

Alan Law, our Chief Officer for Strategy and Reform, recently commented that: "In this increasingly complex and transparent world, Natural England is uniquely positioned to make nature and the environment a recognised and valued national asset. We've got to make what we do relevant to the broader strategic ambition of the nation and of local communities. We will become less involved in telling people what they need to do and spend more time in explaining why it matters and how we can work together to build solutions."

Our conservation story in 2020 – rising to the challenges of a changing world

Our local delivery plans and focus areas reflect the biggest opportunities and threats that Natural England needs to influence in the coming years and will help to embed the Outcomes Approach in everything we do. As our emerging Conservation Strategy explains, we need:

- to work to create and maintain resilient landscapes/ecosystems on land and at sea;
- to put people at the heart of what we do by being open and engaging, by understanding the aspirations of local communities and by being more active in places where people live, work and relax;
- to make the case for the natural environment, to explain how it supports others' objectives, and to quantify and demonstrate its value to the economy and society;
- to develop shared plans for places that embed our vision for the natural environment alongside others' objectives;
- and, as a consequence, to change what we do and how we operate to enable us to achieve this.

These themes start to paint a picture of what we will be doing between now and 2020. Your work locally and nationally will add the colour to the picture and tell the real and convincing story of how Natural England is making a difference to nature, people and communities throughout England.

How should we change?

The shape, structures and balance of people and skills in the organisation will need to change as we rise to meet these challenges. Our reform work will provide the necessary tools, systems and support that we will need to operate.

The Natural England Board has discussed this recently and has advised on the changes we need to make to become a high performing organisation:

- focus decision-making and resources at the local level in response to local priorities in the area delivery plans;
- provide advice to government that is politically aware and based clearly on our local knowledge;
- make more proportionate use of our regulatory powers;
- develop (and recruit) the people and the skills we need for the future (staff who are technically expert, locally connected, risk- and data-literate, and highly flexible, and who understand what great customer service looks like);