



Environment
Agency



Evidence

Guide

June 2010

Foreword

The Evidence Directorate was formed as a result of the Environment Agency's vision that everything we do must be underpinned by compelling evidence. This evidence should be produced swiftly and with light touch governance.

We are changing in Evidence to re-direct our resources to our vision and mission, and our new priorities set out in the organisation's five year strategy. We have changed the way we are structured and continue to work on streamlining our processes and embedding a customer-driven culture. We are developing our people and finding new ways to interpret and communicate evidence in a compelling way.

We have produced this document to explain what we are about, the service that we will provide, and to set out our values and the way we will work. We need to translate and apply this to all our work.

This is an exciting time. We have a real opportunity to shape the Directorate, and define the way we'll work with colleagues across the organisation and our external partners to realise our ambitions.

Miranda Kavanagh
Director of Evidence

June 2010

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Introduction

Towards the end of the 20th century there was recognition, across government and society at large, of the need to reduce our impact on the environment, and to face the challenges posed by climate change.

The global financial crisis has had a huge impact and created conflicting short and long term pressures. However, these pressures are nothing compared to the crisis faced by the environment, which simply won't wait.

Through our vision and corporate strategy we have delivered real benefit to the environment, and it's imperative that we continue to respond to the ever changing physical and business surroundings. Over the coming years difficult choices will have to be made, and it is our role to ensure that the environment and the need to deliver real improvements remain at the heart of decision making.

To do this, as an organisation, we must ensure that our strategies, programmes priorities and targets are: effective, efficient, stand up to scrutiny, deal with problems, are forward-looking and shaped by evidence, rather than responding to short-term pressures. We will tackle the problems, and not just the symptoms.

The organisation's corporate strategy 2010-2015 pinpoints how we can be the best we can, by:

- Using evidence and knowledge to guide and inspire our own action and the actions of others
- Recognising that data, information and knowledge are assets and manage them accordingly
- Using environmental data to create compelling evidence that supports and informs our decisions and those of others

It's not just about what we do, but how we do it. Our strength comes through working together and developing the way we build relationships with people both externally and internally. Our 'doing' is as important as our voice. Finally, compelling evidence underpins everything we do and provides us with the authority and confidence that our advice is sound. We need to deliver the corporate priorities with PACE: focusing on People, Action and Compelling Evidence.

This document sets out how, as the Evidence Directorate, we will support the organisation to ensure that the environmental outcomes set out in the corporate strategy are achieved.

Our vision

The Evidence Directorate will ensure that the organisation's strategy, work programme, and reputation are driven by compelling evidence.

Our mission

The organisation's awareness and the value placed on evidence are improving. Creating the Evidence Directorate is a sign of how important the role of evidence is to the business as a whole. Evidence helps identify emerging threats to the environment and people, and to understand how these change, both over time and spatially. Our evidence allows us to understand the most effective interventions, and where to make them to achieve the optimum outcome for the environment and society. We will provide strong leadership to shape the way we generate, quality assure and use evidence.

Our role

The Evidence Directorate's role is to collate and maintain all the relevant knowledge, facts, data and science available internally and externally. Through analysis and interpretation we provide the evidence required to inform decision makers and to ensure we can substantiate our decisions and drive outcomes.

We will provide the information in a format that is broad enough to enable us to develop options, and detailed enough for those options to stand up to scrutiny. We will provide the information in an accessible way, put it into context and use it to:

- **inform** current thinking and provide an understanding of the most effective interventions and where to make them
- **challenge** where 'inconvenient truths' show that our decisions or actions are not evidence based
- **enable** decision making that ensures we deliver the optimum outcome for the environment and society
- **shape new, and review existing programmes and strategies** to ensure they are effective and that there is a clear line of sight from the evidence through to our actions on the ground
- **prioritise** new strategies, plans and initiatives
- enable the development of better tools and techniques and improve our organisational **effectiveness and efficiency**
- lead a **change** in behaviour that directs our resources to deliver greater environmental outcomes

Our commitment

We have organised the Directorate into three sections: Strategy and Reporting, Evidence Services, and Research, Monitoring and Innovation.

Strategy and Reporting

This is the hub of the Directorate, bringing together work from across Evidence and further afield in order to provide a strategic steer on key environmental issues.

This group has the following role:

- leads on strategic environmental planning that is key to determining the environmental outcomes that meet the needs of people and wildlife and how these can be delivered in the most effective and efficient way
- undertakes the central planning and commissioning of work within the Evidence Directorate and decides whether to gather the necessary evidence ourselves or, increasingly, from others
- presents, communicates, and launches our outputs, and ensures they are visible and accessible both internally and externally, so as to raise issues for internal and external debate
- co-ordinates and delivers the cross-cutting assessment and interpretation of data and information that underpins our corporate strategy
- co-ordinates the management of our relationships with internal and external stakeholders relevant to our evidence base
- systematically reviews our programmes and strategies to ensure they are evidence based, effective and delivering the environmental outcomes we have defined
- establishes and maintains key operational facts and data that underpin each of our supporting strategies
- reports on the state of the environment and use this information to assess how effective our interventions are at delivering our environmental outcomes, identifying gaps in our evidence and commissioning work to address these
- provides a top down view of the environmental pressures and the options for dealing with them both current and looking to the future
- understands the risk for potentially different interpretations of the same knowledge, facts, data, and science and ensure we understand the position of our key external stakeholders
- improves the way we work with Operations across Evidence in delivering our corporate strategy and ensure that we really understand their needs and the options for dealing with them now and in the future
- provides leadership, and quality assures the way we manage our evidence, data and information and lead on our state of the environment reporting
- provides business and workforce planning, support for in-year resourcing of activities and performance tracking and management of delivery all of which are essential to the effective operation of the Directorate

Evidence Services

This group provides the strategic and professional leadership for the organisation on data, mapping, modelling and information assets. The group also provides an overview in the areas of Economics, Statistics and Social Science.

Data, Mapping, Modelling and Information Management

- develops and secures the implementation of the organisation's corporate level strategies on data, mapping, modelling and information
- reviews and continually improves the quality of our data, mapping, modelling and information to ensure that this provides the basis for sound decision making
- ensures that all organisation data, mapping, models and information are properly managed through their whole life cycle to support delivery of our objectives and to be legally compliant
- ensures that our staff have the right data, mapping and information in the right place at the right time with the modelling tools to use it effectively
- ensures that Defra, WAG and EU data, mapping, modelling and information policies are compatible with achieving the organisation's objectives
- ensures that our data, mapping, models and information assets are accessible to others to encourage more sustainable decision making and delivery of our environmental outcomes
- ensures that we meet key statutory data, mapping, modelling and information requirements to support our EU and national compliance and reporting obligations
- ensures that our models and forecasts provide a fair and unbiased assessment of the extent and quality of our understanding of environmental risks.

Economics, Statistics and Social Science

- provides the strategic leadership and oversight for the organisation in the areas of Economics, Statistics and Social Science
- provide the economic and social science evidence that shapes our decisions, policies and strategies
- ensures we deliver statistics to agreed national standards and manages the interface with the UK Statistics Authority

Research, Monitoring and Innovation

This is the core professional service providing expert scientific advice and support to policy and operations and has the following roles:

- provides the science needed to support delivery of the new Corporate Strategy and embedding of the outputs within the business
- ensures that we base our decisions on sound scientific evidence and we have effective peer review and advisory systems in place
- provides a leadership role by flagging new scientific issues that are relevant to the organisation
- leads the strategic direction for monitoring to ensure we gather the right information to understand the environment and the pressures acting on it
- identifies innovation solutions and technologies that enable the business to do its job more efficiently
- provides specific scientific services, on a reactive basis, to Operations and Environment & Business
- maintains and develops our UK and international leadership role on scientific issues of priority and relevance to the organisation
- delivers the Research & Innovation Programme for Environment & Business, FCRM and Operations
- works in collaborative projects with external partners and develops working relationships with academic institutions and other key public and private sector organisations



We will know when we are succeeding when Internal stakeholders;

- come to us out of choice because of the quality and value for money we provide
- see us that we work in a simple but effective way and always thinking about the outcome we are helping to achieve
- notice that we apply the 80/20 rule to ensure we provide the right level of information and no more and always communicate it in a clear and simple way
- respect our skills and expertise and feel that we fully understand their needs in terms of the outputs they require, and the timescales in which they need them, and know that we will deliver the response they require when they need it
- have 'go to' people within Evidence, following a business partnering approach, who will act as their key point of contact and who will provide the link to, and speak for, the whole of Evidence
- know that we will interpret knowledge, facts, data and science and use it to tell them a story about what the information is telling us
- understand what the big issues on the horizon are, and know why these are important and what the possible implications are
- see us working in partnership with them to address the big issues in priority order and provide short-term deliverables to demonstrate progress
- know that we will have assessed the options and always recommend the optimum solutions to ensure deliverability and affordability
- believe we demonstrate good value for any functional money allocated to a specific work stream

Chief Executive, Directors;

- see that we are delivering the full role of the Directorate
- know that, when needed, they will get a rapid evidence response to requests, telling them exactly what they need to know
- be confident that we will always highlight any ‘inconvenient truths’, challenging non-evidence-based thinking

External partners;

- see us working with academic institutions, government and other agencies on evidence programmes and promoting research and exploring opportunities for external, and jointly funded, collaborative projects looking at the application of science
- find that we are regularly publishing compelling evidence in an accessible way; contributing to the debate on environmental issues in civil society, encouraging behaviour change by finding our voice on the national stage, furthering our business objectives
- see that we are looking to develop long-term, proactive, two-way working relationships with them
- observe that we are using and incorporating an increasing amount of the knowledge, facts, data and science they, or others, have produced
- feel that we are working in partnership with them and find that it is easier to align their work with ours
- be willing to amend their programmes to accommodate our evidence needs and be willing to fund work through us



How it will feel for us

We will be the best by;

- having the right skills and experience, focused development and inspirational leadership, and inbuilt flexibility to marshal our resources to respond to the challenges of the future
- having simple systems that support rather than hinder us
- being empowered, accountable and responsible for delivering outcomes
- communicating evidence in a compelling way and ensuring our communications are face to face wherever possible, and that email is the last rather than the first option
- working in a manner that ensures our health, safety, and welfare, and minimises our environmental impact and carbon footprint
- constantly challenging our existing practices and ways of working to ensure that we are providing value for money and maximising the outputs we deliver for every £1 spent
- working collaboratively across sections, functions or teams within our Directorate; making the time to support colleagues, working as a team to respond to requests from the business
- getting the evidence cycle really working and support the Strategy & Reporting team as the hub and core of the evidence cycle; ensuring that requests for work from the business, whether formal or informal, are seamlessly routed through them
- being responsive and flexible, and ensuring that we can provide a 'fit for purpose' response within required timescales
- planning to ensure achievement of high level delivery plan requirements, but also incorporate contingencies to deliver foreseeable reactive work
- being willing to take responsibility and lead on issues, not just provide answers to questions or issues
- not seeking permission, but commissioning ourselves work that needs to be undertaken to fill the gaps in our evidence
- delivering products to the business for them to implement, but have 'sticky hands' and not let go until someone else has taken it on

