

Natural England Standard Evidence



1:0 About this standard

Introduction

Natural England depends upon sound quality-assured evidence on the natural environment to meet its needs as an environmental delivery organisation and as a statutory adviser to Government and others.

The Evidence Standard describes the approach that staff should take to ensure that:

- evidence needs are identified and delivered through Natural England's single evidence programme
- all the advice we give and all the decisions we take are underpinned by best available evidence
- evidence used has been quality assured to the correct level
- the rationale and evidence that supports our decisions is open, transparent and recorded
- wherever possible we will make available the evidence we generate

By working to this standard we will ensure we work to our Evidence to Advice principles, meet expectations under the Government Chief Scientific Adviser's Guidelines¹ and meet our [Evidence Strategy](#)

What is evidence?

The evidence that Natural England uses is derived from a wide range of data and information about the natural environment and its management. This includes information on biodiversity, geodiversity, soils and landscape and their management. Also economic and statistical analysis, social research, operational research, monitoring and surveillance.

In our research and analysis we adopt a scientific approach, collecting data using repeatable observations, testing hypotheses, analysing the results, explaining observations and drawing inferences regarding meanings. We use quantitative and qualitative evidence from a variety of sources, including studies that have been subject to independent peer review and have been published. Other sources of evidence include technical reports, systematic reviews, commissioned studies, case studies, expert (including practitioners') opinion and feedback from customers.

¹ on the use of Scientific and Engineering Advice in Policy Making.

As an organisation we use the most relevant, reliable and accurate evidence we have available and show how we use evidence to inform decisions.

Who is this standard for?

The standard applies to everyone in Natural England when gathering, using and sharing evidence. It is also applicable to people or organisations working on our behalf. Managers in all teams have a responsibility to ensure the evidence standard is being applied correctly in their team's work.

The way in which you use this standard will vary according to your role in using and gathering evidence. For example; Specialists have a significant role in identifying evidence needs, gathering evidence and making that relevant to others; Advisers use evidence and expert opinion to inform the advice they give; Directors use evidence to inform their advice on High Risk Cases.

2:0 The Standard

This standard provides:

- 2.1 The mandatory requirements that all staff must follow including links to supporting guidance.

2.1 Mandatory requirements		
Topic	What we expect of staff	Links to supporting documents
2.1.1 Commissioning evidence	<p>Staff must ensure that evidence needs are met through Natural England's Single Evidence Programme.</p> <p>All evidence projects must be entered onto the Evidence Projects Database (EPD) whether they are funded through the central Evidence Programme budget or through other budget lines, commissioned nationally or locally</p> <p>Research to generate new evidence must be undertaken in line with the Joint Code of Practice for Research. The procurement teams will ensure that all contracts for research include a requirement that contractors and staff adhere to the Joint Code.</p> <p>All evidence projects must have a communication plan recorded on the EPD. This plan should be written following the Evidence communications plan guidance and reviewed regularly throughout the project.</p> <p>Staff must consult with Natural England's economists and social scientists when commissioning any research involving economics or social science and follow the guidelines: commissioning economic requirements</p>	<p>➤ Joint Code of Practice for Research</p>
2.1.2 Using evidence	<p>Staff must use the best available evidence to address their question or issue. They must apply their own judgement, knowledge and experience when using evidence and where appropriate draw on the wider range of expert advice sources from within and outside the organisation.</p> <p>The way evidence is analysed, interpreted and conclusions drawn from it needs to be appropriate to the question being asked. Analytical methods must stand up to scrutiny, be transparent and</p>	<p>➤ Analysis of Evidence standard</p>

	<p>quality assured.</p> <p>Evidence should be assessed by staff for relevance, completeness, accuracy and timeliness. Other factors to consider are permissions for use, any mandatory information handling protocols, and sensitivity of data.</p> <p>In making decisions or preparing advice, staff must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they can show that decisions or advice are based on the evidence used and analysis carried out • Any uncertainty is clearly identified and explained • Where information is lacking or incomplete, the extent to which this constrains any analysis or decision making is explained 	
<p>2.1.3 Quality assurance</p>	<p>Staff must ensure that the evidence they use and the advice they give has been quality assured to the correct level following the Quality Management Standard</p> <p>When applying evidence, staff must ensure they use the most appropriate analytical methods, follow agreed internal best practice, apply external standards and codes of practice.</p>	<p>➤ Quality management standard</p>
<p>2.1.4 Record keeping</p>	<p>Staff must follow the Records Management Standard to ensure the evidence they have used and the approach they have taken to form their advice or make decisions is recorded in the appropriate way.</p>	<p>➤ Records management standard</p>

<p>2.1.5 Access to evidence</p>	<p>All evidence generated by Natural England should be made available to those who will use the information, except where there is a justifiable reason not to.</p> <p>Evidence should be presented in the most appropriate format depending on the activity and shared in the most appropriate manner depending on the audience e.g. via email or media.</p> <p>Technical publications are suitable for communicating many types of evidence from research projects to monitoring results. All technical publications are managed through the Technical Publications Database and are subjected to an approval process to sign off and review each publication following the quality assurance process.</p> <p>Other types of evidence will be suited to publication by other means such as geographic data products (spatial datasets, analysis outputs and map products).</p> <p>All spatial datasets must be collected, managed and published following our data management policy and must meet INSPIRE Regulations.</p> <p>Evidence must be published with metadata whenever appropriate. Metadata is information to describe a dataset, such as author, age, type of data, spatial extent, restrictions on sharing, etc.</p>	<p>➤ INSPIRE Directive</p>
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Quick reference

Type of Standard	Strategic standard
Purpose:	To set out the principles and mandatory requirements for Natural England staff when they gather and use evidence.
Owner(s):	Evidence
Sign-off:	Ken Roy - Director of Performance and Resources Tim Hill – Director of Evidence, Chief Scientist
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Issue	Amendment detail	Author	Date
1.0	Final version published	Fiona Markwick	25 March 2013
1.1	First re-draft into new template – changed wording and deleted references to specific teams / groups to future proof and in light of NE refresh	Gemma Smith	21 Feb 2014
1.2	Comments received from David Townshend and look at requirements from four standards combined into one, added hyperlinks and checked formatting.	Gemma Smith	30 April 2014
1.3	Comments received from Gary Kass, David Askew and David Townshend.	Gemma Smith	05 th June 2014
1.4	Comments received from David Askew, Gary Kass, David Townshend and Di Phillips.	Gemma Smith	25 th June 2014
1.5	Minor changes in spelling and format.	Gemma Smith	14 th July 2014
1.6	Review and simplification in light of Audit comments and new ways of working resulting from Refresh	Emma Johnson	Jan 2015
2.0	Final version published	Rita Caputo	6 th Feb 2015