

From: Hilary Winter [<mailto:hilary.winter@devon.gov.uk>]

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Papers for the Natural England Board meeting to be held later this week are now on the website.

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/ourpeople/neboard/meetings/september2010/default.aspx

Key items from the papers are:-

Delivery on Outcome 2

Improved access opportunities for 200,000 people – Assessed as having a ‘red’ outlook at quarter one because NE had not yet collected data from projects that showed the extent to which levels of access predicted had been realised. This issue is now resolved and some initial sampling shows high levels of access arising from projects. Given these developments, outlook is now assessed as ‘green.’

Chief Executive's Report

This outlines a number of areas for potential joint working and sets out a move towards devolving activity to communities and arms length bodies.

"1.2.2 The Secretary of State wrote to Chair on 9 August setting out plans to deliver a step change in joint working, requesting that we treat this as one of our priorities and provide significant leadership of this initiative. Similar letters were sent to the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission. The request from Defra included the eight key areas of joint working and four areas for developing Big Society involvement.

1.2.3 Areas for joint working between environment bodies were:

1. Joined up design and delivery of land management schemes and advice.
2. Further collaboration on farm inspection work.
3. Options for simplifying the complexity of marine delivery landscape.
4. Joint environmental evidence programmes.
5. Single point of contact for statutory planning work.
6. Joint centres such as monitoring, permitting or planning.
7. Opportunities for joint working from the monitoring review.
8. More collaboration on climate adaptation work.

1.2.4 Areas for developing Big Society involvement in delivery of Defra's objectives and programmes.

1. Transfer of conservation land to Big Society organisations.
2. Transfer of other environmental functions from Arms Length Bodies to Big Society.
3. Without transferring whole functions, involving local communities and Big Society bodies more in contributing to Defra programmes.
4. Further development of Arms Length Bodies' volunteer programmes and encouraging use of the new Citizen Service programme for Defra's objectives.

1.2.5 Defra officials have scrutinised a wide variety of ideas affecting Arms Length Bodies and have presented these to the Ministerial Team. We are awaiting an announcement from Cabinet Office and Defra on the outcome of the Arms Length Body Review in October

1.2.6 We have begun to develop our thinking around a 'Third Sector Prospectus' to support us in a structured collaboration with a range of partners to deliver our public engagement objectives. These include the consideration of how the management and ownership of National Nature Reserves might be taken on by third parties. "

Natural England response to the Defra White Paper - the Natural Environment

The NE response to the Defra White Paper on the Natural Environment may be of particular interest. The Board paper only includes main themes at these stage and not the detail which will accompany the submission but it is noticeable that, whilst there is mention of the economic benefits of a healthy environment, access/recreation/health benefits are not specifically highlighted. There is a general comment, as below:-

"Greater public awareness of the value of, and care for, a healthy natural environment. People living and thriving in the natural environment and connecting with their local place and local communities empowered to take responsibility for the long term future of natural environment." http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/nebpu2203_tcm6-22420.pdf

Hilary Winter, Regional Coordinator, SW Region LAFs, Lucombe House, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW
Tel: 07837 171000