

Board Paper

Paper 22.07

Date

2 February 2022

Title

25-YEP monitoring report

Report by

Louise Jakobsson, Head of Strategy, EIP Monitoring and Reporting

Paper for decision

Open in part

Issue

1. The OEP is planning to publish its first 25 YEP monitoring report in March. The report is being drafted under the guidance of the 25 YEP Steering Group. This paper seeks the Board's views on the key messages and recommendations of the report and its agreement on sign-off process till launch.

Recommendation

2. The Board is recommended to:
 - a) consider and comment on the draft key messages and recommendations for the seven chapters of the report as set out in Annex A.
 - b) consider and comment on the letter, foreword and executive summary in the full draft in Annex B and provide any other comments as relevant.
 - c) agree the proposed sign-off process as set out in this paper to meet the publication date of 8 of March. This involves:
 - a. the continuing delegation of remaining work needed to the draft report, and of the launch arrangement, to the Steering Group and executive.
 - b. the final copy to be signed-off by electronic business by the Board.

Background

3. The 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP), published in 2018, provides the government's overarching strategy for protecting and improving the environment. It will be updated in a new Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) in 2023. Part of the OEP's role is to scrutinise progress against the 25 YEP, and subsequent plans.
4. The government produces an annual progress report (APR), with the most recent report published in October 2021. Future APRs will be statutory and require a response from the OEP within six months. We intend to publish our first 25YEP monitoring report within the same time frame, ensuring that there is no governance gap on reporting.
5. The 25YEP monitoring report was due to be published in January. However, the Steering Group took a decision to postpone the launch to have sufficient time to ensure a high-quality report, and to avoid confusing messaging by having it too closely aligned with the launch of the OEP draft strategy. At its last meeting of 6 January, the Steering Group agreed that the report will be published in the second week of March.
6. The 25 YEP monitoring report is being written under the guidance of the 25 YEP Steering Group, with the Board having opportunity to consider and influence the direction of the report. On August 12, the Board agreed on the report's strategic objectives and strategic issues:

Strategic objectives

- i. Influencing the government to improve the next Environmental Improvement Plan, to be refreshed in 2023
- ii. Influence the way the government reports progress in its 2022 annual report and beyond
- iii. Influencing statutory target setting (due to be set by October 2022)
- iv. Influencing environmental monitoring funding decisions (e.g. Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment)

In addition, the report will raise the profile of OEP by:

- v. Demonstrating a fraction of our future capability to provide expert, independent and strategic advice and signalling our intent and approach to monitoring.

Strategic issues

- i. *This section has been redacted as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

7. With a grounding in the strategic objectives and issues, the report has continued to evolve under the Steering Group's guidance. This has been in response to stakeholder views and feedback from critical friends and peer reviewers, as well as Board comments and steer on the emerging narrative and recommendations at its November meeting. In particular, the strategic

issues have been unpacked, leading to the current framing of the report around six building blocks for future plans. These were presented to the Board at its meeting 14 December meeting, as part of discussion of the overall monitoring function.

8. An overview of key messages and recommendation is found in **Annex A**. This is not intended as format for the final report, but is provided to give the Board an overview of the developing report. A complete current draft with foreword and executive summary is included in **Annex B**.

Analysis

Report

9. The OEP's first 25 YEP monitoring report will be important for signalling the future direction of the function for scrutinising EIPs and targets (and the APRs), and a vehicle for how it holds government to account. It will be the first publication to make recommendations to the government since the advice on the environmental principles. The reaction to the first report will help to determine the right approach for the monitoring function going forward, and provide lessons learned through its creation.
10. The report will need to strike the right tone between being rigorous, independent, ambitious, and constructive to resonate with government and broader stakeholders. It also needs to be accessible. The report is intended to speak to the public and the current narrative, represented and reinforced by others such as the NGOs. It will also need to speak to government, and within this both to the political leadership and the administrative and technical parts of Whitehall.
11. The agreed approach of the first report is to provide a high-level stock-take of the current state, rather than a fully-fledged assessment of the government's report and the goals. It will set out building blocks that should be in place for future EIPs to drive meaningful action forward and deliver on the government's stated ambitions for the environment. These were presented to the Board on 14 December who agreed to extending our insights through the six building blocks which are the foundation of our first report.
12. *This section has been redacted as it contains information for future publication.*

Next steps and sign-off

13. The report continues to be under active development. Further work is needed to improve the drafting and to refine recommendations and key messages. Additionally, there is work to do around quality assurance, proof reading and the design of (info)graphics and report layout. This work will continue to happen under the guidance of the Steering Group.
14. The plan is that the report will be published on the March 8, with a media briefing taking place on March 7 and a virtual public launch event on March 9. A communication strategy and material are being developed together with the communications team. Input, steer and decisions will be sought from the Steering Group as appropriate.

15. The Board is asked to continue to delegate further work on the draft as well as launch arrangements to the executive and the Steering Group. However, final sign-off of the report will be sought from the Board, and it is recommended this is done by electronic business to meet the deadline.

Remit

16. The remit of the report is England only. We are developing relevant advice for NI and this is discussed in a separate paper (22.08).

Finance and Resource

17. The development of the report and associated engagement and report production is a resource intensive exercise. This is currently the focus of the Insights team. This is stretching the team, particularly as it is not at full capacity. It is currently considered manageable, but the Insight team's ability to undertake additional work is limited.

18. Launch event activities will cost around £10,000. Additional cost of printing and design will be around £10,000.

Impact Assessments

Risk Assessment

19. There is a risk that if our main messages are not sufficiently comprehensive, clear, engaging and well-argued, we will not have the impact intended either with government or our broader stakeholders. This is being mitigated by close involvement with the project board and the Steering Group on the development of the report.

20. There is a risk that we fail to deliver a high quality product to the time we have set out, particularly if we identify the need for substantial additional work. This is being mitigated by close engagement with the Steering Group, ensuring risks to delivery are flagged and considered by the project board, and the recognition of the report being an organisational priority, allowing for redirection of resources should this be required.

Equality Analysis

21. None identified

Implementation Timescale

22. The report will enter final stages of design in mid-February, with media launch taking place March 7, publication on March 8 and a public launch event March 9.

Communications

23. We are working with the communications team to develop communications around the launch of the report. A media launch will be held in advance of publication and actively promote the

report in media. The communication plan will seek input and approval from the Project Board and Steering Group.

External Stakeholders

24. We have tested key messages and approach with external stakeholders, including eNGOs, Local Authorities and private sector and business groups. We have sought input from critical friends and peer reviewers on the draft of the report. We have also engaged with ALBs, the Defra team and deputy director level civil servants across relevant government departments. Following the steer of the Steering Group, we will also undertake limited socialisation with key stakeholders in advance of the launch.

Internal Stakeholders

25. The report and supporting work programme have had input from the Project Board chaired by the CEO, which meets every other week.

ANNEXES LIST

ANNEX A – *This section has been redacted as it contains information for future publication.*

ANNEX B – *This section has been redacted as it contains information for future publication.*