

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Questionnaire – 25 Year environment Plan

Landscape Institute's Response to the Questionnaire.

'Our vision is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it'

The Landscape Institute fully supports the Government's vision.

1. What would you like the environment to be like in 25 years?

1.1 The Landscape Institute assumes that the definition of 'environment' for the purposes of this vision includes the state of the seas, rivers, countryside, settlements including towns and cities and the associated elements of natural capital – air, water, soils, habitats and species. Critical to delivering this vision is a clear statement of the starting point and we ask which data sets will be a contributing information to help establish the baseline?

1.2 The Landscape Institute would like the quality of the environment to be transformed in the following way:-

- The cities, towns and villages are distinctive in character and contributing to the health and wellbeing of everyone – providing appropriate levels of open space, clean air, clean water, low levels of noise and light pollution. Places that are resilient to extreme weather events, places that are rich in wildlife, places that meet the specific needs of different parts of the community – the needs of children, the needs of the elderly and the needs of cultural diversity. Places that actively encourage social cohesion and positive social interaction, places that empower economic performance and attract visitors.
- The quality of the countryside is transformed and delivering – secure, sustainably produced food, clean water, clean air, restored soils (supporting optimum microbial and fungal populations for natural fertility), a countryside teeming with wildlife, resilient, distinctive variations in landscape character, a conserved historic environment, a modernised infrastructure making the countryside accessible for health and wellbeing. A countryside where woods and forests are managed and where a substantial increase in woodland cover has been achieved. A countryside where there is a continuation of a clear distinction between town and country.
- The seas surrounding Great Britain are free of physical debris and clear of pollution, supporting healthy populations of appropriate marine life.

2. How can this be achieved?

2.1 The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs adopts the following strategy:-

- (i) **Leadership and Best Practice** - Establishes a National Rural Land Management Policy setting the framework for delivery of the 25 year Environment Plan and leads the public sector in a new strategy of public intervention into land management and other policies for those areas directly under the influence of the Department.
- (ii) **The Government's Environmental Plan** - Secures a cross government and public sector commitment to improving the environment under the plan.
- (iii) **Alignment** - Empowers delivery of the plan by aligning all primary departmental activities across all public authorities with improvements to the environment in each sector to support statutory obligations of each service.
- (iv) **Smart Roll Out** – There are numerous project based examples of best practice where lessons have been learnt that are ready to be rolled out nationally. (Including many good examples funded by the Lottery Administrations) for example.
<http://www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk/html/index.php?page=projects&GreenInfrastructureValuationToolkit=true>
- (v) **Education and Communication** – Encourage 'the environment' to become the framework for cross curricula learning, including lifelong learning, to secure a shift in culture to achieve sustainable living standards.
- (vi) **Skills** – The skills are not there at a strategic level, in either the public or private sectors, to deliver the Environment Plan. Long term training for both sectors and short term mechanisms are needed to ensure access to all the necessary skills for delivering the improvements within the public sector – developing the 'intelligent client'.
- (vii) **Mechanisms** - A balanced strategy for delivery across all potential interventions such as through regulation, conditions of consent, tax relief, incentives, advice and others.
- (viii) **Collaboration** - Building a consortia approach to resource assembly and delivery across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- (ix) **Empowerment** - Empowering local communities to take direct action in securing improvements.
- (x) **Natural Capital Accounting and Audit** - Ensuring Treasury audits of Natural Capital Accounting to secure zero based budgeting in associated investment strategy. Develop model business cases and reporting mechanisms.
- (xi) **Lottery** - A 25 Year Environment Plan Challenge Lottery Fund.

3. What are your top priorities for the plan (both short and long term).

3.1 The top priority for action will be to shift perceptions, change attitudes and lead by example, in order to demonstrate a new emphasis is given to the importance of Landscape as it provides the framework for the 25 Year environment Plan. The public understand landscape, it provides the setting and context of all our lives and it is an asset that is shared by everyone. Appropriately structured and at reasonable cost

the landscape can deliver a transformation to environmental quality and a transformation to the quality of lives of everyone. The approach to achieving such transformation is as much about changes in management techniques as it is to capital works. It can deliver amongst many environmental outcomes:-

- Secure sustainably produced food.
- A multipurpose countryside.
- Clean air, clean water and restored soils everywhere.
- It can manipulate micro-climate for our benefit and build resilience to unpredictable climatic events.
- Reverse the decline in species diversity and the health of ecosystems of both town and country.
- Restore the distinctive variations in character that defines the regions of Great Britain in the world today.
- Celebrate our history through the conservation of the historic environment.
- Enhanced quality of the landscape can drive economic performance.
- Provides the framework for social cohesion and positive social interaction, especially in urban areas.
- It can transform the lives of our children by providing experiential learning resources, by providing opportunities for instinctive and primeval play, for reconnecting children with natural systems and reversing the trends around health and wellbeing.
- It can transform the lives of the elderly and the unwell.

3.2 These are huge challenges that can be practically delivered when brought together, as a collective outcome of the plan. This landscape led plan would be a world leader.

3.3 In the short term the Institute recommends that a top priority is given to the transformation of the approach to farming to achieve sustainable food production and a multi-functional countryside. In addition the Department can give support to others to help deliver aspects of the Plan immediately such as:-

- Support actions to improve the state of childhood and environmental education through the voluntary sector.
- Support the development of a model Landscape Led Local Plan which encapsulates aspects of the Environmental Plan to assist the private sector delivery through the Planning System.
- Support the strategy by the LI and CIEEM to ensure that all Local Authorities are equipped to act as the 'intelligent client' in commissioning delivery of the Environment Plan through the private sector.

4. What are the key outcomes/goals/objectives that should be included and how should they be measured?

For the Countryside

4.1 All farmland delivers sustainably produced food measured by the quality of water in the aquifers and rivers, quality of the air (where all emitted climate change gases are a pollutant), quality of the soil – depth, microbial content, structure, carbon content and fertility dependant solely on natural and organic systems. The agricultural chemical industry has failed to fully appreciate the unintended consequences of all artificial stimulants and oppressors. The consequences have been devastating and largely hidden from the wider public.

- All farmland delivers resilience to extreme climatic events measured by the extent of biodiversity, health of ecosystems and catchment management.
- All farmland delivers the sequestration of carbon measured by the carbon content of soils and biomass.
- All farmland supports the distinctive and diverse landscape for public enjoyment measured against the National Character Map of England.
- Farmland in the urban fringe is supported to be accessible for health and wellbeing of local communities measured by the degree of accessibility.

For our Towns and Cities

4.2 Every settlement is a safe and healthy place to live and work. Each one with its own distinctive landscape framework delivering clean air, clean water, restored soils, teeming with wildlife, accessible open spaces for everyone – young and old, inclusive to all. A recognised standard of between 6 – 10 acres of landscape infrastructure per 1,000 population should be adopted as common practice in all new and existing settlements. A landscape framework that delivers environmental outcomes including the following:-

- Forest framework to urban infrastructure, including housing, for micro-climate, air filtration, oxygen provision, wildlife, carbon capture, air coolant and landscape quality.
- Quality open spaces from private gardens, pocket parks and public parks to connect society with food growing, open water and sustainable drainage, wildlife, resilience, social development, physical and mental health.
- Transformed school landscapes for experiential learning, social development, play, connecting young people with natural systems and driving improvements to health and wellbeing.

4.3 Establishing a baseline to measure outcomes will have to draw on existing analysis of health and levels of satisfaction alongside economic performance however this approach should not exclude a mixture of professional and layperson judgement. The environment is so interconnected that certainty is probably unachievable.

5. How should we go about achieving our improved environment?

- **What role do you see Government and for others (others include councils, businesses, environmental organisations, the wider public.**
- **What part could you and your organisation play?**

5.1 The answer to the first bullet point has been summarised in the answer to question 2 above.

5.2 The answer to the second bullet point includes the following strategic observation –

The Landscape Institute is the professional organisation representing 5,500 Landscape Scientists, Landscape Planners, Landscape Architects and Landscape Managers spread across both the private and public sectors. The Landscape profession's main function is to transform the environment through change and sustainable management. Its members are highly trained in biological and social sciences and the arts – their focus is on delivering multi-functional and healthy landscapes for everyone. The profession is uniquely positioned to support the Government in the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Landscape Institute makes the following offer to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to assist in delivering the Environment Plan:-

- Continue to support the integration of the Environment Plan with Food and Farming.
- Empower its members to participate in delivery of the plan through its formal education review and specific CPD courses.
- Prepare a best practice model – Landscape Led Local Plan - incorporating the Government's agenda.
- Advance a strategy to equip local government in helping the delivery of the plan locally by working collaboratively with the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management to develop an 'Intelligent Client' function in the commissioning of the private sector delivery.
- Encourage all its members when developing private sector commissioning briefs to connect directly with the Environment Plan to secure private sector support.
- To work collaboratively with the Institute of Place Management to secure the transformation and management of city and town centres.
- To work collaboratively with the Learning Through Landscape's Trust to secure the transformation of all 37,000 school grounds to help transform the lives of children and in particular to provide experiential learning resources to engage young people in understanding what the Government is delivering through the plan.

- Three Big Ideas – **The 50/50 Act of Parliament** – reporting back on the shared responsibility for transforming the environment and independent scrutiny of progress of the 25 year Environment Plan by successive governments, bottom up driving top down. **Paid Leadership** – Every senior manager paid by public funds have a new clause in their job description committing them to environmental action aligned with their primary function. – **Citizen Science and Schools** – Pulsating environmental action through the community, pulsating environmental culture through future generations.

6. What are the barriers that might stop you making environmental changes and how could these be overcome?

6.1 There are two strategic barriers that prevent widespread investment into landscape – the external environment. The first of these can be identified by the growth over time of environmental legislation and regulatory disciplines, built over the years on a topic by topic basis. The European Union concentrated on a range of specific topics such as water or biodiversity - the threat to ecosystems from development and land management activities. In reality many of these topics are intrinsically linked and have been transposed into UK legislation. The only statutory reference for landscape in the UK are those built round protected landscapes of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A holistic approach to transforming the environment might usefully explore more emphasis to be given in legislation and in regulatory procedures, to the landscape of both town and country. The landscape Institute fully recognises the importance of restoring an equitable balance between wealth generation and public expenditure. At times of austerity both the private and public sectors focus on statutory responsibilities, consequently too little regard is given to the landscape – the one topic that brings the environmental agenda together and the one topic the public understand.

6.2 The second barrier is linked to the first and some progress has been made by the Natural Capital Committee to address it – the failure of understanding the cost benefit of investing into the landscape. The health of the landscape depends on clean air, clean water, biologically rich soils, healthy ecosystems to provide for the needs of communities and society as a whole. The Committee will only succeed in accounting for these crucial elements if the process has been audited by the Treasury to give licence to building budgets from a zero base. Only then will these essential assets obtain the necessary investment status that is needed.

6.3 To overcome these barriers the Government needs to consider how to strengthen the legislative support for the landscape in its entirety to encompass the elements of environmental topics. Also we need to find a way for society to express its concern for the shared landscape by way of monetary values.

7. What would incentivise you to make environmental changes? In what circumstance would these work best?

7.1 The members of the Landscape Institute are completely focussed on the continuous improvement of the environment as a lifelong commitment. Their contribution to environmental quality, to benefit everyone, is best achieved by greater emphasis being given to the importance of the landscape – its policy and planning, of both town and country.

8. What's the right geographical scale for making decisions? What is best delivered locally and what nationally?

8.1 The Landscape Institute recommends the Government adopt two different strategies one for rural areas and one for urban areas. For rural areas the focus should be on land based characteristics and for urban environments the focus should be on communities. The reasons for this is that for rural areas the dominating activity that drives the degradation of the environment is the unintended consequences of modern agriculture – the solutions are best resolved at a landscape scale. However there is a need to introduce public accountability for public investment into rural areas and there are many consequences impacting on urban areas from rural land management that also requires public involvement. For urban areas degradation of the environment is driven by the inadequacies of development and place management – the solutions are best resolved in partnership with local communities.

Rural Environmental Change

8.2 The Landscape Institute recommends that for rural areas (80% of the country) the Government prepare a National Rural Land Management Policy which sets the brief for the 25 Year Environment Plan. That policy and plan is articulated at a landscape scale making use of the 23% of land designated as protected landscapes and the remainder of the country using the National Character Map prepared by Natural England. Individual Character Areas or a multiple of them. The reason for this is that these areas can be described scientifically as they represent variations in the landscape created by human intervention on natural systems. As a consequence desired change can be easily achieved by targeting specific outcomes to meet the individual circumstances of the land. The most effective and efficient way of achieving the desired outcomes. At a landscape scale individual farm plans can be prepared in response, around which a contract between the farming industry and the public investment can be made to deliver the Environment Plan. At the same time the administrations for the protected landscapes can provide the framework for accountability and harness support from across the private, public and voluntary sectors in support of the Plan. For the remainder of the country Joint Advisory

Committees for each or multiple of Character Areas could provide the accountability and partnership in delivering the Plan.

Urban Areas and the Environment Plan

8.3 The Landscape Institute recommends that for urban areas the Government publishes an inspirational vision for urban living and place making as a catalyst to influence direct action by local authorities and local communities. Ownership of the vision should be achieved by inviting contributions to an online survey from across all communities. This is a critical stage to ensure that the public's interpretation of what 'leave the environment in a better state' means for them. By publishing a vision for urban living the Government would be establishing at the outset that transformation has to be a collective responsibility throughout the public, private and voluntary sectors. The publication of such a vision would be a statement of intent by the Government that it will proceed to use its influence over the life of this parliament to refine interventions including investment strategies to deliver the vision through the Environment Plan.

8.4 The scale for assembling collaboration will vary but for large urban conurbations it is recommended that a framework of urban villages might be considered as the best way of securing community involvement. Delivery is best managed through local government.

9. How could local level ownership (and delivery) of this plan be better driven? Who should be the convenor and final decision maker at a local level?

9.1 For the transformation of the environment in rural areas local ownership of the Management Plan at a landscape scale should be through the administrations of protected landscapes as they already have a statutory duty to prepare Management Plans for their areas. For all other rural areas Management Plans for each Character Area or multiple of Character Areas, ownership of the plan should be by a modern Joint Advisory Committee. Each plan should be signed off by the Secretary of State as the delivery will be through the various Government Agencies but accountable to the local committees (NP Authorities, Conservation Boards, Joint Advisory Committees). It is recommended that this new way of working should be rolled out slowly and piloted. Ultimately, if all parties agree, the scheme of delegation set out in the NERC Act might be implemented with the passing of powers and resources to Local Joint Committees but a final decision on this level of delegation does not need to be made now. Protected Landscapes administrations have already declined the financial administration but it should be recognised that this might be in response to problems associated with disallowance and EU funding rules. The Landscape Institute is recommending a far simpler administrative system. The convenor and final decision maker should be the local administration once the Sec of State has

signed off the management Plan. Local delivery and building collaborative working solutions are best organised locally.

9.2 For urban areas the plan is best driven by the local authority which should take responsibility as the convenor and final decision maker once the plan has been signed off by the Secretary of State.

10. Where should we focus our international environmental efforts?

10.1 For rural areas we are suggesting that there is a new emphasis to be given to sustainable food production, terminating all the unintended consequences of current farming practices – in particular the pollution of aquifers and rivers, the emissions of nitrous oxide from nitrate applications, the destruction of soil quality, the devastating loss of biodiversity and the perilous state of ecosystems, the erosion of the historic environment and the loss of distinctiveness and landscape quality. Public investment in support of the farming industry is essential to make the transformation over the plan period. However the freedom to adopt sustainability standards may be interrupted by having to follow EU methods to ensure a ‘level playing field’ in trade negotiations, this must be resisted. Until we leave the EU the priority is to ensure the UK is free to adopt better standards in environmental management without any trading constraints.

10.2 For all other environmental issues the Landscape Institute recommends that the Government concentrates on international research and communications around best practice solutions to shared environmental problems.

11. Our Secretary of State has said he has no intention of weakening the environmental protections we inherit from the EU, he wants to be ambitious and innovative in how we drive improved environmental outcomes. What regulatory improvements could help deliver that?

11.1 The Landscape Institute welcomes the statement of intent by the Secretary of State about environmental protection which is a critical consideration when scrutinising development and land management impacts. However the Environment Plan is about transforming and moving forward to meet the needs of society in the future and we recommend that a new emphasis on Landscapes for Tomorrow should be the overarching improvement in a refinement of regulatory and legislative procedures. We urge the Government to adopt Landscape-led strategies as the framework for the delivery of Natural Capital improvements and for the provision of multi-functional Landscape Infrastructure, to meet the diverse and extensive needs of everyone. We envisage a landscape framework that recognises the symbiotic relationship between town and country and places a new focus on resilience and sustainability.

12. Do you have any examples of good practice in environmental protection and enhancement (including where government have intervened) that you believe could successfully be applied more widely (if so please send the information to the 25 Year Plan Team).

12.1 The Landscape Institute and its members have numerous examples of good practice in environmental protection and enhancement, including - policy development, establishing effective delivery mechanisms and empowering communities. When the time is right for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to receive targeted examples of good practice the Institute will invite its members to help identify such examples.

**Landscape Institute
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