

Board Paper

09 July 2014

Paper Title	Evidence Management Strategy and Delivery Plan
Paper Reference:	
Paper Prepared By:	Michael Evans and Catherine Duigan

Purpose of Paper:	To present the final Evidence Management Strategy and Delivery Plan
Recommendation:	Approval with further work to develop the delivery plan
Decision Required:	Approval

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Impact on the Environment: As a public body, our decisions must be based on the best available evidence. Not doing this will raise the possibility of failing to protect the environment, causing environmental harm and loss of reputation. Impact on the Economy: Utilising good evidence in our decision making is key to enabling the sustainable use of our natural resources for economic gain. Many of our key industries in Wales utilise or impact on our natural resources. Good evidence will help ensure that we are making the right decisions. Impact on Community: We already work closely with many sections of the community in terms of evidence gathering and sharing. We must continue to engage with communities to share understanding of the evidence base for our decisions. Communities must have confidence that we are using the best evidence to inform our activities. Impact on Knowledge: We need to be confident about decision making where we have evidence gaps, or conflicting evidence. We must ensure that we collect evidence as we undertake interventions, either in operational activity or policy development. We also need to
---	---

	gain knowledge from reviewing the impact of our decision making, learning as we go. All of this will help to ensure that we are a knowledge based and learning organisation.
--	--

Issue

1. All of our decisions are likely to come under increased scrutiny in the future. We must ensure that we have good evidence upon which to make decisions, and that we are able to communicate this clearly and confidently.
2. We need to ensure that we are collecting the correct evidence to meet future challenges, and ensure that this evidence is robust enough to withstand challenge.
3. We must have a process in place to ensure that our evidence is produced to an acceptable standard, and that accepted quality assurance is in place.
4. This strategy frames the way that we will use evidence in the future.

Summary

5. The draft strategy was discussed at a Board development session in April 2014. The Board recommended to keep the paper in its current form as a “concept paper” in order that the useful material contained within continued to be available. The authors were tasked with completing the concept paper, producing a shorter and more focused Evidence Management Strategy, and to support this with the development of a delivery plan.
6. On May 6th we held a cross-directorate workshop to refine the main elements of the strategy and identify key steps for the delivery plan. This workshop was supported by members of the Board Knowledge sub-group as well as staff from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and Welsh Government.
7. The aims of this strategy are to: 1.) Define our evidence remit; 2.) Demonstrate how it will operate with our organisation; 3.) Explain why we need an evidence strategy; 4.) Set out our principles and strategic objectives; and 5.) Describe our evidence governance.
8. We will review the evidence strategy at regular intervals as we move forwards.
9. The delivery plan with target deliverables is at an early stage of development and will be further refined once the strategy is agreed. In particular we will identify delivery dates for the milestones and recirculate by correspondence.

Background

10. As a new organisation it is essential that all staff have a shared understanding of the importance of using good evidence in their work. This strategy will help to resolve the issue of three different ways of managing evidence inherited from the legacy bodies.
11. We may never have all of the evidence that we want. We must be comfortable in deciding when we have enough evidence to move forwards, and how we deal with conflicting evidence. Building our staff’s confidence in making such decisions is key.
12. We also face the challenge of deciding on our evidence priorities. For example, we have inherited three monitoring regimes, but are these delivering the correct evidence for our new purpose? Reviewing and agreeing a single, prioritised monitoring programme will be one of our early big challenges.
13. Our purpose means that we will have to extend our evidence work into new priority areas, for example, to ensure that social and economic impacts of our work are better understood.

14. We have produced this strategy in parallel with the production of the corporate and business plans. There are many early challenges identified where we will need to strengthen our evidence base, such as in utilising the ecosystem approach, producing natural resource plans and producing a state of natural resource report.

Next Steps

15. We will promote the strategy internally and with our key external partners and undertaken regular reviews.

Risks

16. The production and implementation of this strategy is closely linked to the Knowledge Management Strategy and shares some common risks.
17. These include the dependency on ICT to deliver a suite of systems and tools to support knowledge management activities, whilst dealing with the immediate priorities for other operational systems, driven by our transition away from legacy systems.
18. There are also capacity and skill gaps affecting our capability to absorb the increase in volume and complexity of knowledge management activities resulting from transfer of services from legacy bodies

Financial Implications

19. We are able to produce, buy or share evidence. We should not be producing or buying evidence when it is available from one of our partner organisations. The balance of where we source our evidence will be determined by, and have impacts on the available budgets that are already under constraint.
20. We will have to carefully prioritise our expenditure, ensuring that we concentrate on filling the critical evidence gaps and not just doing what we have always done.
21. We will collaborate more closely with WG and Defra family to ensure that we are making the best of available evidence and avoiding any duplication in effort.

Communications

22. We will publish the strategy on our website.
23. We will promote the strategy internally through working groups and on our intranet site and internal social media.
24. We also need to promote our evidence strategy externally to attract potential collaborators, and illustrate the opportunities of working with us.