

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE BRIEFING NOTE

25 YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

House of Lords Debate

“Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan” (Lord Gardiner of Kimble)

Monday 29 January



Background:

- The Countryside Alliance welcomed the publication of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan on 11 January 2018.
- The Plan is ambitious, both in the number of policy areas it covers, and in attempting to provide a framework for environmental policy over the next quarter of a century. It will provide a useful benchmark for assessing action on the environment by this and future governments although further, and more detailed work, is required in key policy areas such as agriculture and fishing and this must be a priority for the Government.
- We recognise that the Plan provides a framework for policy and much of the impact will be seen in the detail to follow which we will scrutinise carefully.
- We welcome this debate as an important opportunity to consider the principles that should underpin environment policy and how these should be implemented.

Countryside Alliance Position:

- The Countryside Alliance fully supports the goals of the Plan, particularly “*enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment*” and seeing “*thriving plants and wildlife*”, and we look forward to working with the Government to help achieve these objectives.
- The Plan “*calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first*”. Whilst we support attempts to place the environment at the heart of government policy, it is equally important that rural communities are not overlooked. The Government must acknowledge the vital role of people who farm, fish, and shoot in environmental work, and work with them in delivering the goals of the Plan.
- People are at the heart of delivering policy and it is disappointing that the relationship between rural communities and the natural environment has not been properly recognised within the Plan. The countryside is a place of great beauty and a habitat for wildlife, but it is also a place of work and home to millions of people. Rural communities will be key to delivering much of the Plan and must be fully engaged.
- There is a section in the Plan on restoring vulnerable peatlands (p. 44) and the delivery of a new framework for peat restoration in England. Whilst we welcome the recognition of the importance of peatland habitat, it is disappointing that there is no mention of the positive work already being done by grouse moor managers across the country to restore peat bogs. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Peatland Programme was awarded the Climate Change Award at the Durham Environment

Awards 2015; their Management Plan for 2014-2019 recognises that “*sound grouse moor management can contribute significantly to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.*” An England Peat Strategy will be published in late 2018 as part of the Environment Plan and there must be an opportunity for those involved in the management of moorland to contribute to this work.

- There is a chapter in the Plan on recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes (p. 56) both of which are noble aims but there is little detail about who is going to deliver this. There is no mention of the fact that it is on land managed for shooting where you are likely to find the highest levels of biodiversity and many of our most endangered birds such as curlews, lapwings, and golden plover. A Nature Recovery Network is to be created as part of the Environment Plan and this must seek to work with, and support, the good work already being done by gamekeepers and other land managers as well as identifying new opportunities.
- There are many different types of conservationists and it is vital that the Government creates a policy framework for the environment that enables all of them to contribute their expertise and experience.
- In attempting to be as comprehensive as possible the Plan lacks detail about how the objectives are going to be delivered and by whom. The Government must work with all of those involved in the management of the countryside otherwise the aspirations for improvement of our natural environment will fail to become a reality. It is vital that delivery involves working with rural communities not imposing solutions on them.

Facts and Figures:

- Shooting and angling have huge potential to contribute to environmental work, including achieving the objectives of the Plan, as well as being of huge importance to the economy of many rural areas.

Shooting

- The contribution of shooting to the UK economy is valued at £2 billion (GVA) according to a 2014 report¹ carried out by the Public and Corporate Economic Consultants² (PACEC) on behalf of a number of shooting organisations. The study found that:
 - Shooting is involved in the management of two-thirds of the rural land area.
 - Two million hectares are actively managed for conservation as a result.
 - £250 million is spent each year on conservation by people who shoot.
 - 3.9 million work days are spent on conservation – the equivalent of 16,000 full-time jobs.
 - At least 600,000 people shoot (live quarry, clay pigeons, targets) and at least 1.6 million people shoot live quarry with airguns.

Angling

- Angling is worth more than £3 billion to the UK economy and the rod licence raised nearly £23 million last year for the Environment Agency to use for management of inland water.

¹ PACEC, 2014, The Value of Shooting - The Economic, Environmental and Social Contribution of Shooting Sports to the UK

² Carried out on behalf of the Countryside Alliance, the Country Land and Business Association and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, in consultation with the Game Conservancy Trust
Countryside Alliance Briefing Note – 25 Year Environment Plan
House of Lords Debate, 29 January 2018

- The Environment Agency (Economic Evaluation of Inland Fisheries) in 2007 found that “*freshwater angler gross expenditure across the whole of England and Wales was £1.18 billion*”.³
- A Defra survey conducted in 2012 on the economic and social value of recreational sea angling showed that the direct spend by recreational sea anglers in England and Wales had increased to over £2 billion total spending, and sea angling supported more than 23,000 jobs (these figures include the contributions of the direct and indirect effects of angling).⁴
- Nearly four million days of sea angling took place in England in 2012 and between 1,000 - 4,000 angling trips are enough to generate one full time equivalent job per year.⁵

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³ Environment Agency, 2007, Economic Evaluation of Inland Fisheries, p51

⁴ Defra, 2013, Sea Angling 2012 – a survey of recreational sea angling activity and economic value in England, p3

⁵ Defra, 2013, Sea Angling 2012 – a survey of recreational sea angling activity and economic value in England, p1
Countryside Alliance Briefing Note – 25 Year Environment Plan
House of Lords Debate, 29 January 2018