance new areas for wildlife using future changes to land management practices, mitigation measures secured through the planning system and other drivers. As well as helping to restore biodiversity, this will help to support and create vibrant, attractive and healthy communities whilst maintaining the special qualities for which Hampshire is known. By better joining up the different parts of our countryside, at a suitable landscape scale, we will be better placed to strategically respond to the competing demands and pressures. We could identify areas for recreation whilst leaving some areas with little access. Similarly we could identify areas for intensive agriculture whilst managing some areas at a far less intensive scale. There should be

7

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402170324/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

sufficient space within a landscape to balance competing demands if considered strategically. Our river valleys could be a good place to consider this approach as examples of areas with high conservation value, issues with poor water quality due to eutrophication, risk of downstream flooding and large population centres relying on water abstractions.

We believe that access to the countryside will continue to be very important. It is Natural England's view that connecting and improving people's relationship with the environment will deliver mutual benefits. If people value and spend time in their environment, then they are more likely to want to protect it. By improving the environment we should see associated improvements for society and the economy through the better provision of ecosystem services such as cleaner air and water.

There is extensive research showing that access to the countryside improves mental health and leads to happier healthier lifestyles. This will become increasingly important as incidence rates of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and poor mental health become more prevalent alongwith the associated impacts on the budget of the National Health Service (NHS). Natural England believes that the countryside could, and should, play a bigger role in the response to these challenges. Making it easier to access these spaces either because they are closer to population centres, or open to more people will help us to meet these challenges. Natural England would like to see greater join up between the environment and health sectors to the mutual benefit of both

- **What are the necessary future land management interventions?**

It is difficult to describe the land management interventions that are likely to be required when so many aspects of environmental policy and regulation could change post Brexit and as society and technology advances. There is also considerable uncertainty as to how the agricultural and land management sector will respond to these changes. The Government's publication of a new Agriculture Bill⁸ provides an outline of its intentions.

Natural England supports the Government's intentions to link public subsidy for land ownership with the provision of public goods such as clean air and water, healthy soils, increased public access and measures to reduce flooding. This will be delivered through a new Environmental Land Management system. It is hoped that this new scheme will build upon previous schemes (such as Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and Environmental Stewardship/Countryside Stewardship (ES/CS)) which have played an important role in helping to create high quality areas for wildlife across large areas of Hampshire. The further linking of public funding with the delivery of public goods will mean we continue to build on the successes delivered through existing agri-environment schemes. Although there is uncertainty at this stage about the level of payments and the likely take up by farmers and land managers we hope to see an increase in the number of environmental enhancement measures deployed across Hampshire for the benefits to both wildlife and communities.

The challenge will be to better link those areas in agri-environment with the existing network of protected areas (and any newly created areas) to deliver an integrated network of areas rich for wildlife if we are to begin to reverse the decline in biodiversity. Taking a landscape-scale approach will help to balance the competing demands that are likely to play out.

There are 2 further trends emerging which we believe should be given greater consideration.

The first of these is rewilding; the concept of allowing nature to take control of the land management and set its own path. This has been pioneered locally on the Knepp Estate⁹ in West Sussex where

⁸ <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/agriculture.html>

⁹ <https://knepp.co.uk/home>

once intensively-farmed agriculture land has been allowed to revert to nature. This has resulted in significant increases in biodiversity whilst remaining a profitable and diversified farming business.

The second is species re-introductions, most notably beavers. Applications are being developed to reintroduce European beavers across many parts of the UK. Natural England has a statutory role in determining these applications and therefore does not have a view on the specific merits of any application however we recognise the increasing body of evidence which demonstrates the positive environmental effects that beavers can have (e.g. improved water quality, less flooding, improved biodiversity).

Natural England believes that both rewilding and species re-introductions should be in scope for thinking about how our countryside should look in the future and would encourage the Commission to consider this further through the Inquiry.

- **How can pollution be minimised (AQMA's linked to current transport pollution) and biosecurity enhanced?**

There are a number of persistent pollutants which are having detrimental effects both upon communities and upon the environment. We will leave it to others to outline the full range of issues but there are two areas upon which Natural England is focussing its work. Firstly the effects of nitrates and phosphates upon freshwater, estuarine and coastal habitats (eutrophication) and secondly the effects on habitats from NO_x and ammonia emissions resulting from traffic and agriculture.

Natural England believes efforts should be made to reduce pollution at source to a minimum however we recognise that is not always possible. The environment could play a more important role in helping to reduce pollution and more consideration should be given to finding natural means to reduce pollution levels.

It is well known the environment can be very effective at reducing pollution levels if located in the right location and present at a sufficient scale. Trees/woodland can reduce air pollution, especially particulate matter, as well as screen sound and light pollution. Wetlands are able to remove nitrates and phosphates from rivers. Shellfish can filter out pollutants from coastal waters making water clearer and cleaner. We have already described how natural capital can help decision-makers better understand the contribution ecosystem services make to our economy.

Many of these measures can be as effective as capital spending on infrastructure to achieve the same outcome. We are increasingly see organisations such as water companies (such as Southern Water and Portsmouth Water) invest in catchment management measures to improve water quality. Natural England welcomes this approach and would like to see more. Not only can this be a cost effective solution but it also results in an increase in biodiversity and can provide important areas for recreation.

- **What are the implications of a 'Natural Capital' approach to development and the principle of 'environmental net gain'?**

It is important to recognise the scale of the problem when responding to this question. The quality of Hampshire's (and the rest of the UK's) environment is declining. Not only is this an intrinsically bad thing, it also has strongly negative impacts upon both the economy and society (WWF – Living Planet

report. 2018¹⁰). The State of Nature report¹¹ (2016) outlines the scale of the problem. Between 1970 and 2013; 56 % of species have declined with 40 % showing moderate or strong declines. Of the 8000 red book species assessed in the report; 15 % were either extinct or facing extinction. The loss of biodiversity is continuing and many more species are now expected to be at risk of extinction. This is likely to become more prevalent as habitats become more fragmented and the effects of climate change continue to take their toll.

The principle of 'environmental net gain' is a response to the severe decline in biodiversity experienced across the UK. Previously aspirations have been to cause no harm to, or minimise the impact on the environment. As described above; this hasn't been effective at preventing further loss of biodiversity and certainly won't be sufficient to restore biodiversity.

There are now a number of policy drivers in place for both net gain and natural capital. They are described in the 25 YEP, and is now referenced in several places within the National Planning Policy Framework (most notably section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment). More locally; the Hampshire LNP have developed a planning policy framework and ecological network maps to help LPAs consider how they can implement environmental net gain in their strategic and their day to day decision-making.

Natural England strongly endorses the use of a natural capital approach and the principles of net gain. The use of natural capital and net gain are important new tools to help decision-makers address the loss of biodiversity. However they are likely to require significant uptake and implementation if they are to make a difference. Taking a natural capital approach will allow decision-makers to consider the full range of services provided by the natural environment which traditionally have been neither recognised nor valued. Once the value of these services is recognised decision makers should be able to prioritise and protect.

An example of this is the coastal defence role saltmarshes play on the Hampshire coast. It is well understood that the presence of saltmarsh can reduce the amount of coastal erosion thereby lowering the protection level hard defences might need to provide. By recognising the economic value the saltmarsh provides (in terms of pounds saved on the additional construction of coastal defences), decision makers are better able to understand the importance of these habitats and their contribution to the economy and society.

By applying natural capital across different habitats and species we should be able to build a much more detailed understanding of the economic benefits the natural world provides to Hampshire.

If we are to halt the loss of biodiversity (and all of the associated negative consequences) we must develop a better understanding of the economic benefits provided by the environment. Once understood, through the increased use of natural capital assessments, we can decide how to respond to better protect the contributions of ecosystem services. We should use the information to support the implementation of measures which will deliver a net gain in biodiversity. Natural England believes that implementing net gain doesn't need to incur additional costs and can often enhance a local area providing the types of green spaces that many communities are looking for.

Given the ongoing declines in biodiversity Natural England believes we should start using these approaches as soon as possible and should not wait until the methodology or aspirations are fully defined. However we recognise that we need to do it at a scale and pace that brings decision makers

¹⁰ https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1187/files/original/LPR2018_Full_Report_Spreads.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>

and communities along with us. We recommend that piloting it in a range of areas, on different types of decisions, might be a good way to start.

- **How can we make better sustainable use of the natural environment to improve our health and well-being, both mental and physical?**

There are a number of diseases related to our lifestyle which are having significant negative effects upon our health. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease and poor mental health are increasingly prevalent. Diabetes prescriptions alone now cost the NHS £1 billion a year¹². Around 1 in 4 people experience a 'significant' mental health problem in any one year in the UK today, with the overall economic and social costs of mental ill health in England, estimated at around £105 billion a year¹³. Natural England believes that facilitating and increasing access to the natural environment can play a key role to help people to live healthier, happier lives.

Our Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) report¹⁴ has been collecting data since 2009 and is the largest survey of its kind in the world. It shows that more and more people are visiting the natural environment, up from 54% of all adults in 2010 to 62% of all adults in 2018. This upward trend is true of all sectors of society. We know from our research that although people visit the natural environment for many reasons; their main motivation is for health and exercise. Natural England believes that for whatever reason people choose to visit the countryside, the benefits that they derive are important but it should be both mutually beneficial for people and the environment.

There is a significant body of scientific literature which shows that spending time outdoors can improve mental health and reduce incidence of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. If the natural environment is to play a greater role in remedying these health problems than we need to find a way to remove the obstacles (real or perceived) which prevent people from accessing these areas.

The planning system should continue to deliver a range of green spaces serving multiple purposes within (and close to) residential areas which are easy to access. This should deliver benefits for biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as for communities. It is important to provide a range of different environmental experiences as different people will want different things. Those areas used to exercise dogs are unlikely to be highly important for wildlife but can still make a contribution towards increasing biodiversity. Similarly there may be areas of high quality habitats where access should be highly managed to prevent causing disturbance to wildlife. We will need to find a broad range of solutions recognising the different preferences within communities, as well as the different demands the countryside is subject to.

Natural England would like to see greater join up between the environment and health sectors to the mutual benefit of both. This is increasingly important for children and we need to create more opportunities for them to spend time outdoors living happy and healthy lives.

2. Built environment

- **What constitutes sustainable built development for Hampshire in the future?**
 - **Location – South Hampshire cities, M/A27 corridor, MDAs, new settlements?**

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46139595>

¹³ <https://mhfaengland.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-headline-reports-and-technical-reports-2016-2017-to-2017-2018>

Given the housing allocations across Hampshire over the next 20 years; Hampshire County Council and the Local and Unitary Authorities have both a major challenge and significant opportunity to deliver new, and enhance existing, communities.

Natural England does not have a view on potential locations, however we would like to stress the importance of putting sustainability at the heart of development. At the design stage, new developments should seek to deliver a net gain in biodiversity and plan to create (or enhance existing) accessible natural green spaces. New developments should not exacerbate existing problems relating to poor air and water quality and work with natural processes to help ecosystem services deliver more for communities. This will help to create vibrant, attractive places to live and maintain the high quality environment which is such a key part of Hampshire's attractiveness.

Natural England and its Partners have demonstrated over the last 10 years that the environment needn't be a blocker to new development. Strategic planning solutions as Bird Aware Solent (Hampshire coastline)¹⁵ and Thames Basin Heaths (North Hampshire)¹⁶ have delivered cost effective environmental solutions to major issues such as recreational disturbance of birds whilst also providing developers with much needed clarity and certainty.

- **How will sustainable built development be planned for and delivered to meet the identified needs?**

Development will need to be planned earlier with increased join up between public and private sector (particularly utility providers such as Southern Water) and between different parts of local and national Government (such as Highways England).

We recognise the work that organisations such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) have done to co-ordinate and strategically address issues. We would like to see more collaboration and would encourage these (and other) groups to proactively integrate environmental considerations into their work programmes. Importantly, this could help to better deliver the types of communities and infrastructure Natural England believes Hampshire should aspire to have. Working more strategically will also make it easier and more cost effective to resolve complex issues around environmental impacts.

Strategic planning solutions such as Bird Aware Solent and Thames Basin Heaths have led the way nationally in showing how we can strategically work together to solve a complex multi-authority issue.

¹⁵ <http://www.birdaware.org/>

¹⁶ <https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/>

ANNEX 2

Natural England's role and remit

Natural England was established under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It is an independent statutory non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

The NERC Act states that this purpose includes:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- conserving and enhancing the landscape
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment
- promoting access to the countryside, open spaces and encouraging open air recreation
- contributing in other ways to social and economic wellbeing through management of the natural environment

Natural England has responsibility for ensuring that landowners and public bodies deliver objectives for European protected sites (Natura 2000 sites), Ramsar sites (internationally important wetland sites) and the requirements for achieving and managing favourable or recovering condition for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Natural England is also charged with helping to deliver the Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy which set out a bold ambition to "halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people". Delivery of objectives towards Biodiversity 2020 outcomes is complementary to, and in addition to the statutory duties toward biodiversity under the NERC Act (2006).

More recently Defra published its 25 Year Environment Plan which sets out the Government's goals for improving the environment within a generation, leaving it in a better state than we found it.

Complementary to these objectives Natural England published its strategy: 'Conservation 21: Natural England's conservation strategy for the 21st century'. This report sets out how Natural England will support the government's ambition for a healthy natural environment on land, and at sea, that benefits people and the economy.

Underpinned by our focus on delivering better long term outcomes for the environment by working towards shared visions with partners, Conservation 21's three guiding principles are:

- 1) Creating resilient landscapes and seas;
- 2) Putting people at the heart of the environment; and
- 3) Growing natural capital.

In support of this, our response to the Commission provides advice on how Hampshire can, by working with people and communities, support the conservation of biodiversity at a landscape scale and enhance natural capital.