



**ADVANCING THE DELIVERY OF
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
Targeting Issues in England's Northwest

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Annex One

A Brief Commentary on the relevance of Green Infrastructure to the delivery of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*.

Annex Two

National PSA Targets (arising from Spending Review 2004) that are relevant (directly or indirectly) to Green Infrastructure

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Green Infrastructure: the physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages. The network of open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, street trees and open countryside that brings many social, economic and environmental benefits to local people and communities.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to reinforce the emerging Green Infrastructure concept across key agencies and sectors throughout the Northwest region in order to effect a significant improvement in the planning and delivery of integrated, multi-functional green spaces. The Green Infrastructure approach to the planning, creation and management of the physical environment is increasingly recognised as a sound basis through which social, economic and environmental benefits can be delivered in an integrated and coherent manner. There is a pressing need for partners throughout the Northwest to work together as a 'united coalition' to develop an overarching framework for the strategic planning and delivery of sustainable development and economic growth, which focuses on integrated management of environmental resources which are essential for sustainable living.
- 1.2 There are, however, a number of issues which need to be explored and understood so that partners are enabled to contribute fully to the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure across the Northwest. This paper provides an initial overview of the key issues that face the region. It discusses funding impediments, organisational cultures, policy frameworks, strategic opportunities, and delivery mechanisms, noting that there is a complex interdependency between these issues.
- 1.3 This Issues Paper is supported by a draft Partnership Plan. The Plan has been developed as a collaborative manifesto to improve significantly the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure across the Northwest. It sets out the roles, responsibilities and commitments of key agencies and organisations working in the region across social, economic and environmental sectors. Partners are encouraged to endorse the Partnership Plan to ensure unified action across the region.

2.0 Understanding the Benefits and Principles of Green Infrastructure

- 2.1 The benefits of Green Infrastructure are wide ranging and relate comprehensively to the principles of sustainable development and economic growth. The environmental sector recognises that, by planning, implementing and managing Green Infrastructure together at the landscape scale it is possible to:
- Provide an inspiring setting for economic growth and investment by improving the regional image and local sense of place, which is proven to be a strong consideration of businesses considering expansion and relocation¹;
 - Increase property and land values²;

^{1a} ODPM (2004) "Competitive European Cities: Where Do the Core Cities Stand?" Urban Research Summary Note 13. ODPM, London.

^{1b} Poor environmental quality is recognised as a key competitive disadvantage in key documents such as "City Growth Strategy St Helens" (City Growth St Helens, 2003).

^{1c} In the United States, small businesses choosing a new business location have cited open space, parks and recreation as a number one priority (The Trust for Public Land, 2001).

- Attract and retain people to areas ensuring stable populations and labour supply³;
- Create a focus for social inclusion, education, training, health and well-being;
- Reinforce and enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness when delivery is grounded in the principles of Landscape Character Assessment to determine opportunities and constraints⁴;
- Create a framework for natural systems and functions that are fundamental to species and habitat viability, healthy soils, water and air, and provide the essential fabric for sustainable living;
- Reverse habitat fragmentation and increase biodiversity to restore functioning ecosystems that underpin a rich wildlife resource⁵;
- Safeguard and enhance natural and historic assets between, in and around communities;
- Provide the essential contact between people and nature⁶; and
- Inspire cohesive partnership working across a range of disciplines and sectors⁷.

2.2 In order to deliver these benefits effectively and coherently, it is necessary to address a number of key principles when planning, implementing and managing Green Infrastructure. These principles are akin to the delivery of other infrastructure systems, including transport and telecommunications, and include:

- The need to design holistically so that Green Infrastructure functions as a collective and connected whole;
- The need to plan comprehensively with the use of intelligence-led planning tools to address and deliver social, economic and environmental benefits;
- The need to plan and deliver strategically at the landscape scale, without the constraints of administrative boundaries;
- The need to secure public involvement and ownership of plans, including private landowners and community groups;
- The need to bring together skills, knowledge and resources of diverse professions, including strategic and local planning, economics, community forestry and landscape ecology; and

² Research published by CABE Space, "Does Money Grow on Trees?" (CABE Space, 2005) has shown the properties located adjacent to parks and green spaces enjoy a 5% to 7% price premium over identical properties in the same area.

³ The vast majority (83%) of the public believe the appearance of their local area is an important factor in deciding where to live (MORI, 2002) and 91% of the public believes that parks and public spaces improve people's quality of life (MORI, 2004).

⁴ The use of Landscape Character Assessments as an important tool for Green Infrastructure delivery plans is reinforced in the recent publication, "Planning Sustainable Communities: A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands" (Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Nature, River Nene Regional Park and English Heritage; 2005)

⁵ "Space for Nature: Landscape-scale action for woodland biodiversity" (The Woodland Trust, 2002) and emerging ecological framework mapping that is being developed by Dr Roger Catchpole at English Nature provide useful frameworks for buffering existing habitats to ensure greatest biodiversity enhancement for resources invested.

⁶ "Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards" (English Nature, 2001) and "Space for People: targeting action for woodland access" provide useful strategic targeting tools to ensure that Green Infrastructure accessibility is maximised.

⁷ Emerging Green Infrastructure plans and strategies across the UK demonstrate strong and extensive partnership working which is an essential component of successful strategy and delivery. which is reinforced by the principles set out by Benedict, M & McMahon, E (2001) in "Green Infrastructure: Smart Conservation for the 21st Century".

- The need for robust funding models to ensure that Green Infrastructure is delivered as a primary public investment with capital and sustainable revenue support.

2.3 The following pages detail the various issues that are currently affecting the application of these principles to the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure in the Northwest.

3.0 Funding Impediments

Limitations of the Single Pot

- 3.1 Outside of the environmental sector, there remains a lack of appreciation for the range of benefits (and their significance) that can be delivered effectively through well managed Green Infrastructure resources. This is particularly the case within the development and regeneration sectors which, importantly, have a significant influence over the use of land and resources. With the Northwest Development Agency operating as the regional champion for economic growth and development, this culture has perhaps been exacerbated by a focus on hard economic outputs under the Single Pot funding structure, with funding output targets agreed by Regional Development Agencies with the Department for Trade and Industry (DTi).
- 3.2 Prior to the Single Pot, there had been some tolerance within the Regional Development Agency for the 'flexing' of funding criteria to enable Green Infrastructure programmes to be delivered, particularly in relation to the administration of EU structural funds which have been a significant source of investment within the region. The Newlands scheme is an example of a programme based on a strong partnership between the NWDA and a range of other regional partners that has demonstrated how soft end use outputs can fulfil key economic growth objectives defined by the Regional Economic Strategy. The new Single Pot structure, coupled with growing financial constraints on RDA budgets in the Northwest in recent years have, however, led to increasing marginalisation of environmental intervention and stewardship in favour of hard economic outputs. This narrowing focus on economic outputs currently presents the most significant barrier to the delivery of strategic Green Infrastructure programmes in the Northwest, and has impacted directly and detrimentally on other large-scale Green Infrastructure initiatives including New Leaf, Pennine Edge Forest, and New Approaches.
- 3.3 The fact that all RDAs consider Green Infrastructure to be of peripheral interest was amply highlighted in their collective response to the House of Commons Select Committee reporting on the Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener programme in 2003⁸. The RDAs jointly commented:

"It is important to recognise that the targets that RDAs are contracted to deliver in return for the single pot do not themselves recognise the direct value and importance of enhancing public space. Many RDAs are, therefore, investing in

⁸ Refer to <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/673/673m22.htm> for the full transcript of the response, which sets out clearly the relationship between the "Cleaner, Safer, Greener" agenda and the vision and targets of the Regional Economic Strategies.

this area of activity despite the absence of specific targets to reflect the investment."

- 3.4 The limitations of policy and funding criteria that are focussed on economic development are not solely a regional issue, but are also relevant across sub-regional partnerships in the Northwest. Indeed, the key themes of funding programmes at the sub-regional level mirror closely those of the NWDA⁹. This is an additional barrier to the funding of Green Infrastructure at the local level.

Managing Finite Resources

- 3.5 Funding will always be constrained by financial limitations because no funding is infinite. In many instances, this can lead to innovation and inventiveness to ensure that the delivery of Green Infrastructure projects and programmes is achieved in a climate of fierce competition for limited resources. However, innovation is no substitute for coherent policy frameworks that provide opportunities for joint endeavour through robust and equitable funding allocations.
- 3.6 In order to appreciate better where Green Infrastructure investment and intervention should be targeted, it is necessary to improve regional understanding of the spatial properties of the multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure. City-region mapping exercises will be essential in this respect, and have been suggested to the Northern Way Steering Group as a worthy recipient of funding from the £100m Northern Way budget.

Missed Opportunities?

- 3.7 There are a number of major funding streams through which resources for the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure could be secured, and through which a number of successful Green Infrastructure initiatives have already been delivered in the Northwest. However, recent experience in the Northwest suggests that key opportunities to secure Green Infrastructure investment, from both national and European budgets, have not been exploited.
- 3.8 A key example relates to the Northern Way Growth Strategy. Despite a weight of reference to soft end use outputs and green delivery mechanisms in the original Northern Way vision document¹⁰, the emerging business plan for delivery of the strategy appears to be focussed on hard economic and 'grey infrastructure' outputs¹¹. This pan-regional budgetary allocation serves only to amplify the restrictive parameters through which economic growth funding is made available at the regional level.

⁹ A review of funding programme details available on sub-regional partnership websites confirms that economic development outputs such as job creation and telecommunications infrastructure predominate. See the following websites for further details: www.cwea.org.uk; www.merseyside.org.uk; www.manchester-enterprises.com; www.elp.org.uk; www.lancashirewest.org.uk; www.ruralcumbria.co.uk.

¹⁰ ODPM (2004) "Making it Happen: The Northern Way" ODPM, London.

¹¹ At the time of writing, the following recent article has claimed that rail projects, incapacity benefit reforms, research and education are to provide the core features of the Northern Way investment allocation: Walker, B (2005) "Northern Way Cash Plan Revealed" in *Regeneration and Renewal*, 3rd June 2005. Haymarket Press, London.

3.9 These missed opportunities are certainly not for the want of effort on the part of delivery partners, and illustrate the ongoing difficulty of leveraging economic funding beyond the Tier 3 and related outputs milestones.

4.0 Organisational Culture

4.1 There are numerous factors that influence the culture of organisations, which in turn has consequences for the strategic prominence given to Green Infrastructure as a vehicle for delivering public benefits across the region. The economic focus given to key regional and sub-regional funding criteria has already been discussed in the consideration of funding impediments. However, other key influences include:

- The bureaucratic distinction made between urban and rural areas and the resulting policy and administrative outcomes that flow from this;
- The short-term nature of political interests and related approaches to local budgetary control; and
- The focus given to sustainability objectives that are closest to the operational remits of individual organisations and departments.

Bridging the Urban Rural Interface

4.2 The urban and rural white papers published in 2000 set out the Government's objectives for urban and rural renaissance¹². It has been commented that these documents reflect the Government's aspirations for departmental organisation, with urban responsibilities falling to ODPM and rural matters to the remit of DEFRA¹³. It is more than reasonable that policy and funding intervention calculations are determined on the basis of categorised needs that reflect manageable units of consideration. It is absurd, however, to ignore the symbiosis that is inherent in these areas. A couple of examples serve to illustrate this point. The migration of town dwellers to the countryside has affected significantly rural property values, and agricultural practices in the upland areas can dramatically increase the chance of urban flooding. Green Infrastructure does not respect these arbitrary boundaries and can play an important role in helping to 'reassemble' the landscape into a coherent functioning entity that spans and is mutually beneficial to urban and rural contexts.

4.3 Notwithstanding the principles above, there are, clearly, different mechanisms and administrative structures through which Green Infrastructure delivery can be manoeuvred in the future. It would be helpful, therefore, for Green Infrastructure Guides to be prepared for the Liverpool and Manchester City Regions and the Lancashire and Cumbria sub-regions respectively. These should articulate the salient challenges and opportunities with which the sub-regions are faced. This should be matched by commitments to action by relevant partner organisations to take steps to overcome impediments, and to exploit opportunities.

The Short Political Horizon

4.4 It is commonly accepted that political interest drives short-term and reactionary approaches to policy and intervention in order to win and maintain favour with an

¹² DETR (2000) "Our Towns and Cities: The Future" DETR, London and DETR (2000) "Our Countryside: The Future – a fair deal for rural England" DETR, London.

¹³ Consultations undertaken in connection with the East Midlands Green Infrastructure Scoping Study that is due to be issued in July 2005.

electorate concerned with issues that have an immediate and tangible effect on quality of life. At the national level, there are signs that Government is embarking on significant policy agendas that buck this trend, particularly in relation to commitments on African poverty and climate change under the current UK presidency of the G8 nations¹⁴.

- 4.5 At the local level, short-term political focus can have a significant impact on the disbursement of local authority budgets, which relates to an extremely significant sum of money in a regional context. In particular, revenue budgets for the management of green spaces and the public realm are prone to risk of diversion to other needs that are perceived as more 'urgent'.
- 4.6 During discussions at the regional Green Infrastructure Seminar held at St Helens World of Glass in January 2005, a number of stakeholders endorsed the creation of a Single Regional Environment Fund as a means of focusing attention on the value of Green Infrastructure. The idea of extending the concept to include a regional endowment fund could also be considered as this agenda is taken forward in the Northwest.

Integrating Sustainability Objectives

- 4.7 The effective delivery of sustainable development relies on a strategic approach that incorporates long-term vision and the co-ordination of actions across wide areas. The Government has recently acknowledged that many of its departments have failed to integrate fully the principles and objectives of sustainable development, but have preferred to focus on those aspects that are most closely related to their respective remits¹⁵. The new UK Sustainable Development Strategy makes plain the need for a cultural shift in this respect. This will necessitate greater emphasis on integrated strategy across the Northwest.
- 4.8 It is notable that the Northwest does not have a regional Environmental Strategy, which, notwithstanding the presence of biodiversity and natural environment priorities in the Regional Sustainable Development Framework¹⁶, compounds the absence of environmental considerations in the delivery of strategic objectives. A regional Environmental Strategy could be used as the basis for determining priorities and related targets for the distribution of a Regional Environment Fund.

5.0 Carrots and Sticks

- 5.1 In addition to the sustainable development gauntlet thrown down by *Securing the Future*, Government departments are now faced with a number of important obligations and targets which should serve to encourage greater prioritisation for the delivery of Green Infrastructure in areas where it is currently deficient.

Public Service Agreements

- 5.2 There is clear synergy, for example, between the principles and benefits of Green Infrastructure and many of the key Public Service Agreement (PSA) Targets that provide a measurable framework against which the performance of the public

¹⁴ The Rt Hon Tony Blair has stated that he is committed to focusing on the challenge of Africa and Climate Change during his presidency of the G8 nations. Refer to www.g8.gov.uk for further details.

¹⁵ HM Government (2005) "Securing the Future: delivering the UK sustainable development strategy" pp15. The Stationery Office, London.

¹⁶ Northwest Regional Assembly (2000) "Taking Forward Action for Sustainability: An Action Plan for the Northwest 2003 - 2006". NWRA, Wigan.

sector can be monitored¹⁷. It is crucial that partners in the region recognise these links, particularly those in Government Office and the family of DEFRA agencies (English Nature, Forestry Commission, and Rural Development Service).

5.3 The key national PSA Targets arising from the 2004 Spending Review that are relevant to Green Infrastructure are set out in Annex Two, and are related to the regional agencies which are bound by them. As the regional arm of central Government that delivers the functions of a number of departments, Government Office for the North West is obligated to a wide range of targets. Agencies operating under the administration of DEFRA are bound by the DEFRA PSA Targets only, but can contribute through inter-departmental partnership working to the achievement of a broader range of PSA obligations.

5.4 Understanding that improved delivery of Green Infrastructure within the region will contribute directly to the achievement of key PSA Targets will be vital to the value attached to environmental investment by the public sector. This concept is already understood in the family of DEFRA agencies, but is, as yet, inconsistently recognised across the various functions of Government Office.

AfS Targets

5.5 Action for Sustainability, the Sustainable Development Framework for the Northwest, contains ten agreed priorities for the region¹⁸. These include:

- Sustainable transport and access;
- Sustainable production and consumption;
- Social equity;
- Biodiversity and landscapes;
- Active citizenship;
- Lifelong learning;
- Cultural distinctiveness;
- Climate change;
- Healthy communities;
- Enterprise and innovation.

5.6 It is clear that, in similar fashion to PSA Targets, that Green Infrastructure is directly or indirectly (and never insignificantly) related to all of these priorities. As a concept, Green Infrastructure can help to organise and synthesise these priorities in relation to environmental stewardship and resource protection, economic prosperity, and social progress. The value of the concept in this regard should not be underestimated.

5.7 There are currently no agreed targets for AfS, but it is understood that these are being developed. The AfS Board, which includes a number of organisations with a key role in advancing the Green Infrastructure concept, should work to ensure that targets are developed to respond to the social, economic and environmental needs of the region.

¹⁷ Public Service Agreements are outcome driven targets that are negotiated between HM Treasury and the departments responsible for delivering them. They provide a basis through which returns on public expenditure can be assured, using performance against the Agreements to determine future budgetary allocations. Refer to www.hm-treasury.gov.uk for further information.

¹⁸ Northwest Regional Assembly (2004) "Action for Sustainability: The Regional Spatial Development Framework for the North West". NWRA, Wigan.

6.0 Strategic Opportunities

6.1 Although a range of planning and delivery impediments have been described above, it should not be taken that the future prospects of improved Green Infrastructure delivery is bleak. Indeed, there are a number of key strategic opportunities that should be recognised and exploited to raise the profile of and support for the Green Infrastructure concept in the Northwest.

Regional Spatial Strategy

6.2 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the Northwest is currently in the process of being superseded by emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the preparation of which is being led by the North West Regional Assembly under the new spatial planning system.

6.3 The RSS will be far more succinct than the outgoing RGP, an approach that is consistent with Government guidance¹⁹ but not with the approach being taken to RSS preparation in other regions. This necessitates the streamlining of policies and supporting information, and has led to suggestions that a Green Infrastructure policy in the RSS could be used as an organising concept through which green targets in the region could be synthesised. This would certainly provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the principles of Green Infrastructure and the importance of their incorporation as a central component of the spatial planning discipline. In particular, the integrating function of the RSS as a strategic planning document should ensure that the multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure and its relevance to other spatial planning issues such as housing, jobs, transport and services, is embedded into current planning thinking.

6.4 Partners will need to continue to work closely with the Regional Assembly and Government Office over the coming months to ensure that Green Infrastructure is given the necessary prominence in the RSS. The Regional Assembly has indicated that policies will be consolidated to no more than 30 pages, including supporting text. With an extensive range of regional planning issues that need to be addressed in the strategy, a strong and rigorous case must be made in support of the Green Infrastructure concept.

Ecological Frameworks

6.5 There is a degree of concern within the 'green sector' relating to the proposal to collapse environmental and biodiversity policies from the current RPG into a generalised Green Infrastructure policy under the emerging RSS. It is considered that this could present a significant risk to the weight of authority given to natural resource protection in the context of new development and strategic spatial planning, notwithstanding the legal framework relating to particular species and habitats under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Habitat Regulations 1994, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and the provisions of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

6.6 To ensure that due consideration is given to ecological principles under the new spatial planning framework, 'Ecological Frameworks' could be (in)valuable tools in the suite of techniques available for environmental planning. English Nature should, as a matter of some urgency, continue to advance the science of this technique with its partners in the Northwest Biodiversity Forum so that suitable

¹⁹ ODPM (2004) "Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies" ODPM, London.

supporting (spatial) information can be provided to the Regional Assembly and Government Office during the RSS preparation period. It is certainly the case that healthy, functioning ecosystems underpin sustainable living, and are fundamental to species and habitat viability, healthy soils, water and air, and provide an essential fabric for sustainable living, and spatial strategy must address this fully.

- 6.7 However, it is imperative that English Nature and the Forum remember that the principles of Green Infrastructure are grounded in multi-functionality, and that the environmental resources of the region are assets in social and economic, as well as environmental, terms. Subscription to this theory will be crucial to the success of Ecological Frameworks in contributing to the Green Infrastructure agenda.

The New Tasking Framework for Regional Development Agencies

- 6.8 The 'single pot' system of bringing together all RDA funding, driven by DTi milestone targets, has been identified as a significant impediment to the delivery of Green Infrastructure. However, the DTi has now stated that²⁰:

"In taking forward their mission of transforming England's regions through sustainable economic development, the RDAs are required to publish Corporate Plans. In their Plans for 2005-08, the RDAs are required by this Framework to show how, in support of their statutory role and their statutory duty to contribute to sustainable development, each RDA will address the priorities identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the region, and contribute to the delivery of the Government's [Spending Review 2004] SR04 PSA Targets on Regional Economic Performance, Sustainable Development and Productivity/Rural Productivity, and through these to the delivery of a range of other PSA Targets..."

- 6.9 The targets relate to several key areas of activity that have a direct and positive bearing on Green Infrastructure, including:

- Sustainable development;
- Neighbourhood renewal;
- Sustainable communities;
- Sustainable farming and food; and
- Voluntary and community sector.

- 6.10 Other PSA targets impact less directly but could, nevertheless, contribute significantly to dealing with some Green Infrastructure outcomes and could be of particular use in helping to alleviate the problem of long-term land stewardship. These are:

- Employment;
- Enterprise (including social enterprises); and
- Skills.

Tackling Worklessness

- 6.11 As Table 6.1 indicates, the Northwest is enjoying unprecedented levels of high employment, albeit below the national average. However, the data shown masks a regional problem surrounding the existence of pockets of high unemployment.

²⁰ Refer to http://www.consumer.gov.uk/rda/info/Tasking_Framework_Annex_A.htm for further details.

Table 6.1: Key Employment Statistics for the Northwest region

Population cohort (Northwest)	Total (thousands)	Percentage
Employment ²¹	3,012	72.8
Unemployment ²¹	155	3.7
Economically Inactive ²¹	972	23.5
Total	4,137	100
Benefit Claimant Count ²²	96	2.3

6.12 The Department of Work and Pensions has recently published its Five Year Strategy which emphasises the need to deal with the problem of worklessness by encouraging those on long-term incapacity benefit to move into some form of employment²³. It aims to increase the overall employment rate from just under 75% to 80%. In the Northwest, this equates to the need to secure a little under 300,000 additional jobs, as Table 6.2 illustrates.

Table 6.2: Number of new jobs required to meet the national 80% employment target in the Northwest

Total population of working age ²¹	4,137,000
80% of total population of working age (0.8 x 4,137,000)	3,309,600
Total currently employed	3,011,835
Balance	297,765

6.13 According to Government statistics, 4.8% of the total working age population that are classed as economically inactive want a job²¹. This equates to 198,000 people. When added to the total unemployment count of 155,000, the demand for jobs in the Northwest exceeds the Government target by 53,000.

6.14 This cohort of society is likely, therefore, to need considerable support and many social enterprises and organisations that have been involved in running Transitional Employment Programmes have learned the value of using the environment as a vehicle for such schemes. Transitional Employment Programmes (also referred to as Intermediate Labour Market Programmes) have also proved to be useful feeders into locally based social enterprises. This offers the prospect of working to deliver the above employment and enterprise PSAs through schemes that also help in the delivery and maintenance of Green Infrastructure.

RES Review

6.12 In addition to the new RDA commitment to meet PSA Targets, the new DTi guidance on regional strategies now includes the following paragraph²⁴:

"The RES must have a clear focus on economic development, and both it and actions to implement it must be based on sustainable development principles set

²¹ Data retrieved from the National Statistics NOMIS website: www.nomisweb.co.uk and is based on mid-year population estimates for 2003 and the local area labour force survey (March 2003 – February 2004)

²² Data retrieved from the National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk

²³ Department for Work and Pensions (2005) "Five Year Strategy: Opportunity and security through life". Available at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/5_yr_strat/index.asp.

²⁴ Department of Trade and Industry (2005) "Guidance to RDAs on Regional Strategies". Available at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/rda/info/res.htm>.

out in the March 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy. The RES should help advance the shared priorities for UK action set out in the strategy – Sustainable Consumption, and Production, Climate Change and Energy, Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement and Sustainable communities..."

- 6.13 This should place Green Infrastructure and the driving force of 'Securing the Future' at the very centre of the most important economic driver in the Region. A commentary on Securing the Future and its relevance to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy is provided at Annex One. It will be important that the coalition of partners working with the NWDA (all of whom should have joint ownership of the Regional Economic Strategy), contribute the skills, advice and lobbying necessary to ensure that Green Infrastructure is given adequate prominence. The continuance of the single pot funding structure and related Tier 3 milestones does, however, pose an interesting paradox in this respect.
- 6.14 The timetable for the review of the Northwest RES has been set. Consultation on a draft RES will take place during the summer of 2005²⁵. The draft RES that will be issued for consultation purposes is to be informed by an Issues Report, a summary of which has been released for public consumption. As it stands, the Issues Report does not recognise the role that Green Infrastructure will play in the future prospects for economic growth in the region. This suggests a continuing focus on hard economic outputs in the future allocation of targets and resources for the region, which goes against the new principles stipulated by Government, through the DTi in the form of Regional Strategy guidance and PSA Target commitments, in relation to RDA operational activity.
- 6.15 This is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed strongly by partners across the Northwest during the forthcoming consultation period.

'Natural England'

- 6.16 It is vital that a strong regional voice is created to drive forward the Green Infrastructure agenda in the Northwest. This will require a united coalition approach to the advancement of the concept and its dissemination throughout the region. It will be necessary, however, for one organisation to act as the regional champion on this issue. It will need to show strong leadership and partnership-building endeavour.
- 6.17 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill²⁶, which was introduced in the House of Commons on 19th May 2005, set the framework for the inauguration of an Integrated Agency to be known as 'Natural England'. This will see the merging of functions that are currently delivered by English Nature, Countryside Agency and the DEFRA Rural Development Service. Natural England

²⁵ Refer to <http://www.nwda.co.uk/RelatedContent.aspx?area=100> for further details of the RES Review.

²⁶ The United Kingdom Parliament (2005) "Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill". Refer to <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/003/2006003.htm>. The Bill sets out Natural England's general purpose as:

- (a) promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity,
- (b) conserving and enhancing the landscape,
- (c) securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment,
- (d) promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation, and
- (e) contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment.

could occupy a satisfactory position to take on this championing role, but it will need to work closely with other agencies in the region, most notably Government Office, the Regional Assembly, and the Regional Development Agency.

- 6.18 This structural adjustment of functions poses uncertainty for many individuals and organisations who are working to improve their understanding of the Green Infrastructure concept. There are likely to be significant challenges ahead as people adjust to new roles in a new bureaucracy. It is essential, however, that sight of the Green Infrastructure agenda is not lost during this transitional period. Natural England will need to lead from the front at the outset of its inception.

7.0 The Delivery Landscape

- 7.1 The Northwest region is renowned for its track record in the delivery of environmental projects and initiatives. There is currently a mass of activity in the region that relates directly to Green Infrastructure projects. There is also significant investment being targeted in specific areas that would be enhanced significantly by greater emphasis on Green Infrastructure planning and delivery.

- 7.2 English Nature has begun to identify and map spatially 'green delivery' across the Northwest. This will be a valuable exercise that will enable Green Infrastructure priorities to be related to existing delivery mechanisms, and for gaps in delivery to be identified where there is a need for intervention. Although the scope of this exercise is relatively limited, there are a number of important issues that need to be addressed before the work is circulated beyond immediate partners for advice and comment. In particular, the following actions should be considered:

- Identifying the geographic location of current, specific projects in addition to the wider 'initiative' boundaries that have already been determined. For example, the Cheshire Meres and Mosses programme is currently shown as a broad initiative across the Cheshire county, although intervention is only being focussed on a number of very localised projects.
- The mapping work has currently only determined the boundaries of initiatives with a specific environmental focus. Other, social and economic programmes and projects that would benefit from greater emphasis on Green Infrastructure should also be included. These would include, amongst others, the Northern Way growth corridor, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders, and Regional Parks.

- 7.3 This mapping work would be usefully correlated with future efforts to determine spatially the multi-functionality of existing Green Infrastructure resources.

8.0 So What Next?

- 8.1 Regions across England are beginning to play with the Green Infrastructure concept and explore what implications it has for public service delivery. Some regions are fairly advanced in these investigations, whilst others, including the Northwest, are at the very beginning of the learning curve. There remains an opportunity, however, for partners across the Northwest, working as a united coalition, to catapult the region to the vanguard of Green Infrastructure thinking – and, most importantly, action.

- 8.2 This paper has highlighted a number of impediments and strategic opportunities that relate to the delivery of Green Infrastructure in the Northwest. It has been

clearly stated that partners need to unite across the region to form a coalition that can advance the profile, the skills and the action that is required to take this agenda forward in the region. A number of specific actions have been suggested, and are summarised in the timetabled schedule below.

- 8.3 The Partnership Plan that supports this Issues Paper provides the platform from which partners will ensure that their roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and implemented. Partners are encouraged to sign up to the Plan and make available an appropriate level of financial and human resource to implement its content as expediently as possible.

Table 8.1: Summary of Recommended Actions

Recommended Actions	Completion Target
Hold regional workshop to discuss Issues Paper and draft Partnership Plan	July 2005
Partners to endorse and commit to Partnership Plan, leading to inception of a <i>Green Infrastructure Coalition</i> .	July 2005
Continue to press the Northern Way Steering Group for adequate recognition of and support for Green Infrastructure as a central component of the economic growth strategy	Beyond Business Plan publication in July 2005
Publish a Green Infrastructure Guide for the Liverpool and Manchester City Regions	June 2005
Publish a Green Infrastructure Guide for Lancashire and Cumbria	October 2005
Identify core areas of Green Infrastructure deficit for targeted intervention	December 2005
Explore the viability and scope of a regional Environmental Fund (including endowment provision)	December 2005
Develop targets for the Regional Sustainable Development Framework that relate to the delivery of Green Infrastructure	To fit in with AfS development timetable
Ensure that Green Infrastructure is given adequate and robust prominence in the RSS for the Northwest	September 2005
Provide advice to NWRA on the incorporation of Ecological Frameworks as a core spatial component of the RSS	September 2005
Corporate Plan for the RDA to be developed that addresses the requirements of the Tasking Framework and Securing the Future.	
Work with NWDA to take forward the RES Review that incorporates principles of sustainable development and which provides leverage for investment in Green Infrastructure	September 2005
Complete 'Green Delivery' mapping exercise	End July 2005
Review of progress against Partnership Plan	March 2006

Annex One: A Brief Commentary on The relevance of Green Infrastructure to the delivery of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*²⁷.

Ref	Text as it appears in the Policy	Relevance to Green Infrastructure
P3 para 2	<i>Make the wrong choices now and future generations will live with changed climate, depleted resources and without the green space and biodiversity that contribute both to our standard of living and our quality of life</i>	This is the statement contained in the second paragraph of the entire document and is the Prime Minister's voice. Nothing further need be said about the significance.
P3 para 5	We need to regard the local environment as a major public service (like the NHS or education) which benefits us every day. Looked at this way, it is clear why policies to promote better quality environments also have the capacity to have long-term social and economic benefits. Often those people who are most economically and socially disadvantaged also live in degraded environments with fewer jobs, unsafe and ugly streets. Our goals are a strong economy, and decent homes in places with clean, safe and green public spaces, where people are able to lead healthy lives, and enjoy the environment around them.	
P15 para 3	However, although the 1999 strategy stressed that these objectives had to be pursued at the same time, in practice, different agencies focussed on those one or two most relevant to them	This is an acknowledgement that some bodies used only sections of the 1999 policy. This will presumably not be allowed to happen under the new policy. Agencies can be challenged if they do not fully consider all aspects of SD. Green space etc is now firmly embedded in the policy and agencies will be obliged to deliver.
P17 para 5		Under this section the shared priorities include natural resource protection and environmental enhancement. Also included is the delivery of sustainable communities including programmes to tackle poverty and environmental

²⁷ Taken from TEP, IBIS Environmental & Design Consultants and Alison Millward Associates (2005) "East Midlands Green Infrastructure Scoping Study". Due to be published in July 2005 by the East Midlands Regional Assembly.

Ref	Text as it appears in the Policy	Relevance to Green Infrastructure
		degradation.
P21 para 7	Further development on indicators	Ecological footprints mentioned.
P29	Community Action 2020 – Together We Can	Programme to be launched later this year.
P37		Discusses the role of schools and education – provides support for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The DfES has just been heavily criticised (Environmental Audit Report April 05) for failing to deliver ESD.
P57	The Government wants to see a greater take up of robust and accredited environmental management systems such asBS8555	
P98	The Government will work with stakeholders to develop a clear vision and coherent approach for the UK to the protection and enhancement of natural resources by the end of 2005	Reinforces the potential influence of Green Coalitions
P110	Tackling inherited degradation	Cites examples of Green Infrastructure on reclamation schemes (mentions Newlands community woodlands scheme in the Northwest),
P112	The Government will take further measures to achieve our aim that everyone should have opportunities to enjoy the natural environment.	Prioritises coastal land
P118 – 137 Ch. 6		Chapter deals with Sustainable Communities and provided many links into Green Infrastructure.
P123		Mentions Home Office/ODPM programme 'Safer & Stronger Communities Fund' and Local Area Agreements.
P133	The Government will fund further research on the causes of environmental inequality	Perhaps the early stages of finding good ways to evaluate Green Infrastructure
P134	While we carry our further research to help identify the areas with the worst local environment, the Government will in the short term focus on improving the environment in the areas already identified	Useful lever for prioritising GI in needy urban areas

Ref	Text as it appears in the Policy	Relevance to Green Infrastructure
	as most deprived by the IMD	
P153	All central Government departments and their executive agencies will produce focussed sustainable development action plans based on this strategy by December 2005	A useful interface for promoting regional Green Infrastructure
P154	The Government will strengthen the Sustainable Development Commission and expand its role to act as an independent "watchdog" looking at Governments progress on this strategy.	The SDC will hopefully be in a position to identify shortfalls in the delivery of Green Infrastructure as part of the Strategy.
P157	The Government will update guidance on preparing Regional economic Strategies in 2005 to help RDAs in delivering economic growth and sustainable development.	This has been done and all RESs must conform to the tenets of 'Securing the Future'.
P162	The Government will launch the "How to" programme to promote 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' communities.	

Annex Two: National PSA Targets (arising from Spending Review 2004) that are relevant (directly or indirectly) to Green Infrastructure²⁸

Lead Department (National)	PSA Target	Bound Agencies (Regional)
DfES	<p>Objective I: Safeguard children and young people, improve their life outcomes and general well-being, and break cycles of deprivation <i>(1) improve children's communication, social and emotional development – Green Infrastructure provides opportunities for developing cognitive skills, physical development, and emotional well-being</i> <i>(4) halt the year on year rise in obesity among children under 11 – Green Infrastructure provides opportunities for recreation and informal amenity as part of a healthy lifestyle for young people</i></p> <p>Objective II: Raise standards and tackle the attainment gap in schools <i>(9) enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5 to 16 year olds – Green Infrastructure includes formal sporting facilities and informal recreational space that can be used by schools and extra-curricula associations as sports resources for young people</i></p> <p>Objective III: All young people to reach age 19 ready for skilled employment or higher education <i>(12) Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training – Green Infrastructure, particularly woodlands and other semi-natural habitats, provide opportunities for green apprenticeships and social enterprise which can be effective skills development vehicles for young people, particularly in disadvantaged areas</i></p>	GONW
	<p>Objective IV: Increase the number of adults with the skills required for employability and progression to higher levels of training <i>(13) Improve the basic skills of adults through Skills for Life – Green Infrastructure can offer opportunities for green apprenticeships including arboricultural and horticultural skills, and environmental stewardship.</i></p>	
DTi	<p>Objective III: Ensuring fair, competitive markets and empowering consumers <i>(4) Lead work to deliver the goals of energy policy, including the reduction of greenhouse gases – Green Infrastructure, particularly trees</i></p>	GONW

²⁸ HM Treasury: Spending Review 2004.

Refer to http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/psa/spend_sr04_psaindex.cfm for further details.

Lead Department (National)	PSA Target	Bound Agencies (Regional)
	<p><i>and woodlands, can absorb atmospheric pollutants that contribute to the Greenhouse effect. Effective management of Green Infrastructure also provide opportunities for the production of energy crops and renewable energy.</i></p> <p>Objective IV: Enabling successful enterprise and business (6) <i>Build an enterprise society in which small firms of all kinds thrive and achieve their potential – the environmental sector in the Northwest is a significant contributor to the regional economy. Green Infrastructure offers a range of opportunities for business enterprise in tourism, agriculture, energy, landscape implementation and management, and many other.</i> (7) <i>Make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all regions and reduce the performance gap between regions – the quality of Green Infrastructure can be a significant component of regional and local image, and is an important consideration of business location</i></p>	
Department for Transport	<p>Objective III: Balance the need to travel with the need to improve quality of life by improving safety and respecting the environment (6) <i>Improve air quality – Green Infrastructure can provide opportunities for sustainable travel through the provision of high-quality, off-road walking and cycling links. It also contributes directly to air quality amelioration.</i> (7) <i>To reduce Greenhouse gas emissions – as above</i></p>	GONW
Home Office	<p>Objective I: People are and feel more secure in their homes and daily lives (2) <i>Reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour – a high quality local environment that is designed and managed appropriately can directly reduce opportunities for some forms of crime, including burglary and assault.</i></p> <p>Objective V: Citizens, communities and the voluntary sector are more fully engaged in tackling social problems (6) <i>The quality of the local environment can also engender a sense of local pride, reducing incidences of criminal damage and vandalism. Opportunities to involve communities in the design and management of Green Infrastructure encourage a sense of guardianship and local</i></p>	GONW

Lead Department (National)	PSA Target	Bound Agencies (Regional)
	<p><i>belonging.</i></p> <p><i>(7) Reduce race inequalities and build community cohesion – by bringing people and communities together (either through outdoor events or through active involvement in the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure can help to build understanding, respect and appreciation between different sectors of the community</i></p>	
DEFRA	<p><i>(1) Promote sustainable development across Government – providing balanced policy and resource attention between economic, social and environmental priorities is central to this theme and relates comprehensively to the need for improved planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure</i></p> <p>Objective I: Protect and improve the rural, urban, marine and global environment, and lead on the integration of policies</p> <p><i>(2) Reduce green house gas emissions - Green Infrastructure can provide renewable energy crops, provide alternatives to road-base travel, and absorb atmospheric pollutants and particulates</i></p> <p><i>(3) Care for our natural heritage, make the countryside attractive and enjoyable for all, and preserve biological diversity – integrated management of Green Infrastructure resources can ensure that all of these functions are optimised. This relates to designated ecological sites as well as open countryside ad urban green space systems.</i></p> <p>Objective II: <i>Reduce the productivity gap in rural areas – Green Infrastructure has an important role in rural areas, particularly in relation to agriculture and tourism. The physical environment is a huge asset to the region in this respect and plays an important role in the rural economy.</i></p> <p>Objective III: Promote a sustainable, competitive and safe food supply chain which meets consumer's requirements. <i>Green Infrastructure plays in important role in Sustainable Farming Food, not only in relation to Environmental Stewardship, but also in protecting areas of high agricultural productivity</i></p> <p>Objective IV: Promote sustainable, diverse and modern and adaptable farming. <i>Sustainable farming practice should ensure that environmental resources are protected, and enhanced where possible. The Green</i></p>	GONW, Forestry Commission, English Nature, Rural Development Service

Lead Department (National)	PSA Target	Bound Agencies (Regional)
	<p><i>Infrastructure approach also seeks to maximise the social and economic functionality of resources, which should ensure that the open countryside provides accessible benefits to urban and rural residents.</i></p> <p>Objective VI: Protect the public's interest in relation to environmental impacts and health <i>(8) Improve air quality - Green Infrastructure can provide opportunities for sustainable travel through the provision of high-quality, off-road walking and cycling links. It also contributes directly to air quality amelioration.</i></p>	
DCMS	<p>Objective I: Further enhance access to culture and sport for children and give them opportunity to develop their talents <i>(1) enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5 to 16 year olds – Green Infrastructure includes formal sporting facilities and informal recreational space that can be used by schools and extra-curricula associations as sports resources for young people</i> <i>(2) halt the year on year rise in obesity among children under 11 – Green Infrastructure provides opportunities for recreation and informal amenity as part of a healthy lifestyle for young people</i></p> <p>Objective II: Increase and broaden the impact of culture and sport to enrich individual lives, strengthen communities and improve the places where people live <i>(3) Increase the take up of cultural and sporting opportunities by adults and young people - Green Infrastructure includes formal sporting facilities and informal recreational space as well as cultural assets such as scheduled monuments, parks and gardens, and landscapes that contribute to local sense of place. Integrated management of Green Infrastructure ensures that these assets are preserved and that opportunities to enjoy them are provided to people of all ages and backgrounds.</i></p> <p>Objective III: Maximise the contribution which the tourism, creative and leisure industries can make to the Northwest <i>(4) Improve the productivity of tourism, creative and leisure industries – leisure and tourism are major economic sectors in the Northwest that relies on the quality and accessibility of the natural environment. Integrated management is essential to ensure that quality is not undermined by tourism and leisure pressures, but which does</i></p>	GONW

Lead Department (National)	PSA Target	Bound Agencies (Regional)
	<i>not prohibit the use of the outdoor environment as a major leisure and tourism resource.</i>	
DWP	<p>Objective I: Ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty <i>(2) improve children's communication, social and emotional development – Green Infrastructure provides opportunities for developing cognitive skills, physical development, and emotional well-being</i></p> <p>Objective II: Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age <i>The role of Transitional Employment Programmes in implementing and managing Green Infrastructure has been proven by the work of Community Forests, Groundwork and other delivery organisations. This can play a significant role in reducing the proportion of people who are economically inactive.</i></p>	GONW



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