

Evidence and innovation strategy programme

Statement of needs for access to the natural
environment

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Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

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Information about this publication and further copies are available from:

Sponsorship, Landscape & Recreation Division
Room 1/04
Defra
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6EB
Email address: CYDmailbox@defra.gsi.gov.uk:

This document is available on the Defra website.

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Strategic Outcome Statement of Needs Summary Sheet

STRATEGIC OUTCOME TITLE: More and better access to the natural environment for recreation, especially for those who find it difficult to enjoy the health and well being benefits which access to nature can bring

1. Delivering the Strategic Outcome

1. **Maintain and renew infrastructure**

- Access to open country and registered common land completed
- Access to coast improved
- Overhaul of rights of way legislation by 2008
- Lost rights of way found in 24 counties
- New Forest National Park up and running
- New National Park in South Downs (if confirmed)
- National Park funding formula in place by 2010 (subject to CSR07 outcome)
- 2 AONB conservation boards established and AONB sustainable development fund launched
- Mainstream access improvements in selected policy areas of OGDs
- Revised forestry strategy in place by 2007 (also relevant to objectives 2 and 3)
- 400 ha of woodlands created in National Forest every year
- 300 agri-environment access/educational agreements in place every year

2. **Develop/implement communications strategy including information on recreational opportunities and communication with user groups, landowning interests, and commercial sector**

- National access database launched by 2008

3. **Ensure everyone is given good opportunities to enjoy the natural environment.**

- Social inclusion programme established on basis of White Paper diversity review (subject to CSR07 outcome)

2. Aligning E&IS Programmes with delivery of the Strategic Outcome

A single E&IS Statement of Need is presented to cover all aspects of the Strategic Outcome.

3. Describe the key links with other Strategic Outcomes

Links to other Strategic Outcomes:

- Natural Resource Protection including land use
- Water quality
- Vibrant Enterprise across Rural England

We have a strong interest in the Modernising Rural Delivery project , and the creation of Natural England, as much of the delivery on Access issues will be provided by Natural England. We also have a strong interest in the policy priorities of OGDs, in particular: DoH (Health White Paper including physical activity delivery plan); ODPM (planning policy and development of better managed urban green space); DfT (linear access routes including incorporation of rights of way improvement plans in local transport plans); DCMS (sport and recreation on land and water and priorities for lottery funding); and DfES (outdoor learning programmes including visits to the countryside). We invest a significant amount of effort in seeking to influence the priorities of these departments and need to develop a robust evidence base to inform the development of our own policy, understand its impact on that of OGDs, and strengthen our hand in negotiating changes to OGD policy when we consider these to be necessary.

E&IS Programme Statement of Needs

TITLE OF PROGRAMME

1. Name of E&IS programme

More and better access to the natural environment

POLICY CONTEXT

2. Strategic Priority

State the Strategic Priority or Priorities to which the new E&IS programme relates.

Protecting the countryside and natural resource protection

3. Strategic Outcome

State the Strategic Outcome(s) to which the new E&IS programme relates and the corresponding name(s) of the SRO(s).

More and better access to the natural environment for recreation, especially for those who find it difficult to enjoy the health and well being benefits which access to nature can bring.

SRO: Brian Harding

4. Key Policy Outcomes and targets

Set out the Policy Outcome(s) to which the new E&IS programme contributes, and their targets.

1. Maintain and renew infrastructure

- Access to open country and registered common land completed
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- Revised forestry strategy in place by 2007 (also relevant to objectives 2 and 3)
- 400 ha of woodlands created in National Forest every year
- 300 agri-environment access/educational agreements in place every year

2. *Develop and implement a communications strategy which enables people to know what they can do and what they should not do*

- National access database launched by 2008

3. *Ensure everyone is given good opportunities to enjoy the natural environment.*

- Social inclusion programme established on basis of White Paper diversity review (CSR07 bid)

5. Key trends, drivers, barriers and opportunities affecting achievement of the Policy Outcomes

Drivers & opportunities

- Vocal user groups – demanding action from Minister
- DCMS/DOH PSA raising levels of activity
- DOH White Paper / physical activity delivery plan for using the natural environment
- DfES – policy in relation to children & exercise influences what Defra does
- Liveability agenda (ODPM and HO)
- ODPM planning policy generally
 - ODPM's communities plan
 - Thames Gateway (which is now planning green spaces)
 - Green Arc initiative (Birmingham and London)

Trends

There has been a certain amount of work on these issues, but it has been piecemeal and done by other organisations in relation to different agenda. More analysis of this needs to be done (see next section under E&I needs/forecasting)

- Towards a more sedentary lifestyle
- Changing demand for different types of activity
- Climate change
- Demographics (aging population – especially in rural areas)
- Rise in overseas tourism (is this at the expense of domestic rural tourism?)
- Rising car ownership
- Rising levels of (childhood) obesity
- Rising demand for access
- Increasing amounts of leisure time?
- Improving understanding of the long-term health benefits of physical activity for the prevention of CHD, some forms of cancer, obesity and associated illnesses such as diabetes

Barriers

- Lack of a robust evidence base with which to inform Defra policy and those of other Depts
- Lack of strategic planning (esp between Government Depts)
- Multi-user conflicts
- Inadequate facilities/activities on offer for under-represented groups
- Insufficient knowledge amongst potential users of the natural environment
- potential reluctance of teachers to take pupils on school trips due to liability concerns

SCOPING FUTURE EVIDENCE AND INNOVATION NEEDS – What evidence and innovation is needed for your *E&IS* *programme*

6. Evidence and Innovation Needs

6a. Discuss what evidence and innovation you need to deliver your Policy Outcomes through this new E&IS programme.

We have found it useful to separate the E&I needs into four sections, as shown in the table below:

Theme/Need	Policy Outcome 1 (infrastructure)	Policy Outcome 2 (information)	Policy Outcome 3 (equality of access)
<i>Developing a robust evidence base</i>	Current evidence is piecemeal, has not been developed specifically for Defra policies, and is owned by various different organisations including OGDs. There is a clear need to draw the evidence together to underpin Defra policy, and to tie it in with other Departmental evidence bases (eg Rural Evidence Hub)		
<i>Developing our analytical understanding of the issues</i>	We need to improve our lines of argument about the relationship between provision of infrastructure and overall impact on our policy goals		There is a particular need to look at the provision of infrastructure and its effect on access to the environment by disadvantaged groups
<i>Developing a targeted communication/ information strategy</i>		Developing a clear communication strategy will help us to understand what the key messages are, the language and tools we need to reach the different disadvantaged groups, and the links with other information providers (eg commercial companies / tourist organisations etc.)	
<i>Innovation & forecasting</i>	This is related to <i>Developing a robust evidence base for policy</i> : there is a particular need to understand trends & drivers more clearly (and to bring together trends & drivers work from other Depts) to inform future policy.		

EVIDENCE BASE

Data for monitoring the supply of access, demand for access, and impact of access on the natural environment. All of these need to be captured at national, regional and local levels, recognising that some of this is already being collected but Defra needs to take a strategic overview of the evidence to inform Defra policy and policies developed in other Departments; and to inform our relationship with delivery bodies.

- Development of generic tools for easy local use (baseline standards, digitising local maps, Best Value Performance Indicators (ODPM)), strategic planning tool to assess whether resource meets use requirements; tools so that everyone can access & use the evidence base
- Collecting baseline information on:
 - Extent & quality of open access (geographical distribution)
 - Nature reserves & country parks
 - Distribution and condition of ROW & other routes, green spaces, water
 - Demand for access
 - To what extent do facilities/service providers in the natural environment address issues of culture, ethnicity and access?
- Evidence for impact on:
 - natural environment
 - economies
 - other users (social impact – local community)
 - health (*shared with DOH, DCMS*)
 - quality of life
 - rural economies and communities
 - social cohesion/exclusion
- Who uses the natural environment?
 - How often?
 - For what purpose?
 - What are the barriers to access?
 - Attitudes of users/non users towards the natural environment
 - What facilities/activities do people want?
 - What has been the impact of the new CROW open access?
- Influencing users/non-users and landowners
 - What are the most effective ways of influencing behaviour (links to communications strategy)
 - How does this vary by target group?

DEVELOPING OUR ANALYTICAL UNDERSTANDING

Developing our analytical understanding to ensure that we (Defra/Natural England) have a good contextual understanding of the likely impacts of Government policies (including OGD and Defra policies):

- ***as a whole***
- ***for socially excluded groups (to meet Policy Outcome 3)***
- ***what national, regional and local bodies can & can't achieve (i.e. where we need to intervene to fill in the gaps)***

- Public health: need for more evidence on Government interventions which will maximise health benefits derived from outdoor recreation
 - Ensure that DOH work in this area innovates and evaluates the role of recreation in the natural environment as well as other forms of activity
 - Working with DCMS to achieve their % yearly increase in number of physically active people
- Planning issues: analytical evidence about impact on access of:
 - DfT's accessibility planning / policy
 - ODPM's recreation planning / policy (including urban green space)
- Access to water: new ways of providing access and for overcoming resistance from other users eg anglers & landowners
- What are the social benefits of access to the natural environment? (for individuals, for rural/urban communities) - well being, confidence, self-esteem, etc.
- Understanding implications of diversity review for setting clear goals relating to Outcome 3
- Developing a systematic framework for CBA and for improving benefits (to deliver results in next three years)
- Understanding whether increased access and improved infrastructure has a multiplier effect on local economy in terms of both output and employment (or is it a leaky bucket and the impacts are felt elsewhere?)
- Confidence, both of the users of the environment and of the service providers:
 - Users – all groups need confidence in their ability to use the services
 - Service providers – including site managers, ROW officers, tourist information staff, rangers, wardens, etc. need confidence in their ability to provide the information to this diverse group of people.

Developing and implementing a communication strategy that includes

- Understanding the target audience(s);
 - Who knows what in relation to access to the Natural Environment?
 - Does lack of information act as a barrier to access?
 - Who should future campaigns be aimed at?

- What are the key messages that they should be trying to get across?
 - What is the best way of communicating with different groups?
- And later ...
- Have our interventions made a difference to attitudes/ behaviour of target groups? In what way? Why?
- what they need:
 - how people access information (through groups or individually)
 - How do they form their views about the natural environment?
 - Better data on current understanding and trends in knowledge of rights & responsibilities
 - Understanding how the different target audiences access information
 - Evaluate the impacts of web-based services (in relation to other forms of information provision) in terms of their impact on all groups, particularly the disadvantaged
 - What are Defra's key messages, how do we communicate these, and how do they link to messages coming from OGDs?
 - What is the best way of linking to the commercial sector to stimulate the commercial provision of information?
 - What role does/could technology play (GPS etc.) in encouraging/enabling access

Innovation & forecasting

Innovation

- Innovative improvements to ROW network
- Innovative ways of generating large benefits with small marginal costs (need to understand relationships between costs & benefits first)
- Innovative methods of providing generic advice to speed implementation eg digitising definitive maps

Forecasting

- Local use and demand, + regional, now and latent
- Effect of weather on peoples choice of access
- Effect of climate change on future use of the countryside
- Social trends analysis, especially in use of leisure time, to predict changes in low participation groups (including whether these trends would lead to the de facto extension of such groups to include others not currently perceived as being disadvantaged)
- Innovative relationships with voluntary groups, social enterprise, etc. to groups out to enjoy the natural environment.
- Bringing the evidence together and making it available via a public interface.

6b. Discuss the priority you attach to the needs identified above, and the benefits and value for Defra and others if those needs are met.

The strategic outcome is one of Defra's 17 top priorities in its recently published five year strategy. It is a matter of high reputational importance that

Defra and its executive agencies make significant progress in this area over the SR04 period.

7. Alignment of existing programmes of work with Policy Outcomes

How well do existing programmes of work help you deliver Policy Outcomes? Where are the gaps? What do you need to fill them

Defra currently has no major programmes of E&I work aligned with these policy outcomes.

The **Countryside Agency** has the following programmes in place to support the policy outcomes:

Maintain and renew infrastructure

- Programme to explore how to improve coastal access;
- Discovering Lost Ways to support work to complete record of public rights of way;
- Country parks renaissance to demonstrate and share innovation;
- Route network improvements to demonstrate and share innovation relating to Rights of Way Improvement Plans;
- Doorstep Greens programme to demonstrate innovative ways to improve provision of Greenspace for deprived communities;
- Pilots to explore the scope for local brokerage of access land dedication

Provision of information

- Programme to support development of national access database;
- Promotion of Countryside Code;
- Promotion of opportunities to use open access land;
- Programme to support walking for health;

Good opportunities for all to enjoy the natural environment

- Preparation of diversity review action plan in progress, supported by research on innovative service delivery;

General evidence gathering and horizon scanning

- Research programme on trends and forecasting to support development of Natural England recreation strategy;
- Bi-annual leisure day visits survey

The **Environment Agency** is piloting an innovative approach to securing access for canoeists on four rivers with targeted Defra funding.

We need to influence the E&I programmes of **other government departments**, especially Health, to ensure that they encompass recreation in the natural environment where appropriate.

8. Landscape for provision of evidence and innovation

Describe the landscape for the provision of evidence and innovation. Ensure you refer to OGDs, Research Councils, EU, international bodies and industry, Defra laboratories, where relevant

Defra has historically relied on the Countryside Agency to undertake most evidence gathering and innovation in this area (see above). This will continue into the creation of Natural England. However the need for new policy development in this area and the priority attached to it in the Five Year Strategy requires growth in supporting evidence and innovation. This will be progressed as a single programme with Natural England to avoid overlap and duplication.

9. Implications for Defra Labs

Do you expect to depend on the Defra laboratories for significant ongoing evidence and innovation capacity requirements?

No

10. Available budget

Identify the available budget for the E&IS programme

Defra does not currently commit funds directly in this area – see section 7 above. The area is able to call on the budget available for the Wildlife and Countryside R&D Programme (listed under the SoN on Natural Resource Protection). This £1.7million p.a. budget is a shared resource between EWD, GWD and SLR. There is a high degree of competition for resource within the programme.

11. Specialist support for the E&IS Programme

What are the roles of specialist staff in supporting the E&IS Programme? How might you plan to access these staff (in post, to be trained, externally sourced, etc.)?

A combination of drawing on existing social science, economics and statistics teams, plus consultants where appropriate.

NRRA Science Division provides an underpinning facility in placing research where necessary using resources from the Wildlife and Countryside R&D Programme.