

Link suggestions on the *Making Space for Nature* recommendations for identifying and protecting ecological networks

Link brings together over 30 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic and the marine environment and biodiversity. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK and manage 690,000 hectares of land.

This paper has been prepared by Link members, including various working groups and the outcomes from specific workshops. These are Link's suggested actions for implementing the recommendations set out in Sir John Lawton's *Making Space for Nature*. We believe that progress against these actions will be a measure of the success for implementing *Making Space for Nature* as outlined in the Natural Environment White Paper.

Column 1 is the Lawton recommendations, column 2 includes Link's suggestions for implementation, and column 3 relates to the relevant priority actions as outlined in *Biodiversity2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*.

This document will be reviewed periodically and is supported by the following 18 Link organisations;

- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation
- Campaign for National Parks
- The Grasslands Trust
- Friends of the Earth England
- The Mammal Society
- Open Spaces Society
- People's Trust for Endangered Species
- Plantlife
- Pond Conservation
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Salmon & Trout Association
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Woodland Trust
- WWF-UK

Lawton recommendation	Link suggestions for implementation	Biod 2020
<p>Overarching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential to identify a national framework for ecological networks and how that will be achieved through local delivery and national support; the framework should include cross-departmental working, and a supportive statement in the NPPF. • Success in creating ecological networks needs to be measured and monitored, by defining clear objectives and testing performance of initiatives against these objectives, which should include halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020 (thereby linking through to Section 41 species and habitats). • Government and its agencies should retain the principle that priorities are firstly towards habitat maintenance, then restoration and finally creation in the establishment of ecological networks; an assessment of actual need should be made on a sub national area basis. 		
<p>Recommendation 1. Local authorities should ensure that ecological networks, including areas for restoration, are identified and protected through local planning. Government should support local authorities in this role by clarifying that their biodiversity duty includes planning coherent and resilient ecological networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Planning Policy Framework should require local authorities to map out ecological networks within their local area, in liaison with Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) where these exist and with support from national organisations. • The Government should ensure that the Localism Bill’s ‘duty to cooperate’ explicitly mentions biodiversity and the natural environment because local authorities need to operate across boundaries at a landscape scale to identify and protect ecological networks. • The identification of ecological networks in local plans by local authorities should build on existing spatial plans for the natural environment and ensure that these fully take account of a) existing protected sites and landscapes, Section 41 priority species and habitats¹, Local Wildlife Sites and the Green Belt; and b) areas for habitat restoration and/or habitat creation as is appropriate within any given landscape². • The NPPF should require local authorities to prepare policies to afford protection to areas for environmental restoration as part of ecological networks. • Government should strengthen the biodiversity duty and its implementation. The link between biodiversity and ecological networks should be made. 	3.4

¹ NERC Act 2006 species and habitats of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England

² Species/habitat/landscape character spatial representation within local authority planning systems: i) requires opportunity for such information to form part of planning process, as reference source for decision-making; ii) needs to include opportunity to upgrade information as knowledge improves; iii) decisions on which elements of species/habitat/landscape to include (e.g. national priorities + special local interest)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every public body should identify a senior person with responsibility for ensuring biodiversity conservation is delivered. For instance each local authority declares ownership of the biodiversity duty by appointing an elected member to oversee its implementation working in partnership with local partners. • Local implementation of ecological network planning should be linked in to the national framework (England Biodiversity Strategy delivery plan) and be supported by accessible data and expertise. • Central government should hold local authorities to account for the effective implementation of ecological networks and require local authorities to publish their progress. 	
<p>Recommendation 2. Planning policy and practice should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide the strongest protection to internationally important sites and strong protection from inappropriate development to SSSIs. • Provide greater protection to other priority habitats and features that form part of ecological networks, particularly Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland and other priority BAP habitats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NPPF should continue to provide the strongest protection to internationally important sites and strong protection from inappropriate development to SSSIs • CLG should ensure that the NPPF includes policies for the protection of the natural environment as a whole, including, but not limited to Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland and other BAP habitats, and Section 41 species populations. • See recommendation 22 on biodiversity offsets • The new Local Green Space designation, set out in the consultation draft NPPF, is a vehicle for achieving the second part of recommendation 2. Green Belt policy is the model the designation can be applied through preparing local or neighbourhood plans. This prevents development that would be considered harmful to the purposes of designating the site and ensuring permanent protection (meaning beyond the life of the plan). Link believes that the new Local Green Space designation should have the same flexibility of use as Metropolitan Open Land in London, i.e. it can be applied to large as well as small areas of land, contrary to the consultation draft NPPF. • In addition the draft NPPF says the new Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces (page 37), and the impact assessment says the presumption in favour of development will ensure that the new designation does not restrict development (page 81). Link believes the criteria need to be amended to ensure designations can actually be made. 	3.4
<p>Recommendation 3. Ecological Restoration Zones (ERZs) need to be established that operate over large, discrete areas within</p>	<p>Nature Improvement Areas (originally known as ERZs) should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent one part of the step-change solution required. NIAs should sit alongside other landscape scale initiatives and as part of local ecological networks across England. 	1.1

<p>which significant enhancements of ecological networks are achieved, by enhancing existing wildlife sites, improving ecological connections and restoring ecological processes. We further recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERZs should be proposed and implemented by consortia of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and voluntary conservation organisations, supported by national agencies. • To start and support this process, and recognising current financial constraints, we also recommend resources be provided, which can be accessed through a competition, to implement 12 ERZs in the next three years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to deliver national and local ambitions for the natural environment for the purpose of securing the conservation status of our most vulnerable wildlife (Section 41 species and habitats) alongside the co-delivery of ecosystem processes, ecosystem services and access for people where appropriate, within ecologically sound landscape units. • Be identified and taken forward by local consortia composed of NGOs, statutory agencies, local authorities, local businesses, landowners and individuals. Be recognised in the NPPF and Local Plans • Be supported by place-based natural environment information, building on existing habitat and biodiversity data and maps, formed by integrating local and national data sources to enable local consortia to set their objectives in a national context. • Incorporate a requirement to monitor and report on progress toward local and national species and habitats ambitions at all spatial scales, through information systems managed by Natural England. • Facilitate the local integration of a range of delivery mechanisms, policies and funding which affect the way land is used and managed, to solve issues such as habitat fragmentation, water quality, flood risk management and species loss. • Be provided with additional national funds toward delivery and provide support for implementation through better alignment of statutory agency resources and programmes. They should not soak up a disproportionate amount of national funding (particularly agri-environment). The allocation of national funding should continue to be based on a prioritisation of the features (such as species, habitats, historic environment features etc) to be protected. Areas that contain these features but are outside NIAs should not be at a disadvantage when it comes to funding. • Provide opportunities to explore new innovative funding mechanisms, such as Payments for Ecosystem Services and biodiversity offsetting, to help secure gains in the longer term • Be informed and re-invigorated by a review of the NIA competition winners after their initial first 3 years. Further tranches of NIAs should follow in 2014 and 2017, building on lessons learnt from the first tranche 	
<p>Recommendation 4. Public bodies and statutory undertakers planning the management of water resources should:</p>	<p>To make space for water and wildlife along rivers and around wetlands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra should incentivise land management improvement projects through the Periodic Review to ensure pollution is tackled at source, and not depend through expensive end-of-pipe solutions. 	<p>3.6</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make space for water and wildlife along rivers and around wetlands; • restore natural processes in river catchments, including in ways that support climate change adaptation and mitigation; and • accelerate the programme to reduce nutrient overload, particularly from diffuse pollution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra should ensure a statutory framework for catchment scale management through existing CAP mechanisms to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Robust and improved implementation/enforcement of existing cross compliance conditions that contribute to resource protection and improved water quality ➤ HLS targeting statements that include resource protection priorities. ➤ Encourage the uptake of ELS options for farms operating near waterbodies to ensure resource protection measures are implemented at the right scale and location in response to farm level conditions. ➤ Ensure HLS embeds resource protection delivery alongside other priority outcomes such as biodiversity. ➤ Make full use of national envelopes to target resource protection action to key areas which complement existing mechanisms e.g. supporting delivery of capital works. • To restore natural river catchments processes,: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Government should ensure priority is given to funding Flood and Coastal Erosion Management (FCERM) schemes that work with or restore natural fluvial and coastal processes ➤ Government should bring forward regulations and guidance required to make the Sustainable Urban Drainage elements for the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) operational. ➤ The forthcoming Water White Paper should set clear objectives for retrofitting SuDs to households and business by 2012 ➤ Extend the catchment management approach to all river systems and ensure subsequent plans integrate flood risk management, land drainage, impoundment removal, fish passage and hydropower schemes to maximise riverine connectivity. • To accelerate the nutrient overload reduction requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enforcement and monitoring to ensure baseline compliance with cross compliance ➤ Regulations to ensure foul and surface water connections for domestic and industrial water <i>appliances</i> are colour coded to help avoid misconnections by 2012 ➤ <i>100% coverage of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones in the forthcoming review of Nitrate Directive implementation.</i> ➤ A ban on phosphorus in all domestic and commercial cleaning products by 2015 ➤ Government to use the Forthcoming Water White paper to set out plans to designate 	
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	<p>waters at high risk from diffuse pollution as candidate Water Protection Zones by 2012 and regulate if voluntary action fails to meet required standards by 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra should also restore clean water to the landscape by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Developing policies which promote the creation of new clean water bodies throughout the landscape, particularly through catchment management planning processes ➢ Creating new networks of unpolluted water bodies to increase the extent and density of high quality freshwater habitat available to freshwater plants and animals 	
<p>Recommendation 5. Authorities responsible for measures to reduce the risks from coastal erosion and flooding should do so in ways that enhance ecological networks where possible. This can be achieved by taking full account of the natural dynamism and functioning of the coast, thereby allowing wildlife and habitats to move and evolve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project appraisal guidance used by Government and its agencies to direct funding of coastal defence and management should prioritise action that enhances ecological networks. • National and Local Flood Risk Strategies should do more to emphasise the need to enhance ecological networks and the positive role FCERM can play in doing so. • Section 41 species occurring in coastal habitats should have their conservation needs incorporated into planning for coastal erosion and flooding. 	3.7
<p>Recommendation 6: Government should produce a strategy to ensure that we protect and secure multiple benefits from our carbon-rich soils and peatlands, and maximise their contribution to ecological networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra should ensure that carbon-rich (section 41) habitats are maintained and protected through the England Biodiversity Strategy (targets to maintain, restore and create peatlands, salt marsh, species-rich grassland and woodland). • Government should ensure that all relevant measures available through the CAP are fully implemented in England to secure appropriate management of carbon rich soils • Government should cease funding capital and revenue funding of land drainage schemes on deep peat. • Forestry Commission and Natural England should set up and implement an England wide monitoring scheme of carbon-rich habitat extent and quality. • Restoration requires capital investment that is targeted at 'restorable' areas with greatest potential benefit across all objectives (ecology and hydrology). Linkages with water companies should be increased e.g. SCAMP: marrying together conservation of peatlands and water quality. • Government should lead phasing out of peat use in horticulture through policy aimed at: 	1.1

	local authorities by 2013; amateur gardening sector by 2016 and professional horticulture by 2020. Any voluntary approach should be reviewed within 5 years at the latest and regulations brought in if progress is lagging.	
Recommendation 7. Responsible authorities should take greater steps to reconnect people to nature by enhancing ecological networks within urban environments, including wildlife-friendly management of green spaces, and by embedding biodiversity considerations in the need to adapt to climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities should deliver the management of green spaces through best practice³, which takes account of protection for Green Infrastructure in the planning process and also seeks to increase community engagement. Designation of Local Green Spaces (see above) should include biodiversity-rich areas that are not “classed as green” space (such as some sites which may be classed as ‘brownfield’), recognise opportunities for good greenspace management and for climate change mitigation and adaptation (e.g. species support, urban cooling, flood alleviation). Also see recommendation 2 (use of LGS to deliver protection for priority habitats outside the SSSI network) and 21 (linear habitats). 	2.1
Recommendation 8. Public bodies owning land which includes components of England’s current or future ecological network should do more to realise its potential, in line with their biodiversity duty. Further, before disposal of any public land, the impact on the ecological network should be fully evaluated. Where such land is identified as having high wildlife value (existing or potential) it should not be disposed of unless its wildlife value is secured for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector land should be used as exemplars of integrating management and implementing policies to deliver for biodiversity, landscape and access within ecological networks. Where there are sales of public land proposed the following key tests must be adhered to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There should be no net loss for nature/ heritage conservation or public access The capacity of civil society should be enhanced Protection of natural and public value <p>Furthermore:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The government should screen all proposed land sales to identify those which hold high public heritage value The freehold of public land of high conservation value should be retained by the State, or vested in a third-sector body with objectives matched to the conservation of its natural environment value 	1.1

³ Local authorities need to recognise the benefits of managing green spaces in ways that are beneficial to biodiversity (e.g. reducing mowing of grass-covered areas increases biodiversity whilst saving costs); the “poor relations” (e.g. cemeteries and allotments) to tradition green infrastructure should be valued for their biodiversity and community engagement potential; The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) should be an aspirational guide; need to recognise the importance of environmental/ ecological education

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. There should be sponsored sale of non-designated land with recognised public benefit; 4. There should be open market sale of public land of low heritage value 5. Disposal conditions should provide for enhanced engagement with local people and communities. 6. Funding should be provided by the State appropriate to the delivery of outcomes identified 	
<p>Recommendation 9. The government should ensure that the remaining areas of high conservation value that currently are not well protected are effectively safeguarded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of high conservation value should be defined as sites supporting Section 41 priority habitats and significant populations of Section 41 priority species. • Statutory bodies should provide, or facilitate the provision of, information and advice to enable adaptive land management on areas of high conservation value to take account of: a) Section 41 species and habitats; b) the role of a site within the context of developing an ecological network; c) supporting ecological processes and functions; and d) known climate change impacts. Defra should develop ways to report on the collective contribution of non-designated sites to national conservation objectives under Section 41, and to the delivery of ecosystem services as identified in the NEA. • Habitats that cannot be readily recreated (e.g. ancient woodland, species rich grassland, peatland) must be afforded statutory protection and/or protection through the planning process. • Natural England should improve targeting of AES payments towards sites supporting Section 41 species and habitats. • Private landowners that are managing high conservation value areas should be able to receive funding/grants through the Green Investment Bank. • Defra should improve the structure, implementation and enforcement of EIA regulations to better protect unimproved pasture and uncultivated land from damage. 	1.1
<p>Recommendation 10. When determining the boundaries of designated sites, responsible authorities should take better account of the need to support underpinning ecological processes and of anticipated environmental change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England and JNCC to clarify position with regards to the opportunity for new designations and changes to existing boundaries of designated sites, in context of developing ecological networks. • Natural England to lead assessment of ecological processes supporting the integrity of designated sites and adjacent surrounding land areas. • Natural England to initiate, in partnership, standard process of assessing potential for use of AES and other land management incentives adjacent to designated sites to 	1.1

	provide buffering, expansion or connectivity functions.	
Recommendation 11. The recent progress in improving the management of SSSIs must be sustained, with the aim of moving the condition of sites from 'recovering' to 'favourable'. Investment in the management of the SSSI series must be maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra to drive delivery towards the new designated site outcome as stated in <i>Biodiversity2020</i> "[By 2020] at least 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition"⁴. These efforts must not undermine opportunities to protect new areas or to deliver additional Section 41 species and habitats across the SSSI network. • Natural England to ensure management agreements on SSSIs are upheld, using penalties and enforcement (e.g. management orders, compulsory purchase) as necessary. 	1.1
Recommendation 12. Local authorities should take responsibility for the identification and monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites and the management of LWS must be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing of LWSs in local plans should be maintained as part of local planning policy. • The NPPF should retain and strengthen policy to protect and enhance LWSs • Local authorities should oversee the management of LWSs with support from local partners 	1.1
Recommendation 13. Responsible bodies should revise conservation objectives for SSSIs and other wildlife sites to respond to the effects of climate change - in particular by aiming to enhance habitat diversity and support underpinning ecological processes, whilst taking account of the requirements of current species and habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England to undertake an audit of conservation objectives across the SSSI network to take account of: a) Section 41 species and habitats; b) the role of a SSSI within the context of developing an ecological network; c) supporting ecological processes and functions; and d) known climate change impacts. Defra should report on the collective contribution (existing and potential) of the designated site network to national conservation objectives under Section 41, and to the delivery of ecosystem services as identified in the NEA. • Natural England to implement a simple process for updating conservation objectives to take account of improved knowledge and evolving environmental circumstances • The collated data at a national network level should form the basis of a well-informed approach to adaptive site management, allowing site management to be tailored to those species in greatest need, depending on their observed (c.f. just projected) response to climate change. • Implement adaptive management processes on designated sites.⁵ 	1.1, 1.3

⁴ *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*, p12

⁵ *Conserving biodiversity in a changing climate: guidance on building capacity to adapt*, published by Defra on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Partnership, May 2007

<p>Recommendation 14. In view of the opportunity presented by their existing statutory remits, in National Parks and AONBs:</p> <p>(a) favourable condition of SSSIs should be achieved as quickly as possible;</p> <p>(b) non-SSSI semi-natural habitat should be brought under management equivalent to SSSI standards; and</p> <p>(c) other land should be managed so as to enhance connectivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Parks and AONBs should become exemplars of coherent and resilient ecological networks on account of their large remaining tracts of semi-natural habitats and their capacity to promote and co-ordinate action at a large scale. National Park and AONB Management Plans and their associated partnerships should be tasked with mapping where and how ecological networks should develop. This should include actions to restore SSSIs recover vulnerable species, extend BAP habitats, deliver key ecosystem services, and ensure transport corridors are enhanced to contribute to ecological networks (e.g. improving the vegetated margins of roads, railways and canals). • National Park authorities, AONB management boards and other key players should creatively engage with farmers, land managers and local communities in discussions about how to best achieve ecological restoration. They should use their remit for education and understanding to promote ecological network concepts to gain wide support. 	<p>1.1</p>
<p>Recommendation 15. The Higher Level Scheme of Environmental Stewardship must be retained and properly resourced as the single most important tool for maintaining and expanding the most significant areas of priority habitat and populations of priority species. Consideration should be given to improving the quality of advice and putting longer term agreements in place to ensure sustained ecological benefits, while retaining the buy-in of land managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England should calculate the resource needed to ensure HLS can provide adequate coverage of section 41 species and habitats, and Defra should increase the budget as required to meet this need • Natural England should undertake a review of the advisory services available to HLS agreement holders and highlight the gaps and identify other partnerships to assist in provision of advice. • Natural England to improve delivery of outcomes by setting clear objectives for the land manager within the HLS agreement and carrying out regular monitoring/ follow-up visits. • Natural England should implement comprehensive monitoring of HLS to enable outcomes to be measured and reported against objectives and to guide further improvements to the scheme. • Natural England to retain the current 10 year agreement length and ensure the process of transition to a new agreement is as straightforward and transparent as possible. • Forestry Commission to ensure England Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) payments are also targeted at section 41 species and habitats, adequately resourced, supported with advice and monitored against outcomes. 	<p>1.1 3.1 3.2</p>
<p>Recommendation 16. A new type of Environmental Stewardship scheme is needed,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England to allocate staff resources equitably between regions to ensure a consistent quality of advice and administration for those applying for agri-environment 	<p>1.1 3.1</p>

<p>particularly to help buffer sites and establish stepping stones and ecological corridors. This should be simple to administer, be available in key areas, and provide support for high cost but relatively simple management measures.</p>	<p>schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England and the Forestry Commission to work together to determine whether HLS or EWGS is the most appropriate scheme for woodland management and creation. • Provision for woodland management in agri-environment schemes (for small farm woods of <5ha which currently not covered by EWGS) should be created with additional resources (not taken from FC EWGS or other biodiversity delivery) is provided • Natural England to agree improvements to Stewardship to allow for action to buffer sites and to form components of an ecological network outside sites of existing high nature conservation value. Ultimately Defra should seek to increase funding to HLS as the branch of AES which has capacity to deliver most benefits for biodiversity, ecological networks, ecosystem services and landscapes. • See also recommendation 23 	<p>3.2</p>
<p>Recommendation 17. The government should promote economic approaches that will favour conservation management by stimulating the creation of new markets and payment for ecosystem services, to ensure that the values of a wider range of ecosystem services are taken into account in decisions that affect the management and use of the natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Treasury should develop a system of Natural Capital Accounting • The Government should produce a response to the NEA report and recommendations • The number of private and public sector as well as voluntary partnerships should increase • Defra should work across government to develop new markets which stimulate businesses to invest in ecological restoration e.g. Flood alleviation, effective biodiversity offsets, local conservation products and sustainable use of resources • Defra to uphold the need for smart regulation to ensure business and other commercial activity does not have detrimental impact on biodiversity and development of ecological networks • Government should introduce new statement on green taxation e.g. tax breaks, peat levy 	<p>2.2 2.3</p>
<p>Recommendation 18. Government needs to establish a consistent, integrated and long-term expectation of land managers to deliver parts of the ecological network. In doing so, consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing more readily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing incentives for conservation management e.g. AES must be appropriately balanced to ensure landowners/ land managers receive the appropriate financial reward for achieving high value conservation outcomes • Defra should monitor the uptake and influence of the Farming Theme of Business Link, and be clear that online toolkits are not a replacement for on the ground advice to farmers which should continue to be supported. • Defra's Integrated Advice Pilot project (to report in 2012) should enable clear and consistent environmental advice to be delivered by the whole range of farm advice 	<p>3.1</p>

<p>available, high quality advice; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing the Defra Whole Farm Approach to provide an opportunity for those managing land to enter into a 'Whole Farm Plan' which integrates all aspects of a farm's environmental and productive potential, simplifies regulation, increases transparency and gives long term commitments to both farmer and the public. 	<p>providers using integrated, evidence-based environmental packages.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 19. Habitat creation by government and its agencies, grant-giving trusts, businesses and the voluntary sector requires greater focus on the needs of ecological networks, in particular the need to contribute to Ecological Restoration Zones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat creation is an important measure that needs further encouragement. However, government and its agencies should retain the principle that priorities are firstly towards habitat maintenance, then restoration and finally creation in the establishment of ecological networks; an assessment of need and priorities should be made on a sub national area basis. Habitat creation should be led by targets in the EBS delivery plan for section 41 habitats and include a balance between the creation of open habitat versus woodland and wetland. More flower-rich meadows should be created to support pollinators and these should be positioned in the landscape to enhance connectivity. Less than a quarter of a percent of the 3 million hectares of wildflower meadows lost since the war have so far been restored. Defra should ensure that habitat creation is not damaging to existing high conservation value areas. 	<p>1.1</p>
<p>Recommendation 20. Government should consider extending tax incentives to encourage landowners to make long-term commitments to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See recommendation 19 on habitat creation Government and its agencies should steer towards habitat maintenance, then restoration and finally creation in the establishment of ecological networks, although an assessment should be made on a sub national area basis. Government should assess the effectiveness of current financial incentives for habitat 	<p>2.3</p>

creation of new wildlife habitats that benefit ecological networks.	creation and the potential role of tax incentives in improving delivery	
Recommendation 21. Public bodies and other authorities responsible for canals, railways, roads, cycle ways and other linear features in the landscape, should ensure that they better achieve their potential to be wildlife corridors, thereby enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks, and improving opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government auctions of public sector land should continue to take into account the needs of linear features in the landscape to connect wildlife and people. • Measures should be integrated to minimise the impact of fragmentation cause by linear features such as roads, thus maximising the value of these features in creating linear corridors 	1.1 2.1
Recommendation 22. If a formal system of biodiversity offsets is to be introduced, pilot schemes should be established to test and refine its operation, to ensure it meets the conditions we have set out for a safe and effective system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra should develop a clear road map to how biodiversity offsets will interact with the planning system and ensure that an accessible and comprehensive evidence base is in place to inform its application • The use of biodiversity offsets should add to, and not undermine, existing protective planning designations • Any biodiversity offsets system should include monitoring to demonstrate the outcomes of this scheme towards the development of ecological networks and the achievement of favourable conservation status of Section 41 species and to allow the offsets system to be review. 	3.5
Recommendation 23. The design and delivery of the Entry Level Scheme of Environmental Stewardship needs to be improved, in particular to ensure key options are taken up in appropriate combinations over a sufficient area. Delivering a more effective ecological network may require refinements to the schemes,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See action against recommendation 16 for further Environmental Stewardship action • HLS is dependent on a fit-for-purpose underpinning ELS scheme. The structure of ELS needs to change to ensure that agreements are delivering a balanced package of environmentally beneficial options across the farmland covered by the scheme. • Defra should scrap the target of 70% coverage and replace with a quality of outcome indicator. • Natural England and/or Local Nature Partnerships should seek co-operation between farmers where possible to maximise the benefits for species and habitats through ecological connectivity and large to landscape-scale action • As an immediate action, Defra should remove options from ELS and Uplands ELS that 	3.1

such as rewarding farmers who act cooperatively.	deliver little added value over and above cross-compliance or existing management practices.	
<p>Recommendation 24. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs should be advised on progress against recommendations in this report after two years, with a full evaluation of the outcomes for England's ecological network after five years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra and its agencies should work with partners to produce a report in 2013 on progress towards establishing England's ecological network. This report must include recommendations for improved cross-sectoral activity to feed into the full evaluation of the status of England's ecological network to be published in 2015. 	<p>4.2 4.3</p>

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