

THE FORMATION OF NATURAL ENGLAND

1 SUMMARY

1.1 Wednesday 11th October saw the official launch of Natural England, a new and powerful Government agency that has been created to champion the natural environment. Natural England has been formed by bringing together English Nature, the landscape, access and recreation elements of the Countryside Agency and the environmental land management functions of the Rural Development Service.

2 WHAT IS NATURAL ENGLAND?

2.1 Natural England unites in a single organisation the responsibility for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes, as well as promoting greater access and recreation – helping people to enjoy more green spaces, both in the countryside and urban environments. As a delivery organisation, Natural England will provide incentives to farmers and land managers to manage their land in a more environmentally friendly way. It will also be a key regulator and the Government's independent watchdog to advise on how policies affect the natural environment.

2.2 The four key policy areas that Natural England will be engaged with are:-

- to conserve and enhance England's natural environment - including the landscape biodiversity, geology and soils, natural resources, cultural heritage and other features of the built and natural environment;
- landscape designations such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coasts. Natural England is also concerned with England's future landscapes, with involvement in planning policy and a range of environmental land management projects;
- the conservation and enhancement of the marine and coastal environment, and for promoting its sustainable use and opportunities for public enjoyment. Our work includes monitoring marine protected areas and creating new ones, working to improve coastal and marine biodiversity, and working with Government on the Marine Bill; and
- the promotion of access, recreation and public wellbeing for the benefit of today's and future generations.

2.3 Natural England will ensure that there is a strong evidence base to inform choices across society on the best ways to protect and enhance the natural environment.

2.4 Natural England is working towards the delivery of four strategic outcomes, which are intended to deliver on their purpose to conserve, enhance and

manage the natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations. These strategic outcomes are:-

- A healthy natural environment: England's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced;
- Enjoyment of the natural environment: more people enjoying, understanding and acting to improve, the natural environment, more often;
- Sustainable use of the natural environment: the use and management of the natural environment is more sustainable; and
- A secure environmental future: decisions which collectively secure the future of the natural environment.

2.5 The centrepiece of the launch was the announcement of four major campaigns that go to the heart of Natural England's purpose and will aim to inspire, motivate and engage people across England. Each campaign addresses one of the critical challenges that face the natural environment. Common to all will be connecting people and the natural environment.

2.6 The campaigns will be launched over the next two months and will focus on protecting the marine environment, preventative health solutions, farmers' stewardship of biodiversity and climate change; targets will include establishing a network of marine protected areas by 2012 and championing the provision of accessible green space within five minutes' walk of every home. It brings together advice and funding to promote farming and land management practices that benefit wildlife and encourage biodiversity.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The creation of Natural England is seen as an opportunity to strengthen and provide a better focus for the protection of the environment in its widest sense from coastlines and geological formations to wildlife and habitats, whilst at the same time enabling access and recreation.

4 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That the creation of Natural England as the new Government body intended to champion the protection of the natural environment be noted.

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Background Papers:-

None.

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