



## ***Putting Nature on the Map* – a project to identify and categorise the places in the UK where the conservation of nature and landscape comes first**

For a century or more, conservation charities and public bodies of all kinds have managed areas of land and sea in the UK to protect nature and conserve landscape. Some of these places – such as National Parks or National Nature Reserves – owe their origins to legislation, others – like nature reserves – to the work of far seeing individuals or organisations. The result is a complex patchwork of places where special measures are taken for nature and landscape.

And yet astonishingly there is no comprehensive, up-to-date, central record of all these places whose management meets international standards. So we cannot say with confidence how much land and sea is managed primarily for nature and landscape, nor the priorities for management. We know a lot about individual types of protected areas of course, but have patchy knowledge of the overall picture. This hinders our efforts to use these areas to help nature and landscape adapt to climate change. Our collective national conservation efforts are not always appreciated. We cannot fully promote our nature lands for recreation and tourism. And we undersell our national experience in conservation when the global need for marketable skills and expertise in this area has never been greater.

*Putting Nature on the Map* aims to address this challenge. Using the latest advice from IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, we will work with the full range of public, private and voluntary organisations in all parts of the UK to identify what ‘protected areas’ exist, classify the aims of their management, record this information, and make it available nationally and internationally. The work will be done under the auspices of the UK IUCN National Committee, supported by public agencies and private charities, and working with the Cambridge-based UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

At the end of the exercise in 2011, UNEP-WCMC will have a comprehensive digital and mapped record of the land and sea areas in the UK where nature and landscape are given priority (recognising of course that in many other areas these are important management considerations). This information will be freely available to all decision makers in the UK, and can be updated as required.

As a result, it will be possible:

- to say precisely what kind of internationally recognised protected areas exist in the UK, and where
- to raise the profile of protected areas with the public, using maps and interactive computer technology
- to provide better information to planners working on land use strategies, especially to help nature adapt to climate change
- to show better how protected areas provide ecosystem services, such as water storage and flood prevention, carbon storage carbon, soil and vegetation protection, and to valuable qualities like tranquillity
- to demonstrate how these areas contribute to the diversity and distinctiveness of the UK’s landscapes
- to show the full range of places that can attract tourists seeking contact with nature and landscape
- to help the UK fulfil its obligations internationally, for example in global treaties on biodiversity and within the EU
- to showcase UK conservation experience abroad as a marketable service.