

## **Natural Environment White Paper – Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee**

Evidence submitted by the Landscape Institute, 20 June 2011

### **The Landscape Institute**

The Landscape Institute (LI) is an educational charity and chartered body responsible for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for the benefit of the public. It champions well-designed and well-managed urban and rural landscape.

### **Reactions to the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)**

#### **1. Key elements of the NEWP which are supported**

1.1 The LI welcomes the recent publication of the NEWP as it sets out a strong vision for the natural environment. In particular, we support the following aspects:

- Recognition of the intrinsic value of nature, while acknowledging the need to properly value the economic and social benefits of a health natural environment;
- Commitment to a strategic approach in planning for nature within and across local areas;
- Retention of natural environment protection and improvement as a core objective within the planning system;
- Recognition of the importance 'landscape-scale' and multifunctional approaches to land use;
- Acknowledgement of the need for green infrastructure generally and, in particular, in urban areas in order to complete the links in our national ecological network; and
- Commitment to review how land-owners, managers and farmers are advised and incentivised to create a more joined-up approach to the natural environment.

#### **2. Particular sections of the NEWP which could be improved**

2.1 The definition of green infrastructure (page 31) would be improved if it included explicit reference to its multifunctional nature. This is a defining feature of the concept.

2.2 Paragraph 2.35 states that Government wants "...to encourage local authorities to promote multifunctional development so that we get the most from land". This is an admirable objective, yet the NEWP lacks detail as to how this will be achieved.

2.3 Paragraph 2.37 relates to the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF will be one of the most critical factors in delivering the aspirations of the NEWP. The final NPPF must therefore embed the promising vision set out in the NEWP. At present, paragraph 2.37 is weak on the importance between these two publications.

2.4 Paragraph 2.80 states that green spaces will “...be managed to provide diverse functions for the benefit of people and wildlife” yet it is unclear how Government intends to ensure that this happens.

**3. Any omissions from the NEWP which Defra should rectify**

3.1 It would have been helpful if the NEWP outlined how its content helps contribute towards implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ELC).

**4. Suggestions for issues the Committee may wish to include in terms of reference for a possible future Select Committee inquiry into detailed aspects of the NEWP**

4.1 The importance of the forthcoming NPPF in facilitating much of the vision contained within the NEWP should not be underestimated. A future Select Committee inquiry could usefully explore the ways in which the reformed planning system is assisting/facilitating/hindering in the delivery of the Government’s vision for the natural environment.