



Ministry of Economic Affairs

The Natural Way Forward

Government Vision 2014



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Foreword

Following changes in society Dutch nature policy has entered a new phase. We now have a fairly robust National Ecological Network in place but we have not yet managed to halt the deterioration of nature. This is why national government and provincial authorities, together with players in society, have drawn up a manifesto, called Pact for Nature, in which they have laid down their ambitions for the ongoing improvement of nature in the Netherlands. The new Nature Conservation Act will provide a sound basis for these ambitions to be realised.

But more is required for the long term. Nature's role in society and in the economy can and must also be stronger. By treating nature in a different way we can do nature and ourselves a great service. Nature and the economy can reinforce one another. This is a vision that points the way for a nature policy, which is in keeping with the spirit of the times and flexible enough to change with it. It makes clear what is necessary to realise the national and international objectives we have already invested in a great deal: the conservation of biodiversity and a stronger and more sustainable role of nature for society and the economy.

Nature of the future is key here, addressing a planning horizon of at least twenty years. Nature with a role for society, for towns, cities and the countryside, for which national government has a responsibility that is shared with provincial authorities in many areas. Compliance with national and international agreements on the protection of species and habitats plays an important part in it but also the question of how to protect and utilise nature more effectively in the interest of us all and how to strengthen partnerships for nature, from local to international partnerships.

The building blocks for this Vision were gathered from discussions with people working with nature: site managers, provincial authorities, producers and inhabitants who took initiatives for action, and many, many others. It is these people I would like to thank heartily for their contribution. We have also gratefully made use of visions and the exploratory research carried out over recent years by provincial and other authorities, civil society organisations, businesses, research institutes and various advisory bodies.

This Nature Vision is a strategic document setting out the major strands of government policy as they will be shaped in consultation with provincial and municipal authorities. It is one step in a long process of change. In addition to these strands and a number of long-term objectives, the document also describes actions for the short term. This is therefore not a static policy document. Nor does it have a legal effect. Parallel to this Vision, the new nature conservation bill will be discussed in Parliament. The documents referred to and the Pact for Nature, agreed in 2013, provide a clear perspective on the role to be played by the government, provincial and other authorities, the European Union, civil society organisations, businesses and the public in the policy for nature of the future.

Policy renewal requires more than a document alone. It is concerned with a change in thinking and doing. The government therefore regards this Vision as a long-term road map, intended for those involved in the process of creating a form of nature that is at the heart of society, and an integral part of a sustainable economic and social development. The Vision shows that the envisaged changes are already taking place. The first steps have been taken and not just by the authorities either. Now it is a matter of the authorities, businesses, nature organisations and the inhabitants of this country to make a concerted effort to achieve our common goal: a strong form of nature thriving in a dynamic society.

Sharon A.M. Dijkma
Minister for Agriculture

Summary

Our natural environment is of great value to people, not only in the form of protected nature reserves in or outside the Netherlands, but also the nature close to home, in towns and cities and in the countryside. Species richness is an important component of this natural environment, important not just in our own country but globally too, as we would like to pass on this richness to future generations. For this, the economy needs to be interwoven with the diversity of nature in a sustainable way: nature must be placed at the heart of society. This Nature Vision outlines how the government, in partnership with provincial authorities, wishes to shape the role of nature for the public interest over the next fifteen to twenty years, building on the ideas existing in provincial and municipal communities, businesses and civil society organisations

'The energetic civil society' is key

Over the past decades the protection of nature has increasingly been in the hands of national government, with a strong emphasis on nature as a value in itself. This approach has produced its successes, but it has also been instrumental in eroding the commitment of civil society.

At the same time, we saw the emergence of people's and businesses' initiatives for the protection or introduction of nature: initiatives which show that it is quite possible for nature and the economy to go hand in hand, to the mutual benefit of both. This is based on enlightened self-interest. People, young people in particular, need green spaces in their direct surroundings to relax, do sports, experience freedom and let off steam. Businesses have increasingly come to regard nature and biodiversity as a production asset and sustainability as an opportunity to compete on the global market.

The government is keen to tie in with this stronger role of the public and the development of green enterprise. For this reason, it places creative and responsible people, and by extension the 'energetic civil society', at the heart of its nature policy.



Pursuing the nature policy shift

This constitutes a shift in nature policy. At government level this shift is already taking place: large parts of nature policy are being transferred to provincial authorities and there is an intention to place agri-environment schemes in the hands of area-specific collectives. The government is convinced of the importance of these two administrative transitions. It also encourages greater involvement of the public and businesses by concluding Green Deals and organising Green Tables and it works towards more scope for Staatsbosbeheer (the National Forest Service in the Netherlands) to reinforce its position in society and collaborate with businesses. The new Nature Conservation Act will lay the foundations for an updated and more workable legal framework. The government's Knowledge Network will become an open network providing full access to other authorities, civil society organisations and businesses.

Towards diverse nature at the heart of society.

The government wishes to diligently pursue the course it has embarked on and wants to work towards a robust and diverse form of nature, which is not just able to cope with the impact of society but actually thrives on it. The government attaches great importance to turning the image of nature as a hindrance into that of nature as a source of social and economic development. For the facilitating role of the government - referred to as 'the foundation' in this document - this means that there will be more attention for natural systems on the scale of the landscape so that the focus on the level of specific species and habitats can be reduced while conserving them in places where they were found earlier. Freeing nature policy from the tendency to focus on detail will increase the opportunities for the creation of a more robust form of nature, opening the way for nature and social and economic developments to go together more easily. Nature policy is not about saving the last bat in the country but about investing in healthy nature for people, plants and animals.

Public involvement in nature, which is part of this Vision's 'construction', will result in nature being expanded, better perceived, embedded at every level of society, and supported by the commitment of the public, businesses and private organisations. Nature will thus not need to be defended against society but is an indispensable and integral part of it. Public involvement will not only benefit nature but also biodiversity and its associated national and international objectives. The endeavour to place nature at the heart of society is based on the government's vision that society is shaped by its people, not by its government. This also implies that the future scenarios and the objectives set down in this document do not always accompany government measures one-on-one. In a society where people seem increasingly able to bring nature objectives closer to realisation, it is right and proper for the government to exercise restraint and adopt a facilitating and encouraging role.

Green enterprise is key to the government's vision for nature of the future. Through sustainable trade chains and sustainable consumption and innovation nature in the Netherlands is to become an important component of green growth. This is possible when parties in society invest in nature or when nature becomes an integral part of a business strategy or a production chain. National government and provincial authorities will play a facilitating role in this process.



Nature combinations

The Netherlands has committed itself to nature objectives in and outside Europe. Its primary strategy is one of spatially separate functions with the National Ecological Network as its exponent. As agreed with the provinces under the Pact for Nature, this network is being realised in an ongoing process. Still, in the long term, the objectives for the conservation of biodiversity can only be achieved if more resources for biodiversity can be drawn on than those provided by the Network alone. This is possible by realising combinations of nature and other uses, such as agriculture, country estate management, recreation, water collection, towns and cities, industrial estates, waterways, etc. Obviously we cannot be 100% sure that these combined uses bring about sufficient results but there are good and still unused opportunities to be found there. Such nature combinations can only succeed if nature provides added value to the use involved, and to get this off the ground we need to look differently at the relationship between nature and these other uses: not as opposites but as complementary to each other.

Towards nature-inclusive agriculture

Nature combinations can bring about major social gains. This is especially true for one of the chief global challenges: a more sustainable agriculture and food production. Worldwide we are faced with the challenge of increasing productivity and reducing the use of raw materials. This must be done in a way that meets the rising demand for food, improves the quality of the living environment and leaves the reserves of raw materials intact. In short: more agriculture and more nature as well. This will only be possible if we work towards a more nature-inclusive agriculture, a way of food production that is economically woven into nature to the benefit of both. This route offers major opportunities for Dutch agriculture in the long term. The government therefore encourages the development of this nature-inclusive agriculture and of more efficient raw material chains, building on the work of the front-runners in these fields.





Focus on conditions

Over time, nature combinations will produce a new construction for nature. The building blocks will be supplied by several actors: citizens, businesses, civil society organisations, and public authorities at all levels, ranging from the local to global levels. This construction, like any other construction, needs a solid foundation. Laws and regulations are an indispensable element of this construction. Today however, the application of regulations seems to have become an objective in itself. In this document the government raises the question: ‘Why are we doing this?’ which leads to the following shifts in emphasis:

- Focus on the realisation of Natura 2000 objectives is done at higher levels of scale than before. Managing at the local protected area level only is likely to produce less nature at greater effort than managing at higher levels (at a regional level, for instance). Achieving objectives established for bio-geographical regions instead of individual Member States will, with time, produce better results.
- Changes of climate and changes in society increase the need for managing the conditions for natural processes rather than managing specific species and habitats. Such conditions include the quality of the soil system, the presence of natural pest control mechanisms in landscape elements, possibly in combination with ecosystem services like water storage. This requires an approach at landscape and regional scales, where town and countryside are considered in conjunction. The government will support experiments with this more regional approach, in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

The government will bring the two issues to the attention of the European Commission and discuss them at European levels in the context of existing European objectives for the conservation and development of biodiversity.

International efforts for sustainability

In our approach to nature conservation we must always take account of the way other countries are dealing with it, as nature does not respect national borders. Nature policy requires international harmonisation and cooperation. Moreover, our economy has a strong outward orientation with imports and exports affecting the natural capital in other countries. The government wishes to provide a link between dealings at national and dealings at global levels. Actions that could at first sight be beneficial at home could be detrimental at a global level. Using farmland for the cultivation of energy crops in the Netherlands for instance, might not amount to much at global level but respecting the natural environment in farming is very effective from a social perspective,.

If we can contribute to reducing the pressure on international nature we will not only do it a service, it will also strengthen our position as a player on the international market. After all, we cannot very well comment on the degradation of tropical rainforests and oppose whale hunting if we do not make every effort to strengthen natural resources at home. The government therefore aims to focus its international efforts on the sustainable protection and utilisation of natural resources. Working towards more sustainable timber and farming sectors for instance, is linked to a stronger nature and more biodiversity.

Leading by example

The government should lead by example. In its Natural Capital Agenda the government announced a fair number of national and international pilots to strengthen nature in various ways. Examples of these can be found in Brazil, South Africa and the Sargasso Sea. It can also set an example with the nature-inclusive construction of roads, waterways and dikes. The option of nature-inclusive design will be included in the planning process of infrastructure investment programmes. The government invites other public authorities and private initiators to do the same. The Natuurstambitie Grote Wateren ('Nature Ambition for Large Waters') due to appear in the summer of 2014 is an inspiring programme for robust nature in 2050/2100 with opportunities for synergies between nature and water safety, recreation and food production, for instance.

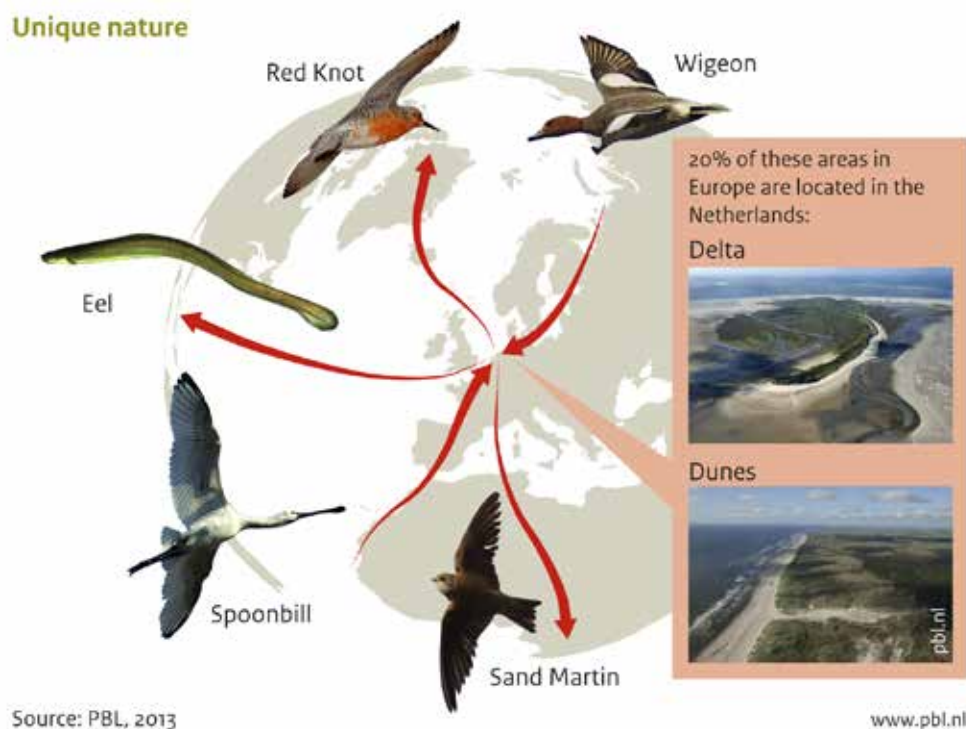
Public implementation programme

The publication of this Vision is followed up by a round of consultations with the civil society to learn what must be done to accelerate the desired developments. This will then serve as the basis for a public implementation programme to be drawn up by the government, provincial authorities, businesses and civil society organisations.

Section 1 Introduction

Our natural environment is of great value to people, not only in the form of protected nature reserves in the Netherlands or further away, but also for nature close to home, in towns and cities and in the countryside. Species richness is an important component of this natural environment. In our country and in the global context we set great store by species richness because we would like to pass it on to future generations. When we see special plant and animal species get into difficulties we are keen to improve the situation, whether close to home or far away.

Nature does not respect national borders. Our country functions as a staging post for migrating birds and fish. Sustainable production and production chains, a prerequisite for nature and biodiversity, are not constrained by national borders either. That is why it is so important that when measures are put in place for the benefit of habitats of flora and fauna and the sustainability of trade chains, this is done in partnership with other countries. It might well be that the Netherlands as a trading nation with strong economic relations worldwide has a special responsibility in this respect. We have invested a great deal in nature and biodiversity already. This has produced some successes but this does not mean we can sit back and relax. We have been able to slow down or reduce the deterioration of many species and habitats but there is still much to be done in that area.



The Netherlands has an important role as a staging post for migrating birds and fish.

We have now come to a point where we have to ask ourselves if the approach we have used and trusted so far will get us any further. While people's concern with nature and sustainability has become deeper and broader we also see that most people seem to think that the protection of species and habitats is a matter best left to the government rather than something they can be engaged in themselves.

This issue is addressed in this Vision. It tries to reconcile these two seemingly opposing trends and at the same time make progress in realising our own objectives for biodiversity as we have agreed to do with our international partners. The government believes that this is possible. It wishes to work towards robust and diverse nature, which is not just able to cope with the impact of society but actually thrives on it. With a solid foundation in place this means more emphasis on natural systems and the scale of the landscape so that the focus on the conservation of specific species and habitats in places where they were found earlier can be reduced.

Greater involvement of the public will result in a broader and more mature form of nature embedded at every level of society and supported by the commitment of the public, businesses and private organisations. Nature that needs no protection from society but is an indispensable and integral part of it. People's involvement will not only benefit nature but also biodiversity and its associated national and international objectives. The endeavour to place nature at the heart of society is based on the government's vision that a society is shaped by its people, not by its government. This also implies that the future scenarios and the objectives set down in this document do not always accompany government measures like for like. In a society where people seem increasingly able to bring nature objectives closer to realisation, it is right and proper for the government to exercise restraint and adopt a facilitating and encouraging role.

The publication of this Vision is followed by a round of consultations with the public to learn what must be done to accelerate the desired developments. This will then serve as the basis for an implementation programme to be drawn up by the government, provincial authorities, businesses and civil society organisations.

Section 2 of this Vision is about the changes that are already becoming apparent in the way people think about nature and the way the government deals with them. Section 3 describes the government's policy on nature and how it incorporates the changes in society. And, finally, in section 4 the role envisaged for national government is described and what the fulfilment of that role is meant to achieve.



Section 2

Nature in a changing society

2.1 Nature lives

Nature enjoys wide support in our society. For most people, nature and outdoor recreation are the determinant factors for the quality of one's direct living environment, second only to having one's friends and family close by. Nearly everyone believes that it is important to have a responsible attitude to nature, also in view of future generations. In recent years we have witnessed a shift in the way people engage with nature. Not only has people's involvement broadened and deepened but their initiatives have also become more varied. People's involvement is what this part of the Vision is about and how this opens up a new perspective for the government's dealing with nature.

2.2 Broader involvement

2.2.1 Diverse nature

People are increasingly sympathetic to nature and their involvement with nature takes various forms. Recent studies have shown that four out of ten people in the Dutch population are actively involved with nature, and half out of the six left, say they are quite willing to do their bit as well. Their contribution is visible in their own neighbourhood where people decide to 'green up' their roof, work their own allotment garden or plant trees in the street where they live. A recent example is the volunteer project '10 000 hours', an initiative taken by festival organiser ID&T, where festival goers can put in hours of volunteer work to give something back to society. De Vlinderstichting, a Dutch butterfly conservation organisation, in partnership with Port of Amsterdam helps to develop industrial estates into butterfly-friendly sites. Insulation companies and municipal authorities are seeking ways to take account of bats in cavity wall insulation. In what is known as the Green Circles Project, Heineken Brewery, Zuid Holland Provincial authorities and Wageningen UR are working together to create a green economy in the area in and around Zoeterwoude.

Perceptions of nature

Nature means different things to different people. For some, it is an amenable environment to live in or an inspiring area for walking, cycling or boating. It can be a nature reserve with rare plants and animals or a rare bird in the sight of a pair of binoculars. But it can also be your neighbourhood's allotment, the familiar landscape marked by history, the wild nature of the Wadden Sea or Biesbosch, or the nature programmes on the BBC. And you could think of nature as the supplier of the construction materials for our buildings, garden sets, clothing, our drinking water or food.

People like their living environment to be nice and inspiring. Nature helps people to relax; it gives them a sense of recognition, of being at home. Many people also seek excitement and wonder in nature. That is why people volunteer to maintain the cultural-historical elements in a landscape. Our landscape is becoming more and more part of our cultural heritage thanks to the commitment of volunteers working in partnership with nature and heritage organisations.

People heading out into nature or watching TV or internet footage of nature in the Netherlands also realise that good nature in the Netherlands is necessary for nature outside our national borders and the other way round. These people understand why the breeding and foraging sites in our country are so important for migratory birds coming from other parts of the world. Some people make a distinction between 'real nature' and other nature, which apparently is less genuine. But this distinction is outdated.



The government prefers to take people's perception of nature as a point of departure. The emerging picture not only appears to be diverse, but it also shows a spreading attitude of dedication and commitment to nature among the public.

2.2.2 A changed perspective on our natural environment

The increased regard for nature and biodiversity by the public and businesses is often part of a broader change in their perspective on their natural environment and the future. Concepts like corporate social responsibility, sustainability and fair trade fit in with this. We are witnessing interesting and welcome examples of businesses taking their responsibility in this field. Businesses investing in nature and sustainability by adopting a 'no net loss' strategy for instance, under which, on balance, their business activities do not adversely affect biodiversity at home or abroad. Such strategies can be based on the wish to reduce the scarcity of natural resources or on the discipline of the judgment of society. Some businesses for instance wish to give their corporate image added value. But it can also be a matter of maintaining the licence to operate by, for instance, becoming part of sustainable production chains for timber, food or clothing. The wish to invest in sustainability may also be underpinned by personal commitment.

2.3. Revaluation

2.3.1 Nature values rediscovered

People's valuation of nature is changing. Not only do they wish to protect nature, they also want to experience nature and make use of it. Society is changing and many people believe we are on the eve of a major breakthrough in the way we live, consume and do business. Everyone knows that there are limits to the earth's carrying power. People are better educated and more articulate, they have faster access to information that has been made globally available and there are more methods of communication thanks to the social media. This requires the government to adopt a different approach, a joint approach that is not top-down but bottom-up, in tune with today's trends.

In our efforts to achieve a sustainable society nature also has a part to play and we are beginning to wonder whether nature's carrying capacity is still strong enough to keep contributing to the wellbeing and prosperity of the generations to come. We are beginning to realise that attractive, natural surroundings benefit our health, and even speed up the recovery process after an illness.

Young people value the sense of freedom nature provides, it helps them relax and is a respite from the constant pressure of social media. They go to nature to do sports and let off steam. We also use nature as a source of inspiration for innovation. Biomimicry in science for instance – literally: 'imitating nature'- studies nature's models and then uses these designs and processes to solve human problems. These are all examples of how we rediscover the values of nature. They also show that nature is an economic factor bringing greater prosperity to present and future generations.



The valuation of nature is changing. People not only wish to protect nature, they also want to experience and make use of it.



2.3.2 Driving forces behind the revaluation of nature

The new valuation of nature is driven by several forces. First, the density of our population, which on the one hand increases the need for green, open spaces and on the other, the competition from residential areas, roads and industrial estates which also need land to build on. This is why we are now turning to the sea to find space for activities for which there is little room on land. Climate change is also a factor on account of the uncertainties about the future of habitats for people, plants and wildlife. The ongoing global decline in biodiversity is another important factor which is commonly perceived as a global ecological crisis. The economic downturn also impacts on the revaluation of nature, as it makes us think again about the way we manage our resources and what our responsibilities are.

Another force behind all this is our greater understanding and experience of nature. Our country is a river delta, with a high population and housing density and intensive farming which have enabled us to gather a great deal of knowledge over the space of a few decades. Knowledge on nature development, nature-inclusive uses and even re-wilding, knowledge for which there is a great deal of interest abroad. We also have a better understanding of the relationship between nature and health. That physical activity and the experience of nature are good for us has long been taken for granted and now it is also corroborated by scientific evidence. We now know that elderly people and people suffering from diabetes or autism benefit from nature in their direct surroundings.

Finally, under the influence of those often interrelated forces, the growing awareness of sustainability and biodiversity in society is an important element that drives the revaluation of nature. Businesses, large and small, as well as consumers, realise that our supply of natural capital, raw materials, water and biodiversity, is finite.

They realise that a more sustainable use of natural resources is a form of sensible risk management. We are on our way to an approach that considers nature as the essence of sustainability.

The Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency writes, that the responsible use of raw materials, nature and the environment may well be the chief challenge for the twenty-first century. According to a study under the 2013 Duurzaamheidskompas (Sustainability Compass) 61% of consumers believes that, even in times of economic recession, the consideration of sustainability remains a necessity. Consumers and businesses are saying that we must shoulder this shared responsibility together. Sustainability has even become an opportunity for businesses to strengthen their position on the market.

Nature's importance for our wellbeing is fundamental and this insight is gaining ground. Every individual can make its own contribution and the more people make the effort the better we will be able to realise the desired changes.

2.4 Towards a new perspective

2.4.1 Nature at the heart of society

As a society we want to work together to improve our natural environment but how do we go about it? What can we do differently and what must not be done differently? The most important thing is having a common perspective as a focus for our actions. The building blocks are already in place. Several provinces have formulated their intentions in their visions on nature and elsewhere, too, building blocks have been formulated. From the initiatives, projects and visions proposed by the public, businesses and civil society organisations, it becomes clear that people realise we should live in symbiosis with our natural environment.

The common perspective found in all these projects, initiatives and visions is a form of nature that is at the heart of society; the natural world as an integral part of sustainable economic and social development. This perspective has a broad base of support and its appeal lies in the collective dimension and the sustainability on which it is based. It is underpinned by our shared responsibility for a better world and appeals to our capacity to respond collectively and learn, improve and look ahead. In this context good practice in our dealings with nature is a matter of enlightened self-interest, not an obligation imposed on us from above.

We can protect nature by using it wisely and recognising that nature is an integral part of our cities, towns and villages. We realise that our prosperity and wellbeing can be sustainable only if we take account of the earth's carrying power and use the resources nature provides us with wisely. We call this nature-inclusive growth: growth based on the use of our natural capital in a way that also helps this capital to grow. The perspective of nature at the heart of society is based on this realisation and the insight that in our country there is hardly any natural environment that has not been shaped by human intervention or management.

Some people still believe that the deterioration of nature can best be reversed by banning social activities from nature areas as much as possible. This has always been a prominent feature of nature conservation and nature policy. As a result, nature has become an independent sector whose interests were placed opposite or alongside those of other sectors like farming, fisheries, housing, transport, sand collection, industry and energy. The new perspective central to this Vision, distances itself from that. By recognising people's interest in nature and the benefits it brings to local communities, trusting their judgment skills and problem solving capacity, people's valuation of nature is done full justice.

Meijendel: nature and the collection of drinking water combined

Water company Dunea provides drinking water for 1.2 million inhabitants of the western Randstad conurbation. Every year more than a million visitors come to the Meijendel-Berkheide nature park on the Natura 2000 site to enjoy nature. For Dunea, water collection and nature management are two equivalent activities as is clear from the Investment Programme for Meijendel. The large renovation programme for water collection in the dunes included nature right

from the start. The dedication of 15% of total investment to nature and outdoor recreation created a broad base of support from visitors and surrounding inhabitants. This helps to speed up permit procedures and ensures efficient implementation. Nature will benefit from the redevelopment of lake verges and a large area of sand drifts will be restored. This will bring back the dunes' natural dynamics and it allows the rare habitat of blue moor grasslands to develop again. The sand

produced by the removal of top soils will be used in the planned renovation. The renovation programme also proved fertile ground for innovation. The renovation of the underground water collection infrastructure proved to go well with the aboveground rehabilitation of sand drifts. The programme illustrates how water collection and nature can be interwoven. Investment in nature and the benefit for society can go hand in hand.



What is nature-inclusive?

The term nature-inclusive means literally that nature is part of the process. It denotes a way of thinking and doing that includes nature from the start. There are two sides to a nature-inclusive approach: it combines opportunity as well as precaution. Making use of the principles and properties of nature more often provides us with the opportunity to work better and more cheaply. And applying the principle of precaution we can reduce or even prevent damage to nature. Examples include the horticulture sector working with insects as pest controllers and a dairy farm attracting meadow birds by combining high soil biodiversity with cattle-grazing.

Nature at the heart of society will be robust, can take some wear and tear and as such will be future-proof. This calls for an approach that is rooted in nature's versatility and resilience, a form of nature embedded at every level of society for people to experience and utilise. A good example is Meijendel nature reserve in the centre of the busy Randstad conurbation. (see box on page 18).

2.4.2 From exclusive to inclusive

From this perspective it is only natural that we make our economic and other activities nature-inclusive, interweaving them with nature wherever possible. A residential area with a lot of green space will be a more attractive and healthier area to live in and the value of houses there will go up. And farmers producing sustainably will not only reduce their ecological footprint, it will strengthen their position on the market. The same is true for international production chains for food, clothing or timber.

Nature combinations offer a promising method of interweaving, combining nature and other social functions. The dunes along our coast are an example of this: where coastal protection, outdoor recreation, water collection and nature are combined (see box). Land used by the Ministry of Defence is another example where high-quality nature and social activity go hand in hand. The possibilities are legion. Nature can be enhanced in combination with harbour expansion as happened in Moerdijk, where fallow land was designated for the creation of temporary nature and planted with butterfly bush, and where concrete walls were built with holes for sand martins to nest in. This enhances the harbour's regional position and its licence to operate. Another example of nature combination is the creation of opportunities for nature experiences as a form of preventive health care.



'We started by solving a traffic problem but the green space on top proved just as interesting,' says Luc Winants former councillor of Maastricht, referring to the tunnel built to ban the A2 motorway from the centre of the city. It became the Groene Loper, a verdant strip of green on top of the tunnel, which has greatly enhanced support for the tunnel. 'The whole of Maastricht now embraces the tunnel', says Winants.

The motorway cut right through the city and with its six sets of traffic lights ('the only six traffic lights between Amsterdam and Marseille') it brought danger from traffic, particulate matter, exhaust gases and noise and it cut the city in two. 'People started to live with their backs to that road'. It took twenty years to decide on a way to solve the problem. In 2006 a public tender was launched that would eventually lead to a tunnel being built below the existing road.

In the opinion of the councillor who is now the Mayor of Brunssum, then the most innovative part of the process began. A public tender was launched for a relatively small package of requirements and needs and room for the participants to develop their proposals. They were asked to propose a plan for the tunnel that could be combined with a money-making plan for the development and exploitation of an entirely new part of the city on top of the tunnel.

In the end, three consortiums were awarded the amount of over a million Euros each to develop their plan. 'It was incredibly exciting', Winants remembers, 'because it was all subject to the strictest confidentiality. We did not know what was going on either. But the city itself provided the incentives to put the developers on the green track. My co-councillor Hazeu and I had already been to Paris to see how they dealt with nature and urban development there. They are very good at it. With the support of

what was then the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Alterra Research institute we put the three competing groups on a coach heading for the French capital. That turned out to be crucial in the development of their plans. They discovered that investing in green spaces was a good idea. Outdoor recreation, sports, nature, a healthier life have a positive impact on property values. They became wildly enthusiastic about it: 'we want to see this happen in Maastricht as well'.

And so it did, as we saw later on. The winning plan for the Groene Loper comes with the planting of two thousand roadside trees which brings nature inside the city and at the same time creates an open and attractive connection with the robust nature outside the city on both sides. 'It is quite easy for the inhabitants of Maastricht to reach it on foot or by bicycle', says Winants. The new houses will face the green spaces and that is reflected in the price. This has helped to keep the budget within the 1 billion Euro limit.

'Nature is a fantastic force to get plans realised in a way that benefits the inhabitants,' is the former Limburg councillor's conclusion.

Luc Winants former councillor of Maastricht on the plan for a tunnel under the A2 motorway in Maastricht:

'Nature is a fantastic force to get plans realised.'

2.4.3 Scope for regions and for natural processes

A resilient form of nature supported by inhabitants and businesses in the direct surroundings fits in well with the new perspective. The commitment of regional authorities and above all, the time and scope to realise this commitment are also needed. The local and regional commitment to nature will be closely dependent on the scope for decision-making and the instruments in place for the people involved. The more this is constrained by supra-regional frameworks and detailed regulation, the less the regional commitment and feeling of responsibility, and as a consequence the intensity and added value of regional efforts.

By bringing the responsibility for the implementation of nature policy down to the regional level, at the same level as that for spatial planning, and by giving provincial and municipal authorities adequate scope for decisions, regional policies can be designed more coherently. It will create opportunities to work with other partners and interests towards a more resilient form of nature. The creation of adequate regional scope is connected with another requirement for a more resilient form of nature: that of managing the conditions for natural processes. Resilient nature provides more room for natural processes to proceed without intervention from outside, more so than we are used to now. Under such conditions it is possible for plants or animal species to disappear from one place, as a result of local causes or coincidence, and reappear elsewhere.



2.5 A shift in public interest

Strong and healthy nature is a great benefit to society. This does not mean that the government should be the sole provider. It all depends on the public and businesses doing their bit as well. Society still wants the government to be firmly in charge where nature is concerned. Nature is a public good embodying functions that cannot be traded. Governments give expression to the needs of society and provide them on behalf of that society, particularly in balancing complicated supra-generational or cross border interests.

But we now see a trend towards a greater involvement of the public and businesses wishing to take the responsibility for a strong and healthy natural environment themselves. They want the government to provide frameworks and facilitate rather than having an executive role. Providing frameworks, as the government must protect the foundations for a strong natural environment (see 4.2) and is bound by international agreements and legislation. Facilitate, as it is easier for the government to invite social initiatives and provide scope and support for other parties to play an active role.

The new perspective the government supports with this Vision aligns with the changes in society and is two-pronged. First, we should take a step ahead, moving from nature that needs protection from the impact of society to a form of nature that is present at all levels of society, serving our prosperity and social wellbeing, and as such is given room to flourish. Second, we should recognise that nature is diverse and has more to offer than the vulnerable species and the demarcated nature reserves that deserve to be safeguarded.

The next section explains how our nature policy responds to the new perspective.



Section 3

Nature policy now: what is already there

3.1 Policy consequences of the new perspective

In the previous section we sketched the perspective of nature at the heart of society: nature that is allowed legitimate space, is cherished by the public and we are keen to invest in, nature that is given the scope to develop spontaneously. This perspective is already visible in important parts of our current nature policy, with the development and management of our National Ecological Network. Now the Pact for Nature places the responsibility for nature policy with provincial authorities, closer to the people. Under this Pact provincial authorities have entered into agreements with social partners (the Manifest parties) describing their role in the implementation of this policy.

The government emphatically opts for this perspective. It is convinced this new approach will advance nature policy. Not only will it bring the nature objectives closer to realisation, particularly those aimed at species and habitats, it will also bring higher social returns. This applies to the nature at home but also to the nature outside our borders, to which we are connected through ecological links and raw material chains. Higher social returns from our natural resources, i.e. greater enjoyment and more sustainable use, are elementary to the new perspective. It is all within our grasp if our new nature policy would formulate explicit objectives to this effect, for instance for nature's added value, for our spiritual and physical health, for water safety, a more sustainable society or the supply of raw materials.

The new perspective has five important consequences for Dutch nature policy:

1. Nature policy will be based on the principle that species and habitats diversity is a prerequisite for a good quality of life on earth. The significance for society reaches beyond the conservation of biodiversity alone and justifies our nature policy. Nature is the decisive factor for the quality of our living environment, our food, our water, the air that we breathe, the beauty of our environment, peacefulness and energy.
2. Nature policy will be designed to improve people's social wellbeing by contributing to a responsible, sustainable treatment of nature; and by protecting, using and experiencing it. This implies a broad concept of nature encompassing not only special nature reserves and rare species of plants and animals but also the everyday world of nature, close to home.
3. Our policy will be made more effective by giving people a greater say in decisions about nature in their direct surroundings to allow scope for their self-organising skills and by encouraging nature-inclusive uses.
4. Our policy will improve the utilisation of nature by investing in combination of nature with other uses, such as health care, welfare, culture, economy and safety.
5. Our policy will focus on developing nature which is robust, able to take some wear and tear, nature that enjoys the support of society.

The policy consequences described above are a bit of a break with current policy. In some cases there will be a shift of emphasis, elsewhere the approach will have to be entirely different and in still other cases the current approach will have to be continued by all means. Below, the policy consequences will be described. First we will look at the focus of recent policy, after that we will consider how current policy addresses the double challenge of bringing the nature objectives closer to realisation and bringing higher social returns from nature. Part three of this Vision sets out the government's ambitions for the future.



3.2 The background to current nature policy

3.2.1 The protection of species and habitats

A bigger role in nature management for people and institutes apart from government authorities is nothing new. When nature conservation became popular, in the second half of the nineteenth century, government authorities did not have a role at all. The Vereniging tot Bescherming van Vogels set up for protection of birds dates back to 1899 and the Vereniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten for the protection of nature reserves to 1905. They were private organisations set up in response to the rapid population growth and urbanisation in the wake of industrialisation. This happened not only in the Netherlands but in other countries as well.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the government got involved in nature with the creation of Staatsbosbeheer in 1899. It was a bid to halt deforestation by planting trees and reclaim shifting sands and to meet the demand for timber particularly for the mines. The first decade of the twentieth century saw the promulgation of the Bird Protection Act, the Forest Act and the Estates Act. In 1929 the protection of nature became part of the remit of Staatsbosbeheer. After the Second World War the government's involvement in nature conservation began in earnest. In 1967 the Nature Conservation Act came into force aimed at the protection of species and habitats. Society's need for nature increased, outdoor recreation became popular and more attention was paid to endangered species. From the 1970s on, the deterioration of nature values in agricultural areas led to the Policy Document on Agriculture and Nature Conservation, which laid the foundations for converting farmland to nature area.

In the 1970s, people in the western world became increasingly aware of the environment and the importance of a cross-border approach. International agreements were concluded, some at the initiative of the Netherlands, which had a major impact on our nature policy. They were concerned with the protection of species and habitats. Examples include the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, 1973) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention, 1979). Other agreements and treaties protected wetlands and cultural and natural heritage. In 1979 the Birds Directive came into effect for the protection of wild birds followed by a European nature conservation strategy laid down in the Habitats Directive thirteen years later, for the conservation of species as well as habitats.

3.2.2 Landscape and cultural history

Landscape and cultural-historical qualities determine the identity of an area. They are also important for an attractive business climate and as such are important elements helping the Netherlands to reinforce its competitive power. National government is responsible for the cultural and historical properties inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (and on the tentative list), characteristic views of towns and villages, national monuments and cultural historical values in or on the seabed. This role is inspired by the European Landscape Convention, also known as the Florence Convention, 2000.

Nowadays landscape conservation is part of the provinces' remit. Conservation is carried out by developing characteristic landscapes with a strong identity, where life, work, recreation and nature go together. Under the Structural Vision on Infrastructure and Spatial Planning provincial authorities may draw up visions and zoning plans for the area under their responsibility giving them more scope for trade-offs between competing claims of urban development and landscape. Such tailor-made approaches enhance landscape values which are much appreciated by inhabitants and visitors.



3.2.3 Ecological network and a broader perspective

The policies for the conservation of species and habitats came together in the 1990s with the plan for a coherent network of existing and newly to be developed nature areas: the National Ecological Network. It allowed species to migrate over long distances and so helped them to survive. The national network now comprises all Natura 2000 sites which have been designated as part of the European Ecological Network with its aim of realising a favourable conservation status of European species and habitats, in line with the Habitats and Birds Directives, for their long-term survival. Species policy was further detailed with the introduction of Red Lists of endangered species for governments to take into account. The habitat approach was used to improve the quality of an area for plants and wildlife. The conservation status of some species was reason for transposing international agreements into national policy, for example in management plans for Natura 2000 sites.

The increased emphasis on ecological values soon led to a call for a broader policy. The policy document entitled *Nature for People, People for Nature* of 2000 of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries paid attention to the experiential value and the commodity value of nature. The idea was that nature began at our own front door. There were ambitions for urban greening, making cities more pleasant places to live and work in. The policy document stressed the diversity of services provided to people by nature, and stated that society should take co-responsibility for renewing and strengthening nature policy.

Ten years later, in 2010, the IBO Natuur interdepartmental working group found that when work was carried out on the National Ecological Network, the broader concept of nature had stayed very much in the background. The integration of nature policy and the policies for housing, industry and infrastructure had not been sufficiently realised.

3.2.4 Biodiversity

By the end of the previous century national and international nature policy focused on a relatively new concept: biodiversity, a concept used to describe the number, variety and variability of living organisms, from genes to species to whole ecosystems. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on 29 December 1993. Apart from the conservation of biological diversity it also deals with the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Convention reflects the new perspective on nature, in which the relationship between nature and the economy is clear. In this vision nature is the basis for the economy and an economic system that harms nature is like a serpent biting its own tail.

Under the Convention on Biological Diversity 193 countries are committed to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and the promotion of the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Convention comes with a strategic multi-annual plan that is reviewed at regular intervals. In 2010 an updated strategic plan for 2011-2020 was adopted setting out the roles of the parties involved to ensure the loss of biodiversity is halted and restore the resilience of our ecosystems.

The European biodiversity strategy for 2020 is based on the Convention on Biological Diversity and comprises the full implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives, the conservation and enhancement of existing ecosystems, having agriculture and forestry contribute to biodiversity, making fisheries more sustainable, controlling invasive exotic plant and animal species and increasing Europe's contribution to the conservation of biodiversity worldwide. The Conventions and agreements have been transposed into national policy and programmes like the National Ecological Network, Natura 2000, the interdepartmental biodiversity programme Biodiversity works (2008-2011), and the Natural Capital Agenda of June 2013. The European Marine Strategy Framework Directive co-regulates marine biodiversity.





3.3 Support for nature policy turns out to be fragile

Our policy for the protection of nature and biodiversity is fairly well organised now, with regulation and investment in a robust network of nature areas protected under planning frameworks by municipal and provincial authorities - including the large water areas and the North Sea. This in itself is quite an achievement given the pressure of urbanisation, population growth, industrialisation, intensification of agriculture and climate change.

Still, public support for nature policy has turned out to be fragile. In a small, densely populated country like the Netherlands, it is inevitable for friction to occur between competing interests or for protection policy regulation to give rise to severe public pressure in some situations. Moreover, the strong and sometimes rigid focus on protection has given nature policy a sectoral character, as if nature were a sector that stood apart from other sectors in society. The technical character of nature policy instruments has not always been helpful either in dealing with nature in a sustainable way or in nature policy being very effective, for that matter. This gives rise to frustration, incomprehension and delay, and to a public perception of nature as a hindrance. Within the framework of existing regulation and with the core values for nature in mind the authorities are keen to smooth out such potential friction. In the first place by providing upfront assurance and involving as many parties as possible and by placing legal powers in the hands of the authorities that are most relevant for the purpose. The competent authorities will decide how the activities can best be carried out to do justice to what is actually needed. Acting pro-actively in the issue of permits, for instance, may speed up procedures somewhat but we do realise that more is needed to reinforce public support.



3.4 How we are already working towards resilient nature embedded at every level of the society.

3.4.1 Decisions by the regions

Under the Administrative Agreement on Nature of 2012 many statutory nature policy tasks were transferred to the provinces. This offers opportunities to bring nature policy closer to the people. In their managing role provinces put together partners and interests and engage new stakeholders to realise nature policy. Since the start of the nature policy renewal in 2013 to create more resilient nature, several steps have been taken. A recommendation from the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure, has been instrumental here. It included the idea of protecting nature by strengthening it without there being a final blueprint, leaving ample room for adaptation.

The Pact for Nature will strengthen biodiversity but much still remains to be done.

National government, the provinces and social partners concluded a Pact for Nature in September 2013. Under this Pact the parties have agreed to work towards a robust National Ecological Network. After an assessment of the Pact for Nature the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency concluded that with the implementation of the agreements made the habitats of many plant and animal species would improve, guaranteeing their long-term survival. The Agency particularly focused on the effects the Pact would have on animal species coming under the Birds and Habitats Directives. In the current situation (reference year 2010) conditions are sufficient for the sustainable conservation of over 45% of these species. With the implementation of the Pact for Nature, this will improve to more than 65% in 2027, according to the Agency.

This is also the idea underpinning the ambitions of national government, the provinces and social partners laid down in the Pact for Nature of September 2013. Under this Pact the parties have agreed to work towards a robust National Ecological Network. The provinces are responsible for the protection of this network, drawing up the spatial plans, bringing partners and stakeholders together, giving people a greater say in deciding how to make use of it in a sustainable manner.

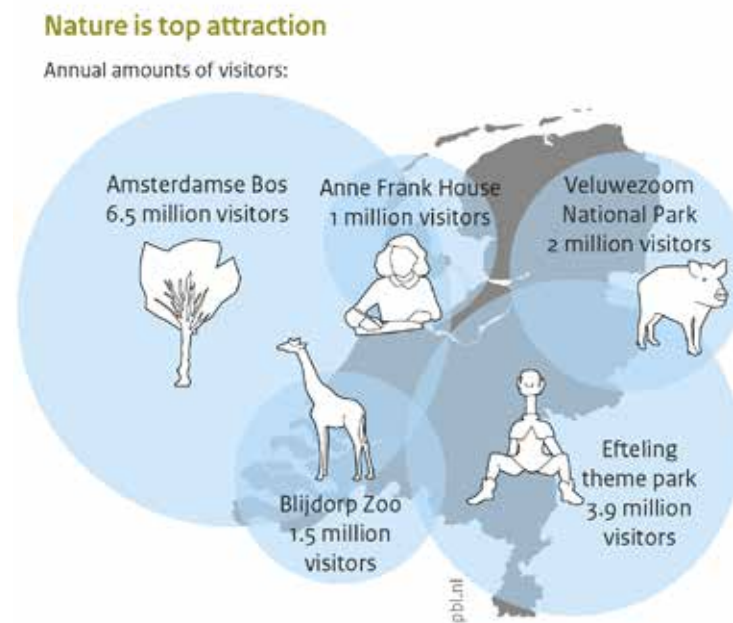
Half of the National Ecological Network consists of Natura 2000 sites. Linking them up not only makes them stronger, it also gives strength to the whole network. Over recent years sites have been designated fairly quickly which created the basis for management measures which will be incorporated in the management plans for this year and the next.

The management plans will reveal which areas need protection, allowing interventions to be implemented together

with the inhabitants of the area. The Integrated Approach to Nitrogen is an important tool in this respect. High nitrogen levels in the soil led to conflicts between nature and the economic growth. The Integrated Approach to Nitrogen provides scope for economic activity in combination with the protection of nature values.

3.4.2 Synergy of nature and culture

Nature and culture mutually reinforce each other and are often experienced in conjunction. In cultural historical areas we often find high nature values. This applies to World Heritage sites, country estates, monumental urban parks and even residential neighbourhoods. Nature and landscape are often the inspiration and platform of art (painting, site-specific theatre). Country estates in the Netherlands cover an area the size of the province of Utrecht and provide high-quality nature within the National Ecological Network. The Wadden Sea World Heritage site offers a wealth of ecological and maritime heritage. The Estates Act makes a valuable contribution to the objectives for nature and biodiversity. And the recently concluded Green Deal Het Landgoedbedrijf is a public-private partnerships between country estate owners and the government contributing to water safety, local economy and health care and under the Green Table Nature and Culture agreements were made to jointly develop new revenue models.



Source: PBL, 2013

www.pbl.nl

Outdoor recreation and tourism provide excellent opportunities to combine nature and the economy

3.4.3 Agri-environment schemes

Since the 1970s agri-environment schemes have been part of the government's nature policy. These schemes can make an important contribution to the conservation of nature and landscape values in agricultural areas, like the conservation of species coming under the Habitats and Birds Directives. Under the Pact for Nature the management of these agri-environment schemes was transferred to the provincial authorities. As the relevant instruments were aimed at individual enterprises the schemes were not very effective and relatively expensive. The government now wants to set up new schemes aimed at larger areas and collectives of farmers who work together and share their knowledge with other stakeholders: nature and landscape organisations, inhabitants and businesses in the area. The changeover to a collective agri-environment model asks a great deal from all those involved and is not expected to be fully realised before 2016.

3.4.4 Clean water

Drinking water companies, water authorities, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment and the provincial authorities are in charge of clean water: drinking water and surface water to swim in and use in farming and, after purification, to be used as a basic condition for nature. At the initiative of the drinking water sector a Green Table has been organised for the parties involved to explore the possibilities of integrating drinking water and nature to provide more added value for nature. Water authorities are working with other public authorities, businesses and civil society organisations to combine water management, energy production, nutrient management, climate adaptation and nature.

3.4.5 Investing in nature

Another trend that has been developing for some time now is the demand from businesses to play a stronger role in nature development and nature conservation. The importance of nature for the economy has long been underestimated, partly because years of government investment in nature was taken for granted. An important anchor point came with the 2011 advice from the Taskforce Biodiversity and Natural Resources. This advice, supported by the government, businesses and civil society organisations, explicitly called nature the driver of the economy: a turning point after years of nature and the business sector being on opposing sides.



Businesses and civil society organisations are now working together towards a greener economy under for instance, Leaders for Nature, the IUCN NL business engagement network, and the Platform Biodiversity Ecosystems and Economy, a joint initiative of IUCN NL and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW). The Natural Capital Agenda, based in part on the Taskforce's advice, offers a number of opportunities to smooth the way towards the sustainable use of our natural resources in the short term. The Agenda proposes actions to make production and consumption, chains, fisheries and the protection of biodiversity at sea, more sustainable. Much attention is paid to agriculture. Apart from an approach for determining the value of natural capital, the Agenda also proposes a great number of national and international pilots and projects aimed at a more robust form of nature. With a pilot in the cocoa producing region of Bahia in Brazil the Netherlands is gaining experience in combining cocoa production and forest conservation at landscape scale. A fine example of making use of natural capital with a view to the future can be found in the Dutch Caribbean.



On the islands of Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius companies, authorities and nature organisations work in partnership towards a more sustainable economy. The islands' biodiversity is the basis of the tourist industry. The rich flora and fauna on the islands and underwater life are pull factors for tourists and investors. Nature substantially contributes to the islands' economy. The government has set aside EUR 7.5 million for projects promoting the sustainable utilisation of nature in the Dutch Caribbean.

Outdoor recreation and tourism provide excellent opportunities for nature and economic activities to positively influence one another. This is why municipal and provincial authorities are looking for ways to reinforce nature and outdoor recreation in spatial planning policies and in area-specific processes at regional scale. The Green Deals the government has concluded with entrepreneurs in the recreation



The value of natural capital

Government research under the heading TEEB, which stands for The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, aims to contribute to understanding the value of our natural capital, the costs of losing it, how to let it grow and make better use of it. TEEB presents an approach that can help governments and businesses in their decision-making process at an early stage. Revenues from the use of nature are ploughed back into maintenance work. A TEEB study at Bonaire showed how much the underwater nature

surrounding the coral reef contributed to the local economy, strengthening the case for conservation measures. TEEB studies in the Netherlands (like those on green spaces in towns and cities) have also shown that investment in nature pays. This applies to the greening of residential areas and working environments alike. At the Green Table Areas of the Future agreements were made about greening business parks.

industry are an example of this. Good route networks are important to access nature areas and connect businesses engaged in cultural history, outdoor sports and recreation. At the Dutch Nature Summit in June 2013 the hospitality sector, which accounts for 2.9% of our GNP and 3.8% of employment, said it would contribute to the Hospitality and Nature Action Agenda to create more synergy. The Agenda will be published in 2014 fleshing out the Vinden, Verrassen en Verbinden sector strategy and linking nature policy to the hospitality economy.

At the request of the government Mr Van Vollenhoven will study ways to smarten up nature management funding based on comparison with the world of cultural heritage. The study will also look into financing mechanisms that could increase the role of businesses, private parties and farmers in nature management. An interesting initial finding is that to realise more involvement and more efficient management, ownership is a deciding factor. The government is eagerly awaiting the results of the three pilots that will be launched, in consultation with municipal and provincial authorities, as a result of this study.



3.4.6 Natural processes as the starting point

Over the past few decades nature policy strongly focussed on specific species and habitats in protected areas, like the Natura 2000 sites. The National Ecological Network is showing more coherence now and with a programme-based approach, similar to that of the Nitrogen Programme, the relationship with the surrounding areas is becoming more evident. This is why the focus of nature policy is shifting from individual protected areas to whole landscapes or regions, which may include one or more nature reserves.

A comparable shift of emphasis from protected areas to an integrated approach on a larger spatial scale is taking place in projects elsewhere in the world. From this perspective the Netherlands, in the context of the Agenda for Natural Capital is closely involved in international projects, where protection no longer focuses on individual nature areas or farms but on whole regions under several conservation bodies.

In the Netherlands we increasingly see efforts being made to align with natural and social dynamics. Resilient nature is nature supported by the public that is given the scope to follow its own dynamics. A robust National Ecological Network can function through the support, input, visits, interest and maintenance of the people in its vicinity. An example is the inspirational document *Natuurambitie Grote Wateren 2050-2100* for the Wadden Sea, south-western Delta area, IJsselmeer, the River areas, North Sea and the coastal waters. The document aims to present an inspiring picture for the long term (2050-2100) of a form of nature that fits in with the changing climate, which is robust and maximally aligns with natural processes.

3.4.7 More room for a pragmatic approach

A shift from strictly separated functions to more room for combined uses is already taking place. Staatsbosbeheer, for instance, has recently been given scope to work on social participation. Nature managers, water authorities and provincial authorities are working together on coherent plans for water storage, nature and recreational access. The transition zones around Natura 2000 sites, where water tables are raised and livestock is farmed extensively, are another example. An approach is being elaborated for dealing with nitrogen deposition near nature areas and transition zones are created to improve the coherence of nature networks.

3.5 Possibilities for biodiversity of international significance

Earlier in this Vision it was explained that the implementation of the measures agreed under the Pact for Nature will improve the situation for many species coming under the Habitats and Birds Directives but this does not mean that the objective of realising a favourable conservation status for all these species has been achieved. Would this be at all possible in the Netherlands? The study 'Nederland Later' carried out by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency shows that for practically all the species coming under the Habitats and Birds Directives this would indeed be possible, provided that there is an optimum environmental policy in place and a spatially coherent National Ecological Network, including the transition zones around Natura 2000 sites, with raised water tables and low nitrogen deposition. This cannot be achieved however without the strict separation of nature and other social uses.

This Nature Vision, with which a shift in emphasis is envisaged from separating uses to integrating them, seeks a different perspective to achieve the same objective. This new perspective was inspired by the National Nature Outlook report 2010-2040, published by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. One of the outlooks described in the report ('functional nature') comprises the interweaving of functions, which is used as a starting point and taken to as far as it will go. The model calculations for this perspective show that aiming for these combined uses can have a positive effect on biodiversity, provided the nature-inclusive uses are realised in a sustainable way. Section 4 of this Vision sketches the potential contribution to biodiversity of international significance for some of these uses (boxes Possibilities for biodiversity: agriculture, towns and cities, country estates, large waters) but these are no more than examples. Other combinations are also possible: with outdoor recreation, water purification, water safety production of sustainable energy and fisheries.

A shift in emphasis to nature-inclusive uses is not the only path that offers possibilities for biodiversity. Another possibility expressed in this Vision is the greater emphasis on room for natural processes to take place. This is already illustrated by the Oostvaardersplassen, the dune area and the large rivers, for instance. Species of international significance like the Little Egret and Beaver are taking full advantage of this. For other species to survive long-term the Netherlands is not big enough. For the White-tailed Eagle, for instance. Such species require harmonised measures at European scale. This harmonisation is also required to respond to shifting ranges of distribution following climate change. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency will be asked to propose the measures required to make maximum use of the possibilities outlined above.

3.6 Broad public involvement as the basis

Robust nature at the heart of society is also nature that benefits society and in turn, profits from it. This is an inviting prospect calling on a range of actors to work together. Local authorities, civil society organisations, knowledge institutes and members of the public are all required to do their bit. Our national nature policy needs a mandate from society. This mandate would run a great risk if nature policy and management is placed at too great a distance from the public and the sense of public ownership disappears. This is why the responsibility for nature must not be the exclusive right of national government, but should be felt and supported widely. This is increasingly becoming the case and the government will go along with this trend by not only recognising the widely felt public responsibility for nature but also by reinforcing it.

In this part of the Vision we described how nature policy came about, how it began to change and where we see the first signs of modernisation. The next part sets out the government's ambitions for the future.

Trek along innovative initiatives

Under the heading 'Nature Caravan' six sessions were organised with initiative-takers wishing to connect nature and their daily business. Each session centred on discussing an everyday theme: living, consuming, relaxing, doing business, caring and learning. The initiatives show that much is going on already and they prove to be a source of inspiration for others: residents refashioning their green spaces into residents' nature plots, enhancing the liveability in the area and social involvement, health care institutes making use of the beneficial influence of nature under the motto 'Ritalin out, nature in'; entrepreneurs developing products that substantially reduce our footprint and so 'make the world a bit bigger'. The experiences of these initiative-takers are very valuable as they show what is needed to strengthen the developments they set in motion. Successful innovative initiatives have a number of aspects in common: a can-do mentality, room for experimentation and

renewal, and an eagerness to seek out other initiative-takers. For the government to be effective it is important to respond more adequately to these initiatives. Most initiative-takers dream of having more impact, greater results, a better world. They want the government to have a vision, to give them a leg-up and where necessary, to intervene. They often find systems blocking their way or giving perverse incentives. They want the government to create access to Europe, health care and education. The trek has also produced new ideas like the idea for an "appellation contrôlée" for nature-friendly enterprise in a region in Indonesia or Brazil. Or the advice to create more room for experimentation in re-integration processes in health care and education.

Section 4

Towards diversity and a solid basis for nature policy

4.1 Staying the course

The two previous sections of this Nature Vision demonstrate that the public, entrepreneurs, and organisations in society are increasingly sympathetic to nature and wish to invest in it. Nature policy can contribute to this by ensuring that nature and activities carried out in society are mutually beneficial, and can strengthen each other. This course is already being followed in national, provincial and local government policy and the policy of their many partners in civil society. This movement which places nature at the heart of society is one we must cherish and strengthen.

This means that all those involved regard the public and civil society organisations as interested parties who will benefit from robust nature, rather than seeing them as potential threats. When a hospital invests in natural, green surroundings because this improves the well-being of their patients, then that in itself can be seen as an important benefit to society. The benefit can be even greater if these natural surroundings also provide habitat for biodiversity of international significance. This has been labelled 'added green value' by the inter-provincial consultative body (IPO). The effectiveness of nature policy is greatly increased if such nature combinations, formed by initiatives from organisations in society, become the rule rather than the exception. This can make nature more resilient and better adapted to the future than if the responsibility lies mainly with the government. But does national government also have responsibilities now that many public tasks under the National Ecological Network have been devolved to provincial government, and local government also plays an important role in nature policy? Why is it not possible for national government to retreat and leave involvement in nature policy completely in the hands of others?

4.2 The role of national government and other government bodies

4.2.1 Modernising systemic responsibility

The public, businesses and civil society can do much themselves to create nature areas and work towards sustainability, as discussed above. However, there are also matters which lie beyond their reach, collective tasks and responsibilities placed on government by parliamentary democracy. The fulfilment of these tasks, or the creation of conditions to ensure that other government bodies can fulfil them, is part of the government's systemic responsibility for nature policy. This includes: legal instruments (laws and enforcement), knowledge and information, and contacts with international forums, the EU, and provincial and local authorities. National government is also required to call parties to account for their actions and intervene where necessary.

There have been many changes in recent years to the way national government has organised this systemic responsibility. One good example is the transfer of some aspects of nature policy to provincial governments; other examples are the new agreements with Staatsbosbeheer to strengthen its position in society, and the efforts that have been made to actively involve the private sector in nature.

There have also been changes to the demarcation of the system of responsibility. For many years there were two main areas which the government focussed on:

1. Contributing to nature worldwide by participating in international consultations and decision-making (EU, UN and multilateral fora) and to projects throughout the world. These activities arose from the international character of nature itself which pays no heed to national borders; developments outside the Netherlands that affect nature there, can ultimately have their effects on nature in the Netherlands.

- Investment in nature of sufficient scope and quality in the Netherlands. This approach is mainly intended to halt the decline in nature and safeguard the value of nature for society.

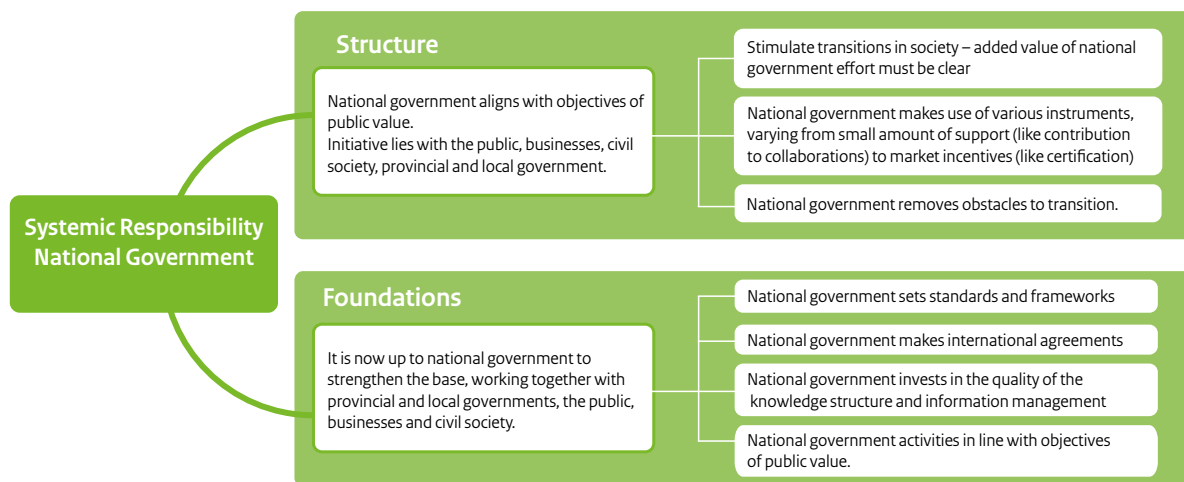
As discussed in section 1 of this paper, a third area has been added over the years, where the emphasis lies on the conditions that have to be met to enable the sustainable use of nature:

- Enable other government bodies, the public, and entrepreneurs, to increase the social and economic value of nature through their efforts for a healthy living environment and sustainable use of natural resources, and stimulate these efforts.

This demands a double commitment from the national government to realise its systemic responsibility: to develop a strong basis for nature (points 1 and 2) and maintain and to stimulate the sustainable exploitation of nature (point 3). Provincial and local governments, water authorities, civil society and the private sector are indispensable partners in this process.

4.2.2 Towards diversity and a solid basis for nature: foundation and structure

To emphasise both the coherence and the differences between the strong basis on the one hand and the sustainable use of nature on the other we liken it to a structure with foundations below it. Sustainable use of nature and biodiversity (the structure) is only possible if protection and development of nature is solid (the foundations). And conversely: investment in robust nature (the foundations) is only worthwhile if that nature is sufficiently understood and valued by society (the structure). A coherent approach to foundations and structure is essential in order to achieve the species and habitat objectives the Netherlands has set itself and to which we have committed ourselves internationally.

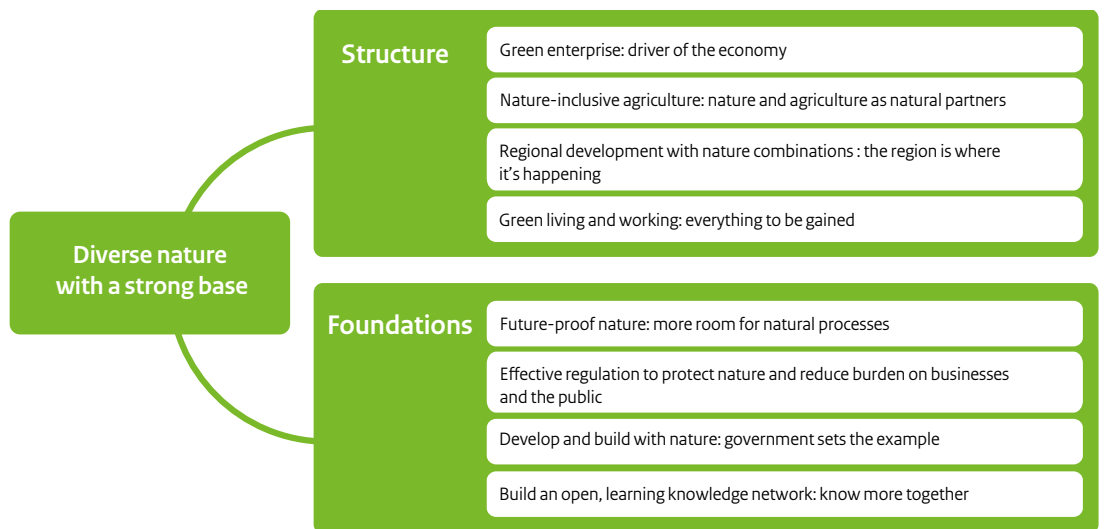


In the government's view it should take a different approach to the foundations than to the structure. The government must guarantee the quality of the foundations and must therefore take responsibility for initiatives and overall control. This involves concentrating on setting frameworks and drawing up standards and maintaining conditions, intervening as third party and taking initiatives. The roles of national, provincial and other government bodies are more specific here than for the structure. Initiatives and control for the structure lie with the 'lively and active society'. Government involvement here is concerned with support, motivating and encouraging, and collaboration, placing the initiative as far as possible with other parties (see figure).

However, this does not mean that there is a strict division between the foundation and structure in the roles played by government and society. For example, in developing the Ecological Network the provinces will seek out cooperation with interested parties in society.

4.3 Objectives arising from this Vision

The government has designed eight objectives and tasks it plans to fulfil over the coming fifteen to twenty years for the foundations and structure (see figure). The objectives represent public interests around nature as it is at present and in the future, and the government believes they tie in well with the motivation and ambitions of the interested parties in society and in the economy. These will be outlined below. Objectives and actions in the first four paragraphs relate primarily to the structure; in the last four paragraphs they relate more to the foundations.



4.3.1 Green enterprise: driver of the economy

Entrepreneurs are seeking ways to integrate nature into their businesses and to embed care for biodiversity and natural resources in their business strategy and to learn from natural processes. To reduce the footprint of the Netherlands abroad and allow businesses to seize the opportunities, government, consumers and civil society are working together with businesses who operate across borders to make cross-border production chains more sustainable. Partly at the initiative of the private sector, various Green Tables have been set up and Green Deals agreed. Businesses are working to improve transparency by sharing information about their influence on natural and social capital, for instance in their annual reports (see box). A community of practice, 'Financial sector and Natural Capital' has been set up, aimed at better embedding decisions about biodiversity in investment decisions and financial products. The government intends to continue to support this type of green enterprise through the Green Tables and Green Deals and by improving the knowledge infrastructure required for this.

Green Deal 'Working together for transparency in natural and social capital'

Thirteen companies (AkzoNobel, ARCADIS, BAM, Deloitte, DSM, EY, FMO, Interface, Heijmans, KPMG, Phillips, PwC and Thermaflex) have agreed to document and report the social impact of their operations and production chains. The Dutch organisation of professional accountants (NBA) and the Society of investors for sustainable development (VBDO) have also signed up to this agreement. By making the impact of business

operations on people and nature visible, we obtain a better picture of a company's' real achievements. This transparency is an important step towards a sustainable, green economy that takes account of the welfare of people. The Green Deal is an initiative by IUCN NL, the organisation for corporate social responsibility MVO Nederland and True Price, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs.



An increasing number of businesses, governments and institutions are working on sustainable innovation for a circular economy inspired by nature. In line with this trend the government wishes nature to be profiled as part of green growth. This is possible if the various parties develop their own activities for the benefit of nature and if they make nature an integral part of their business strategy or production chain. Provincial authorities are also facilitating this development through their remit for the regional economy.

Government approach:

- *Sustainable trade chains:* build on the successful chain collaboration within separate natural raw material streams (such as palm oil, soy, coffee and timber) and develop a regional closed-loop production system approach to making chains sustainable.
- *Sustainable consumption:* encourage dialogue between producers, retailers, consumers and civil society about making consumption sustainable. The government is examining what the driving forces are behind the success of sustainable consumption in our neighbouring countries and what motivates the choice of Dutch consumers for sustainable products at the point of sale, and what role can be played by quality marks and certification.
- *Sustainable innovation:* using a bottom-up approach to stimulate green innovation that brings together entrepreneurial science, innovative businesses and young people. This approach would also create opportunities to link the strength of top sectors to the start-ups of smaller businesses, and so further increase the contribution of top sectors to challenges in society. This can be achieved by rolling out a pilot on biodiversity together with the Netherlands Innovation Acceleration Fund (NIAF). It is also working on the implementation of the Biomimicry Roadmap 2020 with a link to the Green Brain, a network of innovative scientists co-financed by the government.
- *Transparency and smart market incentives:* greater upscaling of green enterprise by encouraging businesses to give the value of natural capital a specific place in their financial decision-making, this includes contributing to the Natural Capital Roadmap of the IUCN Leaders for Nature and to initiatives which demonstrate the 'real price' of products (true pricing). Explore with the sectors, including the financial sector, which economic incentives stimulate nature-inclusive enterprise and how we can ensure that what is good for nature is also economically more attractive than the alternatives.
- *Voluntary investment in nature:* together with the Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Economy Platform (Platform BEE), National Fund for Rural Areas, business and nature organisations are accredited through a system of tradable habitat credits which provide opportunities for businesses who volunteer to compensate for their influence on biodiversity, if that is still the case once they have fulfilled all their legal obligations.
- *Biobased Economy:* stimulate attractive initiatives with high potential for combination of functions of nature and bio-based economy. Dutch nature areas can provide valuable raw materials for the timber industry, but also for the pharmaceuticals industry, chemicals and the energy sector. The government supports the initiatives of the forest and timber sector to draw up a plan of action together with nature organisations and interested parties for the contribution of forests to a green economy. If natural biomass is given a financial value it can serve as an incentive to investment in nature.
- *Timber chains and sustainable forest management:* work towards creating multilateral global agreements for sustainable forest management. Develop a sustainable timber chain by stimulating legal and sustainable timber harvesting and by creating sustainable trade chains for those raw materials that contribute to deforestation; create more productive and more efficient agriculture to help reduce the pressure on forests; develop sustainable funding. Throughout the world many countries and an increasing number of businesses are working together for the conservation and sustainable use of forests. Even a small improvement can have a huge effect on global diversity.

4.3.2 Nature-inclusive agriculture: nature and agriculture as natural partners.

The agricultural sector has to feed a growing population throughout the world and at the same time agricultural production has to be brought back into balance with an area's carrying capacity. Sustainable increase in agricultural production and reduction of raw material use in the food chain are then absolutely essential, not only for reasons of food security, local economic development and the quality of the living environment, but also to protect biodiversity. If we no longer need to increase the area of land under farming, it will help bring deforestation to a halt. Conversely, biodiversity, for instance in a healthy soil, and functional agri-biodiversity, is essential for the sustainable increase of agricultural productivity. In short, more agriculture and more nature.

Decisive for the realisation of increasing sustainability of production is the development of climate-smart agriculture: improving food security, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting agriculture to climate change. This should be achieved through a regional approach, at landscape level and in the often global food chains from producer to consumer.

Opportunities for biodiversity of international significance: agriculture

Farmers have a major impact on nature and landscape. Many farmers are committed to conservation, either from personal motives, or because they benefit from it. For instance farmers creating windbreaks or nature-friendly river banks and field margins, allow insects to colonise there and help control the diseases and pests that threaten crops. Or they introduce bees, which pollinate the crops. Farmers' taking good care of fungi found in the soil has a positive effect on the quality of their crops. Nature-friendly design of ditches and banks can improve the diversity of species in the rural area, especially in the neighbourhood of the Natura 2000 areas, where under the Birds and Habitats Directives the purple heron, black tern and weather

fish, *Misgurnus fossilis* are protected. The root vole benefits from phased reed-cutting. Species like the Little owl, Barn owl and Montagu's harrier benefit from nature-friendly field margins. In reforming the system of agri-environment schemes the government anticipates that farmers' collectives will make a serious contribution to the conservation of species protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives, both within the Natura 2000 areas and outside them. Vital to this process is cooperation with other parties in an area, such as nature organisations and other government bodies. The pilots conducted under the Common Agricultural Policy show great potential.

The future of agriculture will also be determined largely by two issues concerning raw materials: the ecological influence of raw material use (for instance soy) and the dependence of the agricultural sector on increasingly scarce raw materials (for instance phosphate). Intensive action is being taken on both fronts, like achieving sustainability of international raw material chains by stimulating the competitive production of raw materials in the EU and closing production loops. This will enable us not only to maintain our market position, but also, through innovation, to strengthen it. The Netherlands has the responsibility and the opportunity to make a serious contribution to increasing global food production in a sustainable way. This will be based on the experience we have gained from our ongoing process of improving sustainability of production. Society imposes standards on farmers, their suppliers and customers regarding the quality and safety of food, but also has demands related to sustainability, including biodiversity: production conditions, the effects of agricultural production on nature, soil, water, air and landscape. It is the task of the agricultural entrepreneur to translate these demands into economically viable activities. He will not achieve this solely by minimising the effects of his business operation on nature, but also needs to extract as much benefit as possible from nature for his business operation.

Reducing the effects of business operation on the environment, demands the development of closed production loops. This will result in a more efficient use of raw materials and reduce the influence of the business operation on the environment.

To obtain maximum benefit from nature, it is important to have an understanding of the relationships between production and ecology. This understanding will provide ways to use nature in a sustainable way, for instance by ensuring that the soil is healthy and full of life. Greening of production delivers added value to the product, which can be recouped in the market.

To translate the wishes and needs of society into economically viable activities demands collaboration in the chain and dialogue with stakeholders. If there is one agri-food cluster in the world that can rise to this challenge, then it is the Dutch one. This is clear from the various initiatives taken in the Netherlands, like the agenda for sustainable livestock production in 2023, the success of the Skylark Foundation and the creation of local farmers' collectives for agri-environmental schemes.

It is the farmers and the chain that must put these developments in place. The national government should not have a prescriptive or coercive role, but should support and stimulate: by providing pioneers with information, initiating and maintaining dialogue between stakeholders in society, paying more attention in agricultural training to the relationship between agriculture and nature and the greening of the government's own subsidy instruments, like the Common Agricultural Policy. The provincial governments have a managing role and ensure that the parties involved are brought together with interest groups in the regions. At the same time it is the government's task to determine the legal framework. For instance, manure and crop protection policies will create better environmental conditions for nature. These frameworks are believed to be important, not only by the government, but also by many in the sector who regard them as necessary in order to make agriculture sustainable.

Government approach:

- *Climate-smart agriculture*: with the knowledge and expertise of Dutch businesses and knowledge institutes around the world, introduce this form of sustainable agricultural development at a global level.
- *European green coalition*: in the European context contribute to a vision for the future of nature-inclusive agriculture and development of associated incentives.
- *Area-specific coalitions*: together with provincial governments stimulate area-specific coalitions that create synergy between water management, agriculture, sustainable production of energy and nature, which includes linking funding from the Framework Directive on Water and the Common Agricultural Policy. Such coalitions could for instance be made up of associations of farmers, land management organisations, energy cooperatives and water authorities.

Nature-inclusive agriculture

One fine example of synergy between agriculture, food production, biodiversity, landscape, recreation, water management and much more is the Keizersrande farm in the province of Overijssel. They call themselves a 'Natuurderij', from the Dutch word for farm, boerderij. The farm is situated in the floodplains of the river IJssel and manages the Natura 2000 area of which it is a part. The way the farm manages grazing and the design of its landscape gives it the flexibility to adapt to high water levels, which fits in very well with the Room for the River programme. The dairy farm has succeeded in creating greater biodiversity than farms managed in the usual way, as well as strengthening landscape quality.



Potential for biodiversity of international significance: country estates

The bat is a species group that could benefit specifically from targeted country estate management. It is included in the Habitats Directive and much can be achieved for this species with relatively little effort, for instance by planting and maintaining windbreaks that bats use for orientation. Another good measure is to leave old hollow trees standing to provide sleeping quarters. Ice houses and other buildings can be important overwintering sites. Many older country estates are also important breeding sites for birds of prey and owls. This not only applies to buzzards and hawks, but also for species like the Eurasian hobby and the European honey buzzard. The Pine martin is also very much at home here. Another species that benefits from the variety provided by country estates, if there is enough clean water, is the Common kingfisher. Variety is also key to the spectacular recovery of the badger, in this case combined with the building of fauna passages.

- *Sustainable chains*: support initiatives to make national and international raw material chains sustainable, work towards closed production loops and raise the value of land and water management services and sustainable raw materials. Create incentives to encourage the whole agri-chain to set greening targets and take responsibility for achieving them. Collaboration in the form of cooperatives has great potential in this area. Subsidy instruments also provide opportunities for greening.

4.3.3 Regional development with nature combinations: the region is where it's happening

Combinations of uses can be best achieved at regional level, which places regional authorities in an important management and stimulating role. With their area approach provincial governments can ensure that economic development goes hand in hand with investment in nature. The government aims to promote the synergy between nature and other functions in society, like the economy and water and energy supply. With nature placed at the heart of society, this means that everyone will have the same opportunities to participate in nature management. Already land management organisations and private individuals like land owners, farmers and private investors, in principle have the same opportunities to obtain land for nature.

In order to harmonise opportunities for nature development and management national and provincial governments have made agreements under the Pact for Nature for activities to be carried out by the provinces by 2015.

In the coming time the government will promote the following nature combinations:

- *Hospitality economy*: support activities relating to the synergy between nature and hospitality, specifically activities generated by the Agenda for Hospitality and Nature). This includes redesigning overnight tourism in combination with nature development; examining the possibility of a more flexible nature protection regime with less regulation for businesses and more opportunities for nature development; development of new forms of collaboration between government bodies, entrepreneurs, nature organisations, outdoor enthusiasts and other visitors, to create nature areas that are accessible and enjoyable and where sustainable business activity can be carried out.
- *Culture and landscape*: aim for greater synergy between nature and cultural heritage, to include projects under the policy document Kiezen voor karakter; Visie erfgoed en ruimte. Improve cooperation between nature and cultural organisations through the Green Table on Nature and Culture and explore potential for new ways of generating income. Stimulate private investment in nature through the Green Table.
- *Drinking water*: further explore and stimulate nature combinations with drinking water supply through the Green Table. The government supports the efforts of drinking water companies to fulfil the role of fully-fledged nature manager.



- *Climate change adaptation*: stimulate pilots in areas that combine nature with tasks under the Water Framework Directive (water quality), Deltaprogramma (flood protection, fresh water supply), climate resilience (water storage, heat regulation in cities, etc.). A promising pilot with international potential is being carried out in the Betuwe region: Waterrijk.
- *Energy*: nature areas and the sun, water and sea offer great potential for energy production. Stimulate land management organisations and private individuals to produce sustainable energy and at the same time improve the quality of the environment, nature and landscape. Work together with local authorities to find a balance between national and local interests. Energy infrastructure can also be exploited for nature objectives. For instance, how can wind turbine parks at sea contribute to nature values? Another appealing example of multiple land use is the concept of the ecological energy network (EEN): using the land under high-voltage cables for extra nature and recreation.

4.3.4 Green living and working: everything to be gained

The natural environment benefits people's health and well-being. Also, living close to green areas encourages people to exercise more, with a positive effect on their health and on social cohesion, which ultimately results in lower levels of stress. Green spaces also provide shade, absorb fine particulate matter, and make the environment more attractive to adults and children. These factors help to make these environments attractive locations for businesses and their employees. The government is therefore very keen to make room for these beneficial effects and to promote them. This could take different forms in various situations and locations. In urban areas investment in nature can soon result in savings in other costs to society, such as water management and cooling, and can contribute to public health.

How green areas are managed in this environment is primarily the responsibility of the local and regional authorities. Nevertheless, national government can, and indeed will stimulate this process.

Potential for biodiversity of international significance: towns and urban environments

The relation between nature, towns and urban environments is attracting increasing attention. Towns are creating 'green wedges' and nature-friendly banks for canals and rivers that run from the countryside through the towns. This gives towns and urban areas more potential to increase biodiversity. This has mutual benefits: the people living in towns and cities get attractive cycle and walking routes to the countryside and plants and animals can gain access to the towns. These could be fish species, dragon flies, amphibians, reptiles (like the Ringed snake) birds (like the Little grebe, kingfisher and swallow) and mammals

(bat, badger, polecat). Naturally this also applies to species which feel at home in a built-up environment, like the Common swift and creeping plants on walls. We are now seeing more and more Peregrine falcons breeding in buildings. This indicates a beneficial interweaving of nature and urban area: Peregrine falcons breeding in town find their food (pigeons, ducks, etc.) in the direct surroundings of the towns. In many towns several species of bat have found their home – for instance in Leiden, where the most common is the Common pipistrelle, living in cavity walls of buildings.

Government approach:

- *Green in the city*: stimulating local and provincial governments, businesses and partners in society to work together to create a green living and working environment. TEEB for Cities can make an important contribution here by integrating the value of green areas into the decision-making process of local authorities. By stimulating green child-care or school initiatives children in urban areas can experience nature at an early age. This experience starts close to home, on a balcony, in a garden, or in the local neighbourhood. The government therefore wishes to stimulate initiatives from the garden sector and urban farms, such as *Levende Duurzame Buitenruimtes* under the Green Deal.
- *Areas of the Future*: stimulating green business sites through the Green Table, focussed on increasing knowledge and raising awareness about biodiversity. In 2016 the government plans to present prizes to the ten greenest business sites at a conference to be held in the context of the EU Presidency.
- *'Green-blue veining'*: in addition to establishing green areas in the towns it is also important to create links between town and countryside. As urbanisation in the Netherlands will increase, the government believes it is important to improve accessibility to the green environment in and around towns and cities.
- *Nature and health*: promoting the use of green surroundings to improve health by encouraging understanding and awareness. To this effect the effects of green surroundings on health should be researched, regional initiatives stimulated and through the Green Table Healthier with Green, new coalitions created of patients, health care providers and nature organisations. Encourage greening of public places like school playgrounds. At the Green Table launch conference a pledge was signed by the National Forest Service, De Friesland Zorgverzekeraar and It Fryske Gea to organise an exercise programme for the elderly in a natural environment.
- *Proeftuin Eindhoven*: continuing and possibly upscaling the project. At the initiative of the municipal authorities of Eindhoven, government authorities and businesses are working together to make green surroundings an important location factor for businesses and staff.



4.3.5 Future-proof nature: more room for natural processes

The provincial governments are committed to putting the National Ecological Network in place, as agreed with the government. The Natura 2000 sites are important building blocks of that network. As there is now greater cohesion in the network and a programme-based approach is being applied, similar to that of the Nitrogen Programme, and the relationship with the surrounding areas is becoming more evident, the focus of nature policy can shift from individual protected species and areas to the larger landscape. Examples are the river areas and the dunes. Apart from management targeted at species and habitats in specific sites, greater emphasis will be given to creating room for natural processes to proceed in the dynamic delta area that gives Dutch nature its unique character. This will enable robust systems to develop: low management costs and achievable objectives that can adapt naturally to changing circumstances such as climate change.

In the European context the Netherlands will draw attention to the need to combine policy and rules for healthy and resilient ecosystems with for instance water safety, sustainable economic growth and climate adaptation (in relation to gradually shifting habitats of species). In some cases this will require a more flexible approach to achieve the targets of the EU directives.

Some species and habitats are far removed from a favourable conservation status, even on a European scale. There is a firm obligation for our country to ensure that species populations and habitats approaching a critical minimum level do not fall below it and in time will reach a favourable conservation status again. We are making every effort to achieve this. Where there is much to be achieved, we can and must take the time necessary to do so. It may also be necessary to consider the situation carefully. If an unreasonably large or unachievable task is involved, like the conservation of the Black grouse in the Netherlands, an approach is needed which does not allow countries to hide behind one another. In such cases countries could put extra effort in their own nature if it is of special importance on a European scale. The Netherlands for instance, could devote extra effort to delta nature and the species dependent on it; and other countries could make an extra effort for areas of raised bog and dependent species.

Government approach:

- *Natural processes:* place the emphasis on natural dynamism, especially in 2015 when quantifying the targets of the Birds and Habitats Directives and where possible in specific area projects too. Concentrating on a single species or a single habitat can obstruct the development to a more biodiverse system. Satisfactory status then turns into the enemy of improved status. For nature and for the economy it is therefore more attractive to make nature-inclusive designs more easily achievable under these Directives, especially in large waters.
- *European scale:* more cooperation at the level of the European nature network and the bio-geographical region to which the Netherlands belongs, and determine what effort is required to properly restore nature on a European scale.
- *European conference:* organise a conference to achieve dynamic nature development on a European scale to make the European network as a whole more robust.
- *Apply targets practically:* starting from the existing European targets for conservation and development of biodiversity, look for dynamic and flexible application of European rules in the Netherlands and Europe and explore how the rules can be improved to make them more easily feasible to improve the link between nature and other public challenges. Discuss this approach in Europe and introduce it in the European Commission (Natura 2000).
- *Future orientation:* have an explorative study on nature carried out at European level by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), as it did for the Netherlands.



4.3.6 Effective nature regulation: protect nature, reduce the burden on businesses and public.

Regulation is not only indispensable for an unambiguous and logical demarcation of tasks around nature, but also to create instruments. Instruments, for instance, to make area-specific development and a programme-based approach possible. Regulation is also necessary to meet international obligations regarding biodiversity, water and landscapes, and to provide the other government bodies with the instruments they need to carry out their nature policy remit. Regulation contributes to a firm foundation under the nature structure in the Netherlands.

With an eye to the future, regulation on nature and the living environment will be reformed and simplified. The government plans a robust new Nature Conservation Act that will lay down the foundations for nature policy. Sound implementation of the new Act is also vital. The local and provincial authorities, as well as the private sector will be actively involved. This process can also help in applying existing regulation.

Under the new Nature Conservation Act and the future Environmental Act the government aims to improve the practical application of the regulation and remove unnecessary burden for the public and businesses, to tie in better with international agreements, and involve nature and landscape interests at an early stage in area-specific development and large projects, better facilitate active conservation measures and provide more scope and flexibility for customised solutions. The ultimate plan is for the new Nature Conservation Act to be incorporated into the Environmental Act.

Green Deal Temporary Nature

Land owners can apply for a Temporary Nature exemption to develop an area of nature temporarily on their unused land. This will avoid a situation where future construction plans are disallowed because the area has been given over to nature. Private parties, like Havenbedrijf Amsterdam and Cascade, are working with national government and nature organisations, including the butterfly foundation Vlinderstichting. The risk is shared between all parties because they are making their land available for the project and the detailed consequences of temporary nature are not yet known. Some land owners have already voluntarily made extra efforts to adapt the design of their land to make it more attractive for plants and animal species, including protected ones. Although the various parties sometimes have conflicting interests, they use their own expertise and networks to work for the common good, that is, to extend the areas given over temporarily to nature. More natural areas will be created in the Netherlands by allowing nature to develop in its own way. Seed and young animals can spread from a temporary area and disperse, and so continue to contribute to nature in the Netherlands.

To harmonise nature targets and targets in other areas of public value in our policy, the Environmental Vision, as set down in the coming Environmental Act, could also be useful. This will be a comprehensive Vision, with key strategic choices for long term policy for the whole living environment. The principles of this Nature Vision can also help feed into the Environmental Vision.

A key element is its practice-directed application, a manner of working that finds scope within the law and the European rules to carry out activities in such a way that they strengthen rather than damage nature and with as little burden as possible for businesses and entrepreneurs. Experience is already being gained in the practical application of the laws relating to nature, for instance in the development of codes of conduct and the Green Deal Tijdelijke Natuur (see box).

Government approach:

- *Anticipate*: in implementing the Nature Conservation Act involve a broad range of interest groups early in the development of initiatives that can have their effects on nature and landscape.
- *Combine*: create scope to enable the idea behind temporary nature to also be applied to other activities, for instance to government property (under the 2013 Government Property portfolio strategy).
- *Learn from each other*: make an inventory of examples of a pro-active approach to rules and regulations on nature protection.
- *Implement*: support and involve the public, the private sector and local authorities so that legislation is easier to implement.

4.3.7 Develop and build with nature: government leads by example

The government aims to create robust nature that will thrive under human influence and can develop and adapt to changing circumstances. This means we must endeavour to look at the bigger picture and the long term. The connection between nature and the interests of various parties in society must be sustainable: nature that is supported by enlightened self-interest is much more resilient than nature that has to survive on the interests of the sector. Nature must be allowed to be diverse and have many transitional forms.

The more fluid and varied the transitions are between, for instance, nature and agriculture, countryside and town, wet and dry, the more robust nature will be. Where nature policy and landscape policy have a spatial planning dimension and come into contact with other government spatial planning programmes, the Board of Government Advisors can assist in achieving a spatial design of good quality. It can help to set up and manage government initiatives which aim to achieve nature-inclusive results.

National government has a special role here because it is responsible for and takes the initiative for projects that have direct or indirect consequences for the robustness of nature. Nature development in and around national waters in particular faces great challenges because of climate change and decisions that have to be made in connection with flood protection and freshwater supply (as described in the Deltaprogramma). In the Room for the River programme it has become clear that work on water can go hand in hand with the improvement of conditions for nature. The government will lead by example nationally and internationally by exploring potential for nature combinations in the orientation stage of new large-scale projects such as roads, waterways and dikes. Nature-inclusive construction will provide more opportunities in some cases than in others. This will present architects, project developers and contractors with a challenge to present solutions which integrate nature. It is best to identify the nature benefit of this type of design at an early stage, so that projects are not delayed. Decisions on government projects will be subject to existing financial frameworks and the agreed project lead time. By making use of co-commissioning and co-financing extra resources could be made available in order to realise greater value (linkage). This approach will not only make our country more beautiful, it will also ensure that the Netherlands can more easily meet its biodiversity targets. That in turn brings the time closer for us to deal more flexibly with rules for nature.

Government approach:

- *The Nature Ambition Great Waters*, a document to be published in the first half of 2014, outlines how robust nature could look in the timeline 2050/2100. It contains a clear ambition that invites the various interests to harmonise their objectives and work together.
- *The North Sea Strategy*: with the Framework Directive on Marine Strategy build a healthy and sustainably exploited North Sea. With its Regional Agenda for the North Sea, one of the most intensively used seas in the world, the government will stimulate multi-functional use of the Sea.
- *Nature combinations for national waters*: build up experience through pilots aimed at creating synergy between flood protection, freshwater supply, recreation and nature. One of the pilots is a design study for Markermeer. Under the Multi-year programme on infrastructure, spatial planning and transport (MIRT) the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment is examining how sustainability can be better embedded in the MIRT.
- *Nature combinations climate resilience*: together with provincial governments and water authorities determine government contribution to pilot projects for natural climate buffers in areas where the aim is to simultaneously work on nature development, flood protection, freshwater supply and other regional functions.
- *Nature-inclusive construction*: involve potential for nature combinations in design and planning of all government infrastructure investment from the very beginning. Encourage other government bodies and private initiatives to do the same. National infrastructure is the subject of the Green Table for nature-inclusive construction. Various stakeholders, including Bouwend Nederland and government bodies have indicated they are aiming to create nature-inclusive infrastructure. The government will further work out several pilot projects with them.

4.3.8 Build on an open, learning knowledge network: know more together

To make sound decisions we need to draw on sufficient knowledge. Knowledge about the state of our natural capital, about more effective cooperation within the lively and active network community and about the effects of our actions. Government bodies use this knowledge to form their policy, businesses to plan investment and the public to make choices about purchases or activities.

The manner of information gathering has changed dramatically over the past ten years. The use of internet, for instance, has made information more accessible. In a vision which allows individuals and businesses to take the initiative for nature conservation themselves, nature awareness, information sharing, learning from each other and an understanding of the quality and reliability of the information are critical factors for success. In order to realise the government's ambition to create diverse nature with strong foundations, changes are necessary in the areas of research, science and education. Learning networks are the key: networks of entrepreneurs, researchers, government bodies, education, the public and civil society. The government intends to stimulate this process and sees its role in linking and disseminating information and knowledge and raising awareness about people's own influence on nature.

There is a special role for the monitoring networks of around sixteen thousand volunteers enlisted through voluntary organisations. They provide data about population changes and the distribution of species to private organisations data management organisations (PGOs). This is then processed into policy information by Statistics Netherlands. One example is the Red Lists (see 3.2.3) most of which have been updated in the form of basic PGO reports. The government plans to publish the updated lists in the Official Gazette in 2014, or in 2015 at the latest. An important aspect of the learning network is education. Many studies have shown that the experience children build up with nature forms an important part of their personal development and strongly determines their involvement in nature later in life.

Opportunities for biodiversity of international significance: Large waters

The Natuurambitie Grote Wateren ('Nature Ambition for Large Waters') is a government document aimed to serve as inspiration, which outlines how nature may look in 2050. It involves the Wadden Sea, the North Sea, the coast, south-western Delta area, the IJsselmeer and the River areas. Recovery and use of natural processes plays an important role in this Natuurambitie. A start has already been made, for instance with the Room for the River project and the Sand Engine, an experimental sandbar built off the coast of Zuid-Holland.

Ambitions for the longer term, aimed at creating room for natural processes to proceed and for combining uses, can build on this further. A suitable design for the River area for example may be for

nature that fits into the dynamic river system of a lowland delta. Here we find river valley grasslands; a nature type that is under serious pressure internationally. The Birds and Habitats Directive species otter, Great bittern, and Sand martin make their home there, as do the beaver and the Black stork. The transitional area between freshwater and salt water is of great importance for fish species that swim from the sea upriver, deep into our neighbouring countries. The corridors between the rivers, the IJsselmeer and estuaries like the Oosterschelde, make it possible for these fish to complete their natural life cycles. They include the Habitats Directive species like salmon, Sea lamprey, the European river lamprey, Twaite shad and Allis shad, but also the eel and the European sea sturgeon.

Government approach:

- *Knowledge development:* stimulate cross-sector research that contributes to innovation in the area of green growth, in business networks (large, medium and small). This will generate forms of cooperation and small businesses can scale up their research results with the help of larger businesses with more resources.
- *Knowledge sharing:* together with provincial governments create knowledge networks to help the public, private bodies and businesses to develop and manage nature on the basis of the successful OBN



programme (development and management of nature quality). Give nature a greater role in groups that exchange knowledge about the Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme.

- *Knowledge application:* continue the Groen en Doen programme, in which the government contributes to obtaining knowledge through green volunteers, tying in with initiatives undertaken by provincial and local governments.
- *Education and training:* support from the Green Table Human Capital Agenda Natural Living Environment, established by representatives of green education and partners for the private sector to train future workers and educational institutions for a green future. Support green education inside and outside schools, for instance by stimulating green school playgrounds and city farms and the educational programme Duurzaam Door. The government will also continue to support coordination of nature education activities which the Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid IVN carries out in the National Parks.
- *Research network:* increase involvement of other government bodies, civil society organisations and businesses in the research network managed by national government. Researchers will be challenged to introduce the results into networks in society and collect and develop the knowledge of individuals in society (citizen science).
- *Policy information:* together with provincial government work towards a cohesive system of ecological information provision for national, provincial and area targets arising out of the Pact for Nature. In this system volunteers, PGOs and the Network Ecological Monitoring (NEM) play an important role. The emphasis in providing this information is on learning, not on holding people to account.

4.4 Vision in practice

4.4.1 Accelerated policy changes

This Vision is one step in a longer process of change. It sets out the key policy lines for the coming decades, based on the eight objectives for the long term and action to be undertaken for the short term. In order to make these objectives concrete and to ensure that they are realised, this Vision is accompanied by an appeal to all those involved in nature, especially provincial and local governments, civil society, businesses and participants in the Green Tables. The appeal calls on everyone to indicate how they can contribute to realising the objectives. The Ministry of Economic Affairs favours nature combinations with energy, businesses and agriculture. On the basis of the reactions the government will draw up a public implementation programme with the provinces and other groups involved in the second half of 2014.

4.4.2 Funding

Several sources can be used to fund the policy change. A large part of the action required forms part of on-going policy processes of directing non-financial instruments to activities that build on the new perspective. The instruments can be adjusted for this purpose. This applies for instance to increasing local involvement in agri-environmental schemes, broader application of principles for temporary nature and making room for the dynamic processes in nature policy.

Even so, smart nature combinations can contribute to achieving nature objectives with resources from the sector without this leading to extra financial pressure, for instance by not including nature as extra task in developments, but by using nature as part of the solution from the very beginning.

Green Deals play a prominent role in developing enthusiasm for public involvement in nature and biodiversity. In the current Ministry of Economic Affairs budget scope has been created to stimulate greening of the economy, including for the conclusion of Green Deals.

The measures in the Nature Vision are covered by the budget of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. A number of these measures have been given concrete form, such as the continuation of Groen en Doen, in which the government contributes to knowledge collection by nature volunteers.

Some of the measures will be elaborated in the public implementation agenda. The total budget available is 1 million Euros this year, increasing to 10 million a year from 2017.

The desired changes in society will be supported by making expertise capacity available in the area of cultural heritage, landscape, design and area development. This will be used partly to elaborate the Natuurambitie Grote Wateren and for adjustments to better align the knowledge infrastructure with the aims demanded by society.

The objective to place nature at the heart of society cannot be enforced by the government with laws, rules or subsidies. It can only be achieved if the whole of society contributes to it. This Nature Vision contains many examples of private parties who have faced up to their responsibilities and included nature and biodiversity in their activities and strategies – locally, nationally or globally. Private resources, such as contributions from businesses, benefactors, club members and green funds have always been an important source of funding for nature and will continue to be so in the future. The National Fund for Rural Areas is there to assist the various parties.



4.4.3 Finger on the pulse

This Nature Vision is based on the principle (see 2.4.1) that nature at the heart of society contributes to its welfare and well-being. Typical examples are food supply, raw material supply and benefits to the living environment, and therefore our health. Another important element of the Vision described here is that nature at the heart of society will be more robust and have greater biodiversity than when it is sheltered from society.

The foundations for this robust form of nature will be laid with a future-proof Natura 2000, a new Nature Conservation Act, a nature-inclusive government approach to construction and a solid knowledge infrastructure. Biodiversity policy in the framework of Natura 2000 has considerably improved the starting position for nature, or has at least reduced or halted its decline. Under the Nature management agreement and the Pact for Nature, the way in which this can be followed up with monitoring and evaluation has been agreed. The Pact for Nature has laid down the basis for a successful continuation of this policy, but is not enough. Nature combinations and making nature part of our daily lives can help to strengthen nature and biodiversity, also outside the nature reserves. European studies have shown that in areas with a diverse range of nature-inclusive uses the average status of conservation of protected European nature is more favourable.

The result of ensuring firm foundations for robust nature and for a structure made up of combinations of different types of nature, nature-inclusive working and a greater capacity for self-organisation can be mutually beneficial. Nature-inclusive agriculture for instance, with closed-loop water, energy and nutrient cycles can strengthen nature quality in the foundations and agriculture or infrastructure with green borders can serve as a link for Natura 2000 areas.

If agriculture manages to adopt a nature-inclusive approach on a large scale and farmers make use of rich soil life, including landscape elements and nature-friendly water management, the number of characteristic species will increase considerably (see box in 4.3.2). Because the Netherlands imports many biotic raw materials, making their production more sustainable will also benefit biodiversity abroad.

If urban areas can be made greener with natural forms of gardening, green roofs, parks that fit in with the landscape and types of building that are beneficial to urban species, towns and cities can become the habitat of even more Red List species than at present (see box in 4.3.4). If we can link up towns and cities and their surroundings with green corridors, fauna corridors and land and water routes, then people living in towns and cities will be able to experience the wealth of nature. If we then succeed in allowing natural processes to do their work on landscape scale for the conservation of species, a diverse, dynamic form of nature will be created which is less dependent on human management. Earlier calculations by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency have shown that there is great potential for achieving international biodiversity targets by implementing measures aimed at water quality, water quantity and by giving more room to natural processes.

The government is convinced that it is possible to achieve this richer, more robust type of nature by making sustainable use of nature's importance to society, by concentrating effort on a form of nature that is superior to enclosed nature reserves and specific species by strengthening the self-organising capacity around nature and by investing in nature-inclusive uses and in nature that can take some wear and tear.

However, conviction is not the same as certainty and we need that certainty in order to be able to provide future generations with the same nature and biodiversity that we find indispensable in our own surroundings and throughout the world. The government is therefore working together with provincial governments, businesses and civil society on an implementation programme and will ask the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency to evaluate the policy changes arising from this Vision every three years, and assess whether they, together with the Pact for Nature, lead to the anticipated results. The evaluation will not only consider the question of to what extent the policy adopted contributes to achieving ecological targets, but also whether the added value of nature to society has increased and to what extent the policy adopted contributes to better use of it.

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