

**Date:** 28 November 2022

**Title:** Research into the OEP's influence and voice

**Report Author:** Andy Lester, Head of Business Strategy and Planning

**Responsible Executive Director:** Richard Greenhous, Chief of Staff

[Open paper for discussion](#)

### Background

1. On 2 November the Board discussed several related matters within the theme of maximising our influence. We planned to return to questions related our reputation and voice, following receipt of research we have commissioned on this subject.
2. We commissioned research with the objective to:
  - a. systematically gather evidence of how the OEP and its work has been received by key stakeholders
  - b. assess the OEP's reputation by analysing evidence about its perceived authority including:
    - i. the perceived credibility and reputation of the OEP;
    - ii. confidence in the tone of the OEP in using its public voice;
    - iii. confidence in the positioning of the OEP in the context of its independent remit; and
    - iv. how the OEP is developing a purposeful voice
  - c. provide insights and recommendations about how the OEP can strengthen its positioning and voice and achieve greater impact.
3. The research questions to be addressed were:
  - a. What is the OEP's reputation amongst stakeholders and how does this vary?
  - b. To what extent is the OEP seen as credible and what affects this?
  - c. To what extent has the OEP struck the tone and projected the voice that will allow it to succeed?

- d. To what extent has the OEP adopted the position that will allow it to succeed?
  - e. What are stakeholders' views on how the OEP's future work can be more authoritative and impactful?
4. [Woodnewton Associates](#) were appointed in a competitive tendering process. The CVs of the delivery team are set out at Annex A.
  5. The research has had two main components:
    - a. stakeholder research via a series of 20 semi-structured 45-60m interviews with senior stakeholders. Stakeholders involved are set out at Annex B
    - b. quantitative analysis of how key publications / activities have been received in the media, social media, Parliament and public debate.
  6. *This section has been redacted as it includes personal data* are attending the Board's meeting to present their interim findings, ahead of finalising their report. The Board will then be invited to discuss the following questions, with Woodnewton remaining with us to support that discussion.
  7. The Board has previously raised a query of the interaction between our statutory functions, and how we may use our voice. A note on the legal context is set out at Annex C.

## Discussion

8. Do you recognise the picture our research indicates?
  - a. What is surprising?
  - b. What are you pleased with?
  - c. What concerns you?
9. How should this feedback influence how we position ourselves in future?
10. How should this feedback influence how we develop and use our voice in the medium term – how should this steer our thinking for our 3-5 year plan?
  - a. In engaging through the media?
  - b. In working with stakeholders?
  - c. In engaging the public?
11. Which of these things is most important? Now? In the medium term?
12. Should we communicate and use our voice beyond matters directly related to the issues we are working on? For example, to comment on issues of the day, which fall within our statutory remit.

**Annex A – This section has been redacted as it includes personal data.**

**Annex B – Stakeholders interviewed**

Baroness Kate Parminter	Lords' Environment & Climate Change Committee
<i>TBC (not confirmed)</i>	Environment Audit Committee
David Hill	Defra
Karl Beattie	DAERA
David Hart KC	Environmental Law Association
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	UKELA
Brendan Freeman	Climate Change Committee
James Markwick	Natural England
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	Environment Agency
Matthew Farrow	Broadway Initiative
Signe Norberg	Aldersgate Group
Stuart Colville	Water UK
<i>Anonymous</i>	National Farmers Union
Elliott Chapman-Jones	Wildlife Trusts
Richard Benwell	Wildlife and Countryside Link
Rosie Cunningham	RSPB
Ruth Chambers	Green Alliance
Sean Kelly	NI Environment Link
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	Ulster Wildlife Trust
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	Client Earth
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	Worldwide Fund for Nature
<i>Anonymity not confirmed</i>	Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful

Our consultants seek confirmation from participants as to whether they are happy to be identified. The request to participate was typically sent to the Chief Executive.

**Annex C – This section has been redacted as it contains legally privileged advice.**

Paper to be published	Yes, in part
Publication date (if relevant)	With meeting minutes
If it is proposed not to publish the paper or to not publish in full please outline the reasons why with reference to the exemptions available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). Please include references to specific paragraphs in your paper	Elements may be redacted as publication would contravene data protection requirements (s.40)