Setting the Scene

Towards an Evidence Framework 12/13 September Workshop?

Alan Jemmett,

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service

The are very few places in Europe that have such a density and diversity of designated coast and estuary so close to major cities, large populations and centres of economic activity - this is a big responsibility.

Liverpool City Region Deal – Accelerate Investment in Low Carbon Economy

- Signed 2012;
- Centre of Offshore Renewable Engineering;
- International Festival of Business;
- **Regulatory Pilot – facilitate decision taking, improve evidence;**
- River Mersey Task Force.

Liverpool City Region Low Carbon Deal - Regulatory Pilot

Key drivers:

- Significant economic and skills aspirations for the low carbon economy with windfarms in the vanguard;
- Perceived risks to delivery of investment projects – delay and uncertainty;
- Evidence to support conservation advice dated and inadequate;
- Risk of environment v.s. economic.

Main Activities

- Business case to secure resources from a variety of sources;
- Scope – focus on low carbon projects, especially those which straddle land/marine;
- Joint working arrangements;
- Monitor pipeline of prospective projects – pro-active not re-active;
- Identification of baseline gaps;
- Commissioning to address critical gaps;
- Single evidence base for technical assessments;
- Development of principles – environment account managers;
- Update Regulation 35 packages;
- Developer engagement;
- Reporting and liaison.

Main Outcomes (1)

- >£250k secured for survey and capacity (Environmental Accounts Manager);
- £180k survey commissioned and delivered e.g. docks and bird survey, functionally linked land, Biotope and Coastal Habitat Mapping;
- NE commissioned evidence / literature review e.g. Water birds & Egremont shore;
- WeBS monitoring around Mersey Estuary SPA count areas – addressing data gaps (volunteers);
- 3 low carbon projects assisted through consents – statutory timescales met;
- 34 other projects assisted according to principles – solar, biomass, EfW, wind, supply chain etc;

Main Outcomes (2)

- Single evidence base used for single technical assessments e.g. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects;
- Influence - single point of contact Defra family, relevant to coastal concordat;
- Variable engagement by developers;
- NE review of 6 Regulation 35 Conservation Advice packages complete (and drawing on updated evidence) – Mersey Estuary, Mersey Narrows & North Wirral, Ribble & Alt Estuaries;
- Improved understanding of baseline - strengths , weaknesses & gaps;
- Organisational joint working.

Succession Activity

- Joint working principles – day-to-day for project consenting;
- Use agreed single evidence base for technical assessments e.g. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects;
- Improved awareness - baseline gaps, updating activity required;
- Working protocols business as usual e.g. single evidence base, single ALSE;
- **This workshop!**
- **Suggested Baseline Evidence framework?**

- Joint working – smoother working processes and arrangements especially between NE, EA, Councils and MEAS;
- Increased willingness to work together, Open Data, share scope of assessments, joint commission.

Evidence-based decision taking – focus should be on the merits of a project and not arguments over the adequacy of the data!

Some thoughts for the Workshop "Towards an Evidence Framework?"

- Build shared understanding / professional consensus where critical gaps lie for LCR coast (e.g. functionally linked land?);
- Multi-organisational responsibility;
- Data and decision taking – it has a limited shelf-life;
- LCR open for business!
- Explore mechanisms to address them?
- Discuss and seek consensus on joint working practices e.g. Joint commissioning – sharing resources sharing scope;
- Platform / location to share data, studies, scope – accessible to ALL sectors;
- Professional network and contacts?
- Working principles – now day-to-day for projects going through consents;
- Measures and success and mechanism to review (2-yearly gathering?).
- **Baseline Evidence Framework?**