

What benefits might there be from an Evidence strategy? And for whom?

1. A single evidence strategy would reduce the risk of duplication of evidence gathering. It would create a database that people could access to see if the evidence they require has already been collected for a different purpose and if so, is it suitable for their purpose. This reduces cost to projects and potentially the time taken to move a project forward;
2. Collaborative working may trigger an earlier consideration of the evidence required in an area or for a project and enable the modification of some methods used to collect evidence to an extent where the evidence is then valid for more than a single purpose/project. This is likely to be more economical than each project collecting its own project specific evidence. Collaborative working may also help to identify future evidence needs;
3. A single strategy would identify gaps in the baseline database and help define the overall evidence need for the Region. Identification of an overall evidence need may also help partners agree a single standard which would help improve the consistency of evidence gathering and make future data sets more comparable. This would also encourage targeted research which, in some circumstances, could be filled by engaging with students from within the LCR;
4. It would be relatively easy to publicise and promote a single strategy. This would be useful in raising public awareness of the value of the European sites, and of enterprise, and how they can co-exist. This may help reduce opposition in the face of continued development within the region if the public understand the mechanisms involved in protecting European sites;
5. A single evidence strategy would direct focus to key indicator receptors which would help secure a robust baseline database. It would also likely result in long term datasets. Where resources are limited it would be more beneficial to have a robust and complete baseline database rather than patchy survey coverage restricted to a discreet project area; and
6. A single strategy is likely to increase communication between partners and, by identifying gaps in the database, or realising its potential benefits, is also likely to identify new partners. It may trigger the formulation of a Liverpool City Region Management group (such as that formed for Plymouth Harbour) which could include the Local Nature Partnership, The Liverpool Enterprise Partnership and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. These three partners as a minimum would ensure the management group was represented by all interested disciplines.
7. The need for a single Evidence Strategy is partially driven by the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the NERC Act. It would likely be of benefit to:

- Statutory agencies (such as Natural England in terms of helping to inform and update conservation advice for European Sites and the Environment Agency in terms of partnership working and securing funding for research or habitat creation);
- NGO's such as RSPB and LWT (Particularly in terms of securing funding and helping to achieve their conservation objectives);
- Academia (Particularly in terms of identifying research opportunities;
- Developers (for many of the reasons stated above – providing a more economic and potentially more streamlined process with regards to the collection of evidence)
- Planners (would help inform the evidence base required to ensure fully informed planning decisions are made with the most appropriate evidence; and with minimal delays due to the need to wait for additional evidence to be collected)

Case Studies of how industry and/or academia can work together to fill evidence gaps

8. Irish Sea Wind Farm project – Collaborative approach between Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, Planning Authority, Gas and Oil. An example of a number of different organisations (developer, planner, NGO and academia) working together to collect the evidence required to assess potential impacts of the wind farm.
9. Plymouth Harbour – An overall Management levy is charged which helps fund the management of the European marine site.
10. Fisheries working with the Environment Agencies to identify gaps in fish stock surveys and also contribute to those surveys.
11. New Brighton Foreshore sediment study where bird watchers and RSPB volunteers are monitoring the distribution of fine sediment deposition. This has also stimulated discussion with Academia to research the seasonal variation in sediment deposition.

How could an evidence strategy be used to strengthen funding applications?

12. Identifying the benefits of a single evidence strategy would help to secure funding for the reasons set out below:
 - It would identify a clear, Region wide need and benefit;
 - It would encourage partnership working;
 - It would inform a 'best practice' standard and identify a 'value for money' evidence gathering strategy for the reasons set out in paragraphs 1 to 6;

How will future communications between organisations be facilitated and how would they lead to a review of a draft strategy?

13. A 'signpost' mechanism could be implemented from where all interested parties would be directed to the location of the datasets relevant to their needs. This

would require 'buy in' from all parties to ensure it was maintained and kept up to date.

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