

The state of Natural England 2020-21

A view from
Prospect trade union



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Stand up for your environment, stand up for Natural England

Foreword

At a time of global pandemic and the enforced second wave lockdowns across the country, it may feel inappropriate to be updating the State of Natural England report. But our members also have family members and friends subject to furlough and redundancy and are conscious of the wider social issues facing people in the UK. The fundamental issues impacting Natural England persist. Unless these are tackled, they will remain long after the virus is banished and the life of our nation restored.

Much of the work we do in Natural England has continued, albeit in modified form, throughout the pandemic in conserving species, licensing works and supporting, where we can, our wildlife organisations and others impacted by their declining income. Tracking the local use of greenspaces in our cities and towns and countryside during lockdown shows how much people value their local natural environment:

“During April to June some adults in England were getting outside more often than usual with 40% of adults reporting that they had spent more time outside since the coronavirus restrictions began and 31% were exercising more in outdoor spaces. Over these three months, 58% of the adult population had visited a natural space in the last 14 days. In total, 85% of adults reported that being in

nature makes them happy and this was consistent across different population groups. Those who had visited a natural space in the last seven days reported being happier than those who hadn't.”¹

All of this is set in a political landscape of global engagement in biodiversity and climate change issues, with several events that have recently taken place, or are planned for the near future:

- UN's Leaders Pledge for Nature- Sept 2020, New York
- The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030
- The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow on 1 – 12 November 2021
- The United Nations Summit on Biodiversity was convened by the President of the General Assembly on 30 September 2020, New York
- UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15), now expected to take place in May 2021.

Staff at Natural England have continued to work in the face of the pandemic and under the long running impacts of cuts to services. If there is to be the oft-vaunted Green Recovery for us all, Natural England needs to be at the core of that endeavour.

¹ <http://bit.ly/people-nature-gov>

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What is Natural England and why does it matter?

Natural England was created as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) under an Act of Parliament – the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 on 1 October 2006, and we are formally accountable to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), who is accountable to Parliament for our activities and performance.²

This amalgamated the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service – themselves long-standing bodies with some being able to trace their heritage back to 1949 with the then Nature Conservancy.

Natural England is responsible for protecting and improving England's natural environment, including its landscape, flora and fauna, freshwater and marine environments, geology and soils. And for people's enjoyment of it all.

To achieve this, Natural England has a myriad of statutory duties and other essential work including partnership-based projects. It:

- advises government on environmental legislation and policy
- is a statutory consultee on environmental matters for planning, development and marine licensing
- helps farmers and landowners enhance the natural environment on their land
- issues and enforces wildlife licenses for protected species
- designates our most precious environmental sites
- commissions and undertakes environmental scientific research, evidence gathering and drives partnership projects
- has a responsibility to help people enjoy, understand and access the natural environment.

But there is so much more to Natural England than what gets recognised.



© Natural England/Peter Wakely

It is a repository of skills, expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to the natural world. These are the sorts of time-tested qualities that used to be valued in the civil and public service that need to be maintained and cherished.

The sheer scope and scale of the work delivered by Natural England's staff is not well understood or appreciated, yet it has a real and lasting influence on the ground. A few examples are outlined below.

- **Protected sites** – designation of our best ecological and geological sites, both terrestrial and marine (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves – the crème de la crème of the best natural features in England); European sites and Marine Conservation Zones. European sites form a network of the best sites across Europe and in England they always overlap SSSIs. Natural England advises on the management of SSSIs, assesses their condition, consents activities and undertakes enforcement.

“The creation of Natural England is a landmark moment for the natural environment. No other organisation in Europe matches the breadth of our legislative remit, and the scale of our challenge”

Sir Martin Doughty, 2006

² <http://bit.ly/NE-annual-report-2020>



© Getty Images/carnoso.pl

There are 4,123 SSSIs in England, covering more than one million hectares of special habitat, wildlife and geology (approximately 8% of England's total land area).

Some of Natural England's most recent designations include Johnsons' meadows in Leicestershire and Crime Rigg quarry in Durham, the latter site representing an outstanding example of a 290-million-year-old Permian dune system.

- **Countryside stewardship/ Environmental Land Management Scheme** – helping farmers and

landowners design plans to enhance biodiversity on their land and secure funding now we have left the European Union. This helps to achieve a balanced agricultural economy which is sustainable and benefits wildlife. Most SSSIs are managed through stewardship. Many of England's well known and much loved estates are in stewardship, such as Chatsworth House and most estates of the National Trust and Crown Estate. Approximately 23% of English land is currently under stewardship (three million hectares).

Natural England also uses stewardship to target specific conservation efforts such as saving the turtle dove, a charming bird which used to be a familiar sight in the English countryside but is now close to extinction – one of the causes of its decline being lack of seed and grain as food during the breeding season.

Natural England is now busily devising the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme which will be the cornerstone of England's new agricultural policy, rewarding farmers, foresters and other land managers with public money for public goods. Natural England has already written 130 Technical Guidance notes on ELM in

2020 in preparation for a national pilot in 2021.

- **Planning development and policy** – statutory consultee on impacts of development and planning policy on protected sites and landscapes. A significant part of Natural England's work in this area is promoting integration of green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain as part of development schemes. It is also pioneering landscape-scale solutions across local authority boundaries to address the impacts of development and population growth on vulnerable internationally important sites.

During 2019-20, Natural England offered our advice on over 14,000 planning consultations and responded to over 17,000 licence applications.

In addition, Natural England have pioneered a new 'nutrient neutral' approach to addressing water quality impacts from new development in the Solent, where nature-based solutions are being implemented to secure over 1200ha of wetland, woodland and meadow habitat across a highly urbanised catchment whilst enabling sustainable development. NE is now looking to roll out this approach nationally.

- **Protected landscape** – designates Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks; provides expert advice on landscape impacts from development when consulted.
- **Marine environment** – designation of marine protected areas, setting their conservation objectives and providing conservation advice. Statutory consultee on licensing and consent for marine activities, including fisheries. Provides advice to government on marine policy with a recent focus on exiting the EU. Supported the confirmation of 41 new Marine Conservation Zones.



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- **Catchment sensitive farming** – working jointly with the Environment Agency and Defra to reduce diffuse water pollution from agriculture, by giving free training and advice on cleaner water and healthier soils to farmers in England.
- **Wildlife licensing and enforcement** – assesses and issues licences for activities which may disturb or kill European protected species including bats, great crested newt, dormice, smooth snake, sand lizard and Natterjack toad; and national protected species including common reptiles, badgers, water vole and Schedule 1 birds such as the barn owl. Enforces licence breaches.
- **England Coast Path** – we have continued the establishment of the England Coast Path, now standing at 402 miles of new National Trail.
- **Advice to government and scientific research** – specialist advice to government, stakeholders and the public on environmental evidence and policy, especially at the moment on emerging legislation for agriculture, fisheries and the environment.
- **Natural England furthers scientific research** – commissioning and undertaking studies on wide-ranging aspects of the natural environment and conservation.³ Natural England was also heavily involved in the design of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.⁴ Natural England undertook a review on the impacts of burning on deep blanket bog which has led to changes in the management of our protected uplands and over 200 historical authorisations to burn on

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-englands-publications-maps-and-data>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>



© Getty Images/Ben Schonewille

the peat have been given up or amended.

Also, our Natural Capital Account (Natural England Research Report (NERR) 078) for National Nature Reserves won the John Hoy prize for the best piece of economic analysis in government.⁵

- **Collaborations in conservation** – key driver of numerous partnerships and project work, for instance *Back from the Brink* species conservation programme: Natural England working in partnership, saving 20 species from extinction through 19 projects which has also benefitted over 200 other threatened species including the adder. Species Recovery work includes enabling the reintroduction of the white-tailed eagle onto the Isle of Wight project to get going.⁶

While Natural England is often seen as just doing business with Defra, it is a non-departmental public body. Its remit, and the customers and partners with which it works, are wide-ranging and cross-cutting at many levels.

Natural England engages across government departments and agencies, industry sectors and the voluntary sector. It encompasses all types of our environment – from urban to peri-urban and open countryside through to the coast and sea.

This is the beauty of Natural England – it provides overarching custodianship, expertise and forethought for all aspects of the natural environment and provides the links and authority to make a difference in the real world.

This forms the crux of Natural England's Conservation 21 strategy, its place in delivering the 25 Year Environment Plan and especially the emerging Environment Bill, and is the reason why Natural England is more than the sum of its parts.

⁵ <http://bit.ly/NE-annual-report-2020>

⁶ <https://naturebftb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Back-from-the-Brink-Impact-Report-Feb-2020.pdf>

Natural England encompasses all types of our environment – from urban to peri-urban and open countryside through to the coast and sea

Natural England's funding

It has been well-documented that Natural England's government-funded Grant in Aid budget has declined by 49% in six years and almost two-thirds over a decade. In 2019/20 the effects of that decrease have been particularly keenly felt. We are now running with some serious risk to our core, statutory functions, which will have consequences for our customers as well as for wildlife."

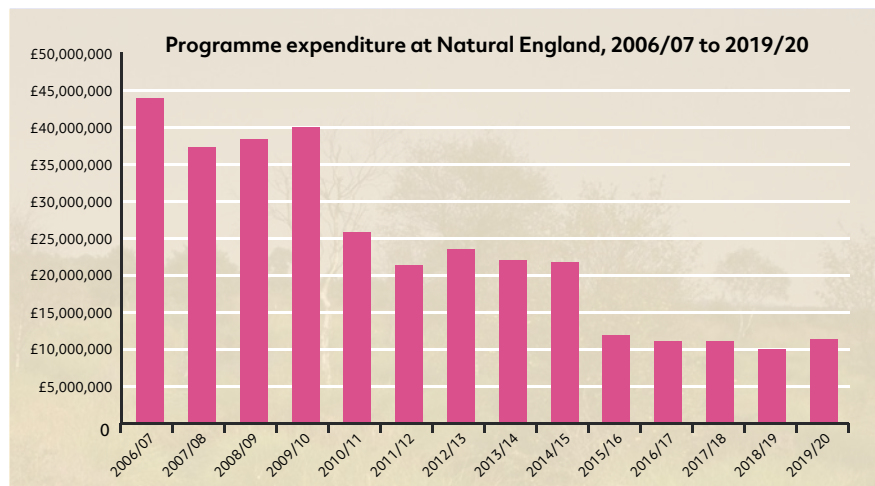
Tony Juniper, Chair Natural England⁷

The cuts to staff numbers in Natural England outlined in the first State of Natural England report 2019-20 are not the only impact of the decade of austerity. There have been significant reductions in many of the important spend areas which have limited our capacity to advance the science and monitoring so important for the natural world's management.

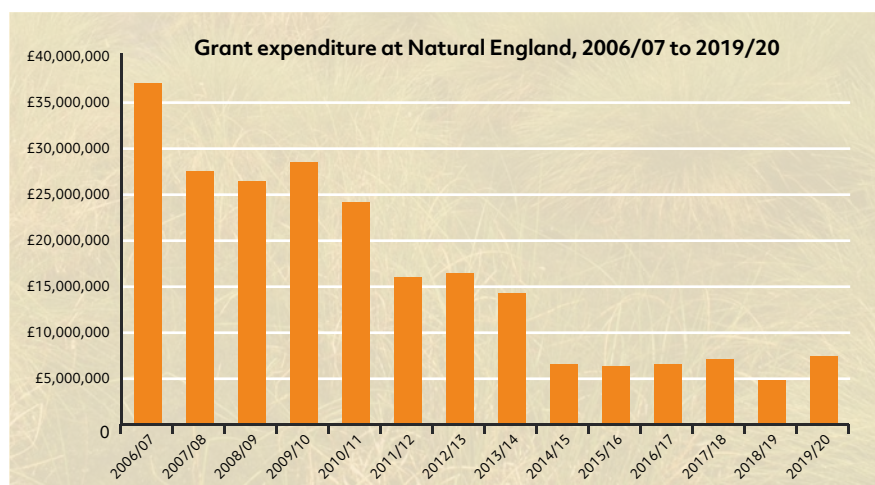
This is well demonstrated by the decline in the overall programme expenditure figures from the very end of English Nature, to the current time of Natural England, an eye-watering drop of 78% from c.£45m to £10m.

There will, of course, have been comparable budget streams from the other two founding bodies (The Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service), perhaps suggesting that the declines have been more significant in the merging reductions of what have been three much larger finance streams into one. The declines from austerity from 2010-11 are clear and the trajectory is downwards.

Grant expenditure has followed a similar path, but perhaps more steeply in the later years. The grants were historically diverse and ranged from support for microscope purchase for



Source: Natural England annual accounts (excludes legal expenditures)



Source: Natural England annual accounts

⁷ <http://bit.ly/NE-annual-report-2020>



© Getty Images

one of the biological recording schemes in 2012 to the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme, a modular grant allowing bespoke management tailored to SSSI; again showing a massive drop of 86% from c.£36m to just under £5m.

This is not to say that grant support programmes have been abandoned. The 2020 Peat Capital Grant scheme proposes to deliver peat restoration in both lowland and upland settings over the next five years. It will be funded by the Nature for Climate Fund and is direct action to reduce carbon loss from

peatlands into our atmosphere. But there is clearly so much more we could do with proper investment.

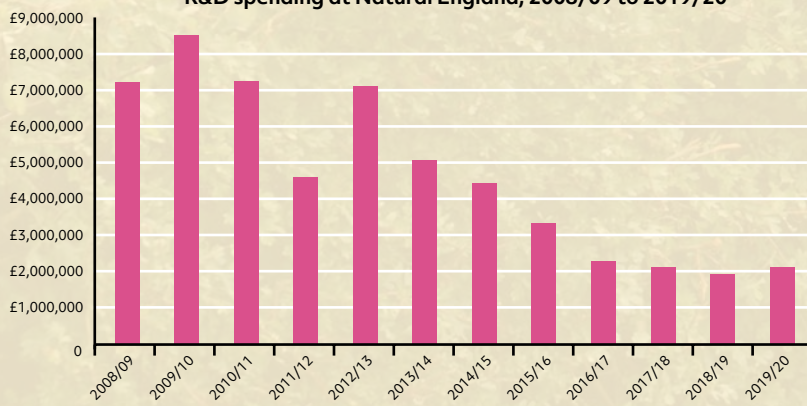
It's a similar picture for the core science and development programme spend, which sets Natural England somewhat apart (although core DEFRA has a comparable budget). This has fallen by a huge 73%, making it difficult to fund much of the necessary work and often resulting in reductions in ambition in both scope and analysis. The two forces of staff reductions and programme cuts mean that it becomes increasingly hard to operate, such that the arrival of more spend might be hard to cope with without the attendant staff resource to manage the contracts.

Natural England's science and research portfolio is expansive. It ranges from "A Natural Capital Strategy for North Devon" to the "Review of the status of the beetles of Great Britain Longhorn Beetles (Cerambycidae)", to "Developing a robust technique to detect populations of endangered native white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, invasive signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* and crayfish plague *Aphanomyces astaci* in lotic systems using innovative eDNA approaches" to "Listening to young people's views of the coast: Living Coast Youth Voice".

The decline in capacity through budget reduction formed part of the main critique made by the submission from Wildlife and Countryside Link in September 2017 to the House of Lords Select Committee inquiry on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, when they wrote:

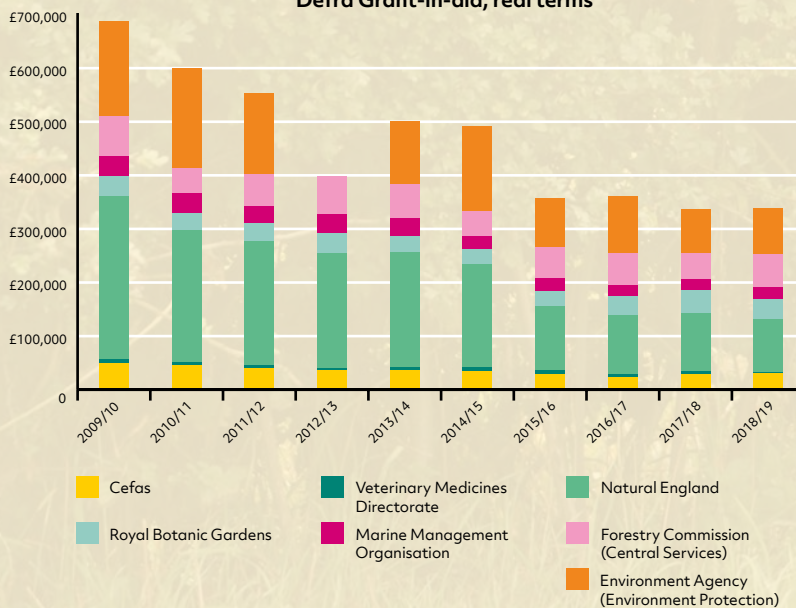
However, based on recent assessments, Natural England has struggled to fulfil its mandate. We suggest this is predominantly because of continued budget cuts and erosion of its independence from the Westminster Government. Due to these cuts Natural England does not have the resources or sufficient numbers of suitably skilled

R&D spending at Natural England, 2008/09 to 2019/20



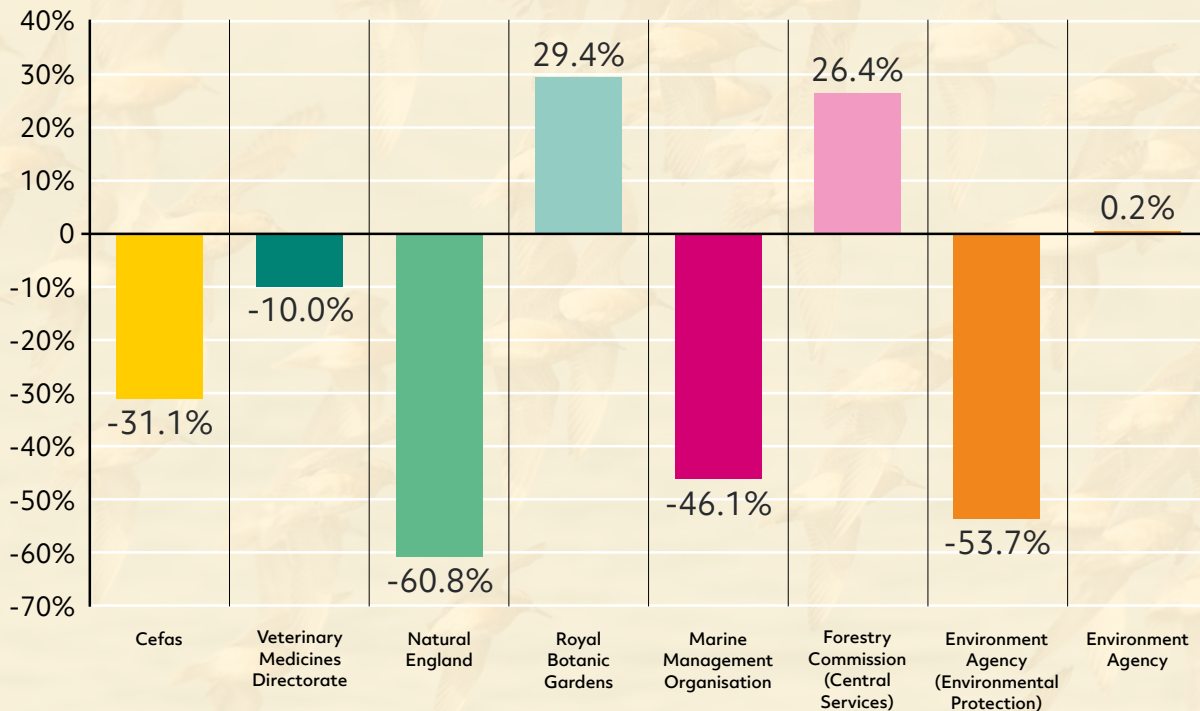
Source: Natural England annual accounts

Defra Grant-in-aid, real terms



- Cefas
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate
- Natural England
- Royal Botanic Gardens
- Marine Management Organisation
- Forestry Commission (Central Services)
- Environment Agency (Environment Protection)

Real terms change to departmental grant/funding, 2010/11 to 2018/19



“Natural England has struggled to fulfil its mandate... because of continued budget cuts and erosion of its independence from the Westminster Government”

and experienced staff to perform its functions fully and effectively.”⁸

This is all, of course, driven by core Departmental decisions on what is valued and what is not.

The Grant in Aid sums already showed large differences between, say, Environment Agency and Natural England, but the real term impacts were far harsher in Natural England. This is made clear in the above graph.

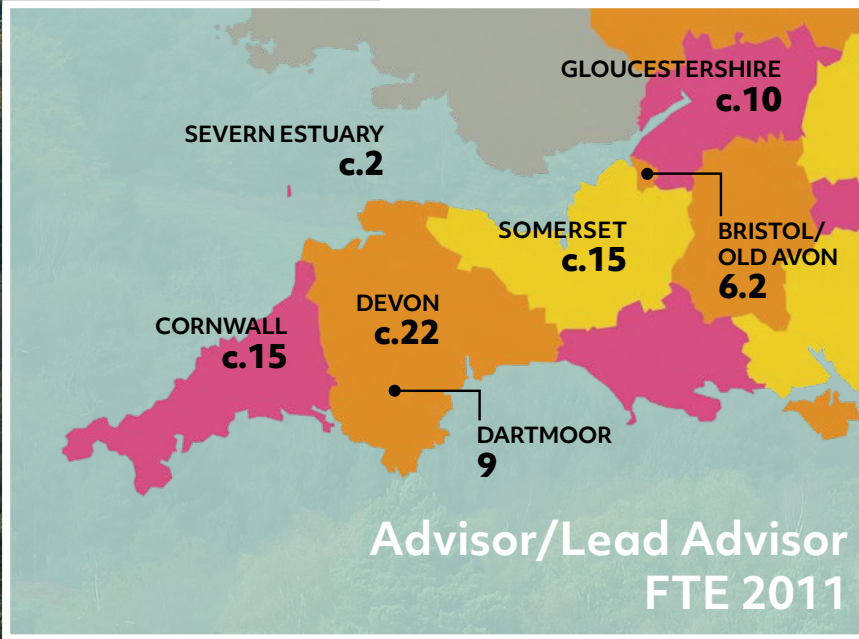
NE took a more disproportionate hit in the Defra group because most of its work was not considered ‘protected’ (compared to, for example, EA’s flood defence work), rather suggesting a Cinderella status in Departmental eyes. These cuts had a massive impact on NE’s ability to, for instance, undertake condition assessments on SSSIs and its ability to enforce legal action.

Other impacts landed on fulfilling its statutory and regulatory functions in planning and marine advice, wildlife licensing, and being able to manage its National Nature Reserves.

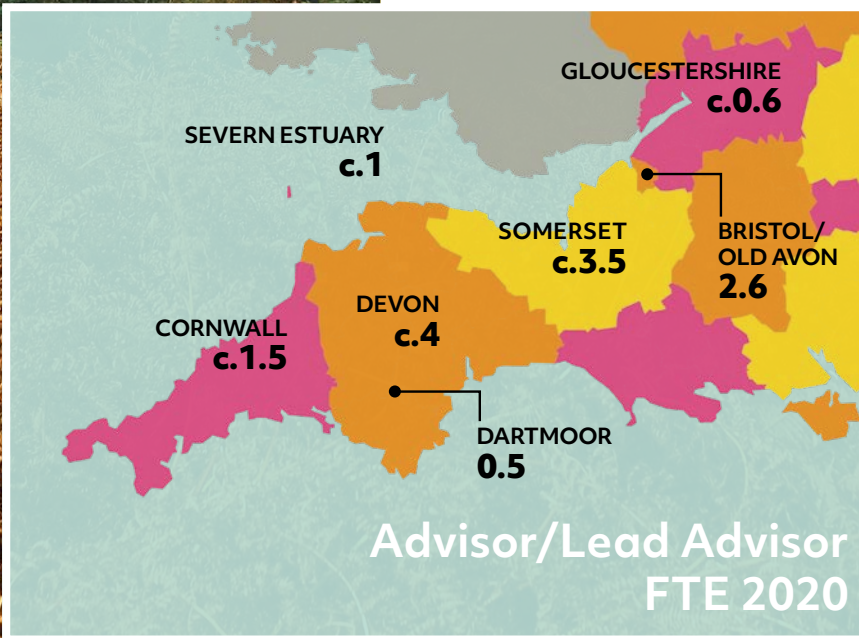
For 2020/21, NE received an ‘uplift’ of £15m additional funding on top of its annual core funding. This funding was used to address existing work resource pressures, and NE has used this to recruit for over 200 new roles, including roles to help deliver the Environment Bill legislation currently going through Parliament. However, the extra sum is the colloquial drop in the ocean. The NE leadership know themselves that “this funding will not address all the pressures and that there is still more to do to make our case in future years, to realise further opportunities for NE to play its full part in nature recovery and connect more people to this ambition.”

⁸ <https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/NERC%20call%20for%20evidence-%20WCL.pdf>

Impacts of the budget cuts on Natural England's capacity: The SSSI story



Source: Prospect members and reps within Natural England



Source: Prospect members and reps within Natural England

It is difficult to accurately portray the historic declines of staff working on the core SSSI agenda. Although there were full time dedicated staff, it was also often part of someone's role, the dynamics of project work in the past may not have carried forward, and the models of delivery change. However, it is less the exact magnitude of the decline in numbers than the overall trend of decline of dedicated support that is the key point. SSSIs still require oversight, relationship building with owners and partners, and the strategic understanding of county conservation issues are still sought. Whether the 2020 staffing uplift will improve this position remains to be gauged.

SSSI work is covered in a different way now to that of the past, leading to the establishment of central casework 'Hubs' in local Area Teams. How these Hubs work, what they deal with and how they interact with staff working on specific designated sites will vary. There will be inconsistencies across the country. Typically, Area Team casework Hubs have been staffed by junior grades (adviser and support adviser), new to the organisation. Whilst these individuals are often very able, they are routinely being asked to do work which would previously have been done by more senior and experienced staff. We have to acknowledge that the 'hub' does have value and having staff deal with 'low-risk' enquiries is particularly useful, but the organisation is having to react to lower staffing levels and losing experienced staff to other organisations which offer better pay.

“A centralised system like this promotes a knowledge of the process but not of the sites themselves. As I say, geographical 'patches' have been actively discouraged. Over time this will lead to the gradual loss of local knowledge and degrade relationships with local stakeholders.”
– Prospect member

“There is a fast turnover of staff and a lot of the time the people in the team are very new to the organisation being supported by an experienced lead adviser and sometimes an S grade (not always available).” – *Prospect member*

Of concern to Prospect members is the loss of relationships:

“This is not just about decline in numbers, but in the complete loss of that owner relationship – often built up over decades – and the intimate site knowledge which now is mostly a rapidly fading memory at best.” – *Prospect member*

There is a feeling we are consequently increasingly absent as a body in the farming and landowning community.

More widely, the sort of experienced staffing levels currently found in Natural England may well present a challenge when matching the aspirations and ambitions of the Nature Recovery Network and the 25-Year Environment Plan. Much the same can be said over the need to monitor both the terrestrial and marine sites to an adequate level, even given the advantages of monitoring reform and the switch away from strict SSSI unit assessment. Some, as now, will be covered to an appropriate level, though many will remain unvisited and hence unpoliced.

Given the importance of local partnerships in much of the above, Natural England’s role may be reduced, though it has helped forge many excellent initiatives, or seed-funded them.

“The Area Team has had the staying power and influence to secure a single ‘strategic mitigation plan’ through wet grassland creation as part of the planning process for the South Humber Gateway development zone. For this major achievement



© Natural England/Philip Ray

they’ve shared in this year’s RTPI “Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment” award. This is an example of having a clear vision, backed up with good evidence (eventually), and accepting that ‘you’ve got to be in it for the long haul.’” – *Prospect member*⁹

But there remain limits to deployment of the reduced staff numbers without de-prioritising what has come down to priority work, much of the development opportunity work having had to be forsaken to keep things running.

That said, the uplift of £15 million in 2020-21, was specifically targeted at planning responses, licensing and consenting capacity, National Nature Reserves, Health & Safety, and SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) condition. This has allowed an increase in the staff compliment of some 210 full time equivalents over the spring and summer of 2020. This is welcome although it has clearly proved difficult for new starters with both lockdown and Covid19 office closures both enforcing home working and a lack of direct engagement with their new teams.¹⁰

“This is not just about decline in numbers, but in the complete loss of that owner relationship – often built up over decades – and the intimate site knowledge”

⁹ https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/5126/rtpi_a4_ape_20_winners_brochure.pdf

¹⁰ <https://mxm.mxmf.com/rsps/m/goHg-f8cnHtSyLPyUMtwxg>

The consequences of austerity and pay

The problems with the pay system are structural with unbalanced initial conditions thwarted by a decade of austerity. It is clear from the founding body pay scales that there were large discrepancies between grades, and that where you ended up in a Natural England pay scale was in part of reflection of the legacy of your employment.

Staff who came from the Rural Development Service were far more likely to be at or above the target rate in their grade than other staff; this is even though their average length of service in their grade is often not significantly different from staff who came from other founding bodies. Comparison with staff who came from

the Countryside Agency seems stark – on average they often have the exact same time in grade but much lower pay. This legacy remains today.

This discrepancy might have been flattened out and diminished in a decent pay environment, but under austerity and the 1% pay cap inequality was burnt into the pay framework. This historic bias will also have had some bearing on the highly concerning Equal Pay landscape

The mean gender pay gap across the whole of Natural England is 8.4%. When we compare women and men's pay across individual grades, men earn more on average at each grade. For example, in the two most starkly differentiated pay bands the figures are:

- Manager, Principle Adviser, and Principle Specialist pay band – men earn 8.9% on average more than women.
- Support Adviser pay band - men earn on average 6.3% more than women.

The 2020-21 pay settlement purports to reduce the disparity at the Manager level, although the extent of that reduction has not been declared. This is recognised as a major issue for Natural England but the sort of pay settlements that are provided come nowhere near to resolving these problems.

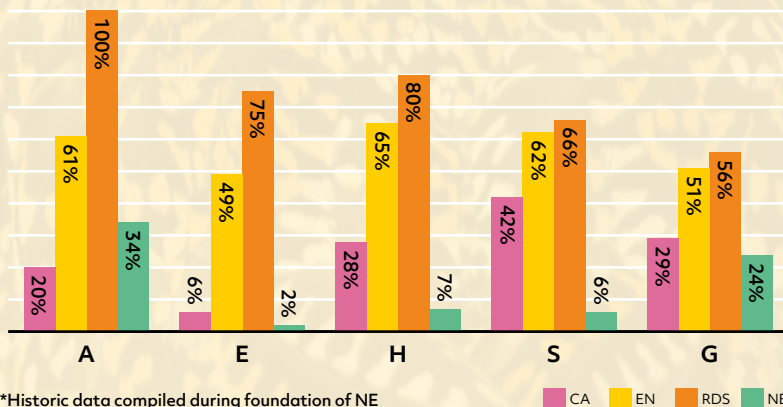
“Pay remains a major concern, with only 9.5% of people believing their pay adequately reflected their performance”

NE Annual Report & Accounts, 2019-20

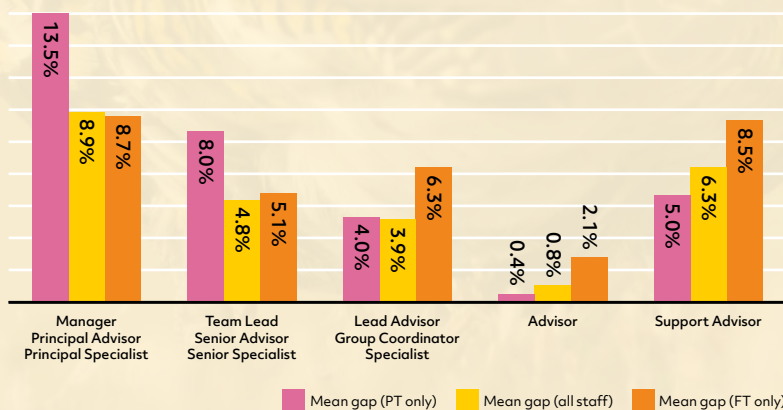


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Proportion of staff at or above Target Rate in each grade by founding body*



Mean GPG at NE by pay grade and work pattern



Staff well-being

“There is a risk that changes in work priorities, ongoing budget reductions and other background factors (e.g. a greater awareness of pay differentials across the Defra group) will lead to a continuing decline in staff well-being and morale.”¹¹

“I am a lead advisor in sustainable development for Natural England. I fulfil one of the organisation’s main statutory duties by providing consultation responses to planning applications and local plan and policies. Since I started over three and a half years ago, workloads and resourcing pressures have increased dramatically with serious knock on effects on my ability to keep up with simple admin requirements and continue my professional development. In this period I have barely left the minimum of my pay grade, and following the 2020 pay award, I have been drawn closer to it. Reaching the mid-point of my grade, let alone the target point, seems many light years away and I wonder if I will ever reach it. I feel strongly that my pay doesn’t fairly reward me for the challenging role I perform at Natural England.”

“I’m a Marine Lead Adviser and have been in NE for over 8 years. I took a £8k pay cut to take the job in NE from a local authority and I am still £3k below what I was earning in 2012, despite using more of my qualifications and experience in this role, having more of an impact and it being more demanding. Amongst my peers in the private and public sector, despite being more qualified than many of them I am still way under their pay levels which consistently contributes to a feeling of being overworked, underpaid and undervalued despite knowing the work I do is very important. This also contributes to the feeling of our work being undervalued and not given the right level of importance considering



© Prospect/Simon Crosby

the climate and ecological emergency we face.

However, since lockdown and the pandemic, there is better understanding on the importance of nature for our health and wellbeing and therefore increased priority to its protection. This must include valuing the dedicated and committed people that work so hard (sometimes to their own detriment) to protect it and reward them appropriately to retain skilled and experienced staff. We cannot, and should not, put up with consistently being at the bottom of the pile because in order to attract and retain the best talent the rewards package needs to be attractive otherwise we will consistently have our brightest and best going elsewhere leading to a demoralised and deflated workforce in NE.”

“I’m an experienced Senior Adviser (who has just this month completed 30 years’ service with the organisation) and as such I’m at the top of my pay-scale. I’ve looked at the pay award calculator and discovered that I’ll be receiving just over £300 i.e. 1% as a non-consolidated bonus, with no increase in my annual salary. Over the past 10 years I’ve only had one increase in my annual salary with the rest paid as non-consolidated bonuses and this is although I receive high box markings. Over these 10 years my outgoings and financial responsibilities have

increased, but this hasn’t been reflected by increases in my salary. I know that it’s really important to address the situation with people at the bottom of the pay scale, but in negotiations please don’t forget about those of us stuck and going backwards at the top of the pay scale.”

“Pretty soon there won’t be anyone left in Local Teams to be reassigned- Advisers aren’t getting any younger either and we should at least be placed on NE’s Red List of endangered species?”

“Following this year’s pay ‘award’, this is how it has affected me:

- Adviser grade for 10 years since 2010, after leaving the EA in March 2008 on £22,373 after 7 ¼ years’ service.
- 2019 pay award: Grade min of £21,522 was 92% of my £23,379 pay. Mid-point was £23,649, target rate was £25,776.
- 2020 pay award: Grade min of £22,168 is 94.74% of my new pay of £23,999. Mid-point (I have just passed) is now £23,972, target rate £25,776.

So, I have slipped even further towards the grade min, so feel like in real terms I am going backwards through my grade.”

11 <http://bit.ly/NE-annual-report-2020>



Natural England's ambition and ability to fulfil its purpose

In early October 2020, Natural England published the Building Partnerships for Nature's Recovery document, a real sense call to arms and "an invitation for you to engage with us in the conversations and partnerships which are essential for focused, effective deeds."

For the four Strategic programmes it states our contribution to the ambition of the 25-year environment plan and to "help to level up the social inequality underlined by coronavirus by using green space and nature to build back greener."

Its spectrum is broad, and ranges from our three-year programme of intervention through schools to improve children's life chances in some of the most deprived areas of England to partnering with the National Academy for Social Prescribing, to the creation of a "blue belt of marine protected areas" around our coastline and improving improvements in our air and water quality by working with water companies, the Environment Agency and Defra to establish unified monitoring standards.

Public awareness of the plight of biodiversity and fragility of our landscapes has finally come to the fore, and Natural England is eager and brimming with ideas to get on and make England a better place.

But it is clear from the trajectory of both funding, pay and staff numbers that to meet the ambitions and challenges set out in this report, and to not let the Green Recovery fall flat, Government must step up and make good the damage done. Urgent, radical investment is needed in Natural England, as the government's key expert, advisor, regulator, facilitator and deliverer for England's natural environment.¹²

Public awareness of the plight of biodiversity and fragility of our landscapes has finally come to the fore, and Natural England is eager and brimming with ideas to make England a better place

¹² <http://bit.ly/NE-building-partnerships>

The future

There is clearly much current ambition in addressing environmental concerns, be that England's contribution to tackling climate change, biodiversity declines, the Green Recovery post-pandemic, the protection of 30% of the UK's land by 2030, as well as novel initiatives such as Biodiversity Net Gain and the 25 Year Environment Plan. Natural England, with its breadth of expertise spread across wide swathes of government is well placed to assist and take forward significant parts of this agenda.

But the disproportionate cuts, out-dated and unfit pay framework, challenges over legacy body pay-scale

positioning and unwelcome equal pay inequities all require more support, more passion, and more funding if those ambitions are ever to come to anything.

Natural England is constructing a pay case, and has done an Equal Pay Audit and, as noted, Natural England has received a £15 million uplift. But the issues are so deep none of this will really solve the core problems unless concerted action and pay-scale re-design is brought to bear, coupled with funding proportionate to the real threats the country faces.

If not now in the opportunity for a Green Recovery, then when?



**Protect
England's
nature.**

**Protect
Natural
England.**



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