

# 25-year Environment Plan

## Introduction

The government's 25-year Environment Plan was released on 11 January 2018. While it does not have any legal standing, it sets out a series of key actions that provide an indication of the government's priorities and intentions. The actions with greatest relevance to development planning include the following:

- 1 Strengthening the existing requirements for biodiversity net gain in national planning policy and consulting on whether these should become mandatory
- 2 Expanding the net gain approach to include wider natural capital benefits such as flood protection, recreation and improved water and air quality
- 3 Establishing a cross-government project, led by Natural England, that reviews and updates existing standards for green infrastructure by summer 2019
- 4 Working with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to see how commitments on green infrastructure can be incorporated into national planning guidance and policy
- 5 Exploring the potential for district protected species licensing to be expanded and include more species, to provide a more streamlined process for development
- 6 Exploring, through ongoing MHCLG-led reforms of developer contributions, how tariffs could be used to steer development towards the least environmentally damaging areas and to secure investment in natural capital
- 7 Amending the planning practice guidance to clarify construction and ongoing maintenance arrangements for SuDS in new developments, tightening links with planning guidance for water quality and biodiversity
- 8 Considering changes to the NPPF and Building Regulations in the longer term to encourage SuDS
- 9 Commissioning a 21st century 'Hobhouse' review of National Parks and AONBs, to consider the coverage of designations, how designated areas deliver their responsibilities, how designated areas are financed and whether there is scope for expansion
- 10 Consulting in 2018 on a national policy statement for water resources that will streamline the planning process for new large infrastructure schemes
- 11 Looking at ways to increase the use of heat produced at waste facilities through better connections to heat networks

## Commentary

The reception to the Environment Plan has been mixed, with some organisations welcoming it and others concerned that it does not go far enough quickly enough to have a meaningful impact. It is probably best viewed as providing a framework for future plans, policy and guidance, not setting any new legally binding targets in its own right but useful for understanding the government's priorities. In particular, the consolidation and expansion of the 'net gain' approach indicates that the environmental focus of development planning is likely to shift from avoiding harm to actively providing environmental benefits. As part of this, maximising the benefits from green infrastructure and SuDS provision is likely to become increasingly important for new developments.



### Further information

Neil Trollope  
Technical Director  
Head of Environment

E: [neil.trollope@torltd.co.uk](mailto:neil.trollope@torltd.co.uk)  
T: 0203 664 6755

[www.torltd.co.uk](http://www.torltd.co.uk)

Terence O'Rourke provides environmental planning services, including EIA, heritage, ecology and landscape and visual impact expertise, for a wide range of major development proposals in both the private and public sectors.

