

### **Who decides what ecosystem services we need and where?**

Several very interesting questions are posed within this section, many of which we will soon be tackling ourselves. We were particularly interested to see the reference to the role of the voluntary sector in delivering public policy objectives over their own land. As paragraph 1.19 rightly states, the RSPB manages large areas of land; across the UK we manage 140,444 hectares of land for nature conservation on 203 reserves. As a nature conservation organisation, our primary objective for the management of these sites is their biodiversity interest, one of the key public policy objectives you refer to. At many of our reserves, the RSPB also invests substantial resources in encouraging and supporting recreation and education, which are also key public policy objectives. There are of course further public policy objectives that could be addressed on the RSPB's land holding, and we are investigating the synergies and trade offs of managing land for biodiversity alongside other public policy objectives, both on our own land and more widely.

Managing land for multiple benefits is not always straightforward, and often defined by site-specific conditions, but the potential benefits are great. An understanding of future weather patterns is essential if multiple objectives are to be successfully delivered into the future. Consideration of managing land for multiple public objectives highlights the need for larger areas of land to deliver public benefits, especially biodiversity. The tendency of the nature conservation sector to focus primarily on retaining and enhancing wildlife on their land holding is driven largely by the urgent need to protect the small and vulnerable populations of important species that remain, following historical losses. If these populations were more robust, for example because more land was available to support healthy populations elsewhere, this concern would be minimised and delivery of multiple objectives across a larger land holding would be considerably easier.

### **Who should we engage in new conversations and how?**

Again, several very interesting questions were raised in this section. One (very large!) stakeholder group that are often overlooked in consultation are those who depend on the ecosystem services supported by the natural environment, and enjoy the biodiversity it supports, but are only indirectly affected by policy decisions. For example, the identification of an area for built development in a Local Development Framework will affect landowners and local communities directly, and so they are consulted. However, the project will have wider implications for wider society - for example, any biodiversity gains or losses, carbon storage or emissions, and impacts on water resources - but as it is impossible to consult with 'wider society', they cannot play a role in stakeholder engagement. The cumulative impact of individual projects on the natural environment, and thereby the wide range of services it provides to wider society, can be considerable. The natural environment itself also lacks a direct voice. The RSPB aims to provide a 'voice for nature' in policy-making and implementation, both on the behalf of nature itself, and for wider society who benefit from it.

### **How can our use of land and water help tackle climate change?**

We welcome the consideration of the important role of land and water use in climate change mitigation. We also wish to bring to your attention the vital role that land use will have in assisting the adaptation to climate change of the natural environment and society in the UK. Historical emissions of greenhouse gases have already committed us to climate change, although our mitigation activities are essential to avoid 'dangerous climate change' that would make adaptation impossible. How society responds to the new challenge of adapting to climate change will shape how we use land in the UK, and it is essential that the needs of the natural environment be addressed. Without human intervention, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for much of the UK's wildlife to successfully adapt. The RSPB are in the process of completing a response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's study on 'Adapting the UK to Climate Change' which considers many of these issues, and we would be happy to provide this to you once complete.

Paragraph 3.15 raises the question as to whether existing legislation is flexible enough to cope with the new challenge of climate change. We consider the current legal and policy framework for biodiversity conservation (in particular the Nature Directives) can lead to flexible and dynamic conservation programmes if they are implemented in a purposive and

creative way. Legal advice to the RSPB, supported by its own analysis (attached to this email), demonstrates clearly that the Directives provide a workable framework to address climate change and act as a driver to deliver adaptive measures to sustain biodiversity into the 21st century. Therefore, while some adjustments will be needed in the way in which this framework is implemented, the underlying system is fit for purpose and can ensure species and habitats can adapt to climate change.

<<BD, ECOS package Sept05.pdf>>

It is important that the role of protected areas in the challenge to assist the adaptation of biodiversity to climate change is well understood. Firstly, studies show that protected areas are strongholds for wildlife. For many specialist species, they are crucial for their survival. They are powerhouses of species recovery and strongholds of productive populations. Adaptation to climate change for wildlife will be a step-by-step process, and each step will be dependent on the previous one. The richness of future biodiversity, in a changing world, will depend upon the diversity we conserve today.

Secondly, as land managed specifically for nature conservation, protected areas possess the key characteristics of land that biodiversity can thrive on in the UK. These include low nutrient status, clean water, protection from built development and cultivation amongst other. These characteristics will remain important as species move and communities of plants and animals change in the longer term. As climate envelopes for different species shift, where else in a landscape will specialist species be able to establish themselves?