UK National Ecosystem Assessment
First Meeting of the User Group
22 May 2009

Defra, London

Report of Outcomes and Issues Arising

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Overall Goal of the meeting:

To ensure that the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) meets the needs of the users and clients.

Objectives of the meeting:
- To provide input into the definition of the scope of the NEA and its outputs
- To guide the development of the stakeholder involvement plan
- To provide input to the design of the communications and dissemination plans

Participants

NEA User Group members:
Steve Killeen – Environment Agency
John Hopkins – Natural England
Paul Morling – RSPB and Wildlife and Countryside Link
Andy Stott – JNCC
Nicola Owen – Mineral Products Association
Diane Mitchell – National Farmers Union
Edward Hobson – CABE
Diane Brooke – RWE npower

Philip Bubb – UNEP-WCMC (NEA Secretariat, meeting faciltator)
Matt Walpole – UNEP-WCMC (NEA Secretariat)

The full membership of the NEA User Group will consist of about 22 members, but unfortunately due to the short notice for invitations to the first meeting only eight members could attend. The full membership of the User Group will receive the meeting report and be invited to further comment on the design stage of the NEA.

Agenda

9.00	Welcome and Introduction to the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, Peter Costigan, Defra
9.15	Introductions and review of the ToRs and operation of the User Group
10.15	Key questions that guide the NEA and ecosystem services and linkages to be assessed - report and comments on the previous day's work of the Expert Panel
11.30	(Join the Expert Panel for discussions and a working lunch) Client and User Groups report to the Expert Panel their views from the morning and response by the Expert Panel. Joint discussions on: • Scope of the NEA • Report outlines • The balance between an assessment at the UK scale and for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and more detailed case studies.

2.30	(Client and User Groups return to separate room)
	Further definition of the uses of the NEA
	Further definition of NEA Outputs:
	• Website
	• Key messages, graphics, videos
	• Promotional materials, news media and education resources
3.45	Any other business and thanks
4.00	Finish

OUTCOMES

User Group Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the NEA User Group were reviewed and modified to be as follows:

• Provide insight to the NEA Secretariat and Expert Panel as to the needs of their particular sectors that are relevant to shaping the NEA.

• Review assessment outputs as they are generated by the Secretariat and Expert Panel, ensuring that format and style and content & relevance are suitable for target user groups.

• Assist with stakeholder engagement during the Assessment by liaising with existing networks to seek views & disseminate information

• Assist with facilitating the uptake of outputs within their represented sector.

• Advise & assist with providing access to data & key information sources & expertise

• Identification & promotion of synergies with other related initiatives in the UK and internationally

Changes to the Key Questions

The design of the NEA and the structure of its reports will aim to address a series of key questions. The meeting participants reviewed each of the current draft key question and all of them were generally accepted as appropriate and useful, but with some clarifications and further specification required in some cases. These points were added in brackets to the relevant questions. One question was added on the data and information needs for conducting a UK NEA. The suggested changes are reflected below.

At the joint session of the User and Client Groups with the Expert Panel these changes were reported to the Expert Panel. The changes were similar to and consistent with ones already discussed by the Expert Panel and it was agreed that a revised set of key questions will be drafted and circulated.

1. What are the status and trends of the UK's ecosystems and the services they provide to society? (Issues to further specify within this: timeframe – last & next 50 years + recent trends & nearer term needs – 'shifting baselines' – capacity of ecosystem to supply services for people & thresholds of change)

2. What are the data and information needs for conducting an assessment of ecosystem services? (at the outset)

3. What are the factors causing ecosystem changes in the UK? (including policy and management factors)

4. How have ecosystem changes affected human well-being in the UK? (particularly concerned with equity & distribution of changes on people, including consideration of trade-offs. The next 3 questions were seen as subsets of this question)

5. Who and where are the beneficiaries of ecosystem services in the UK, considering trade-offs between types of services?

6. How does the location of beneficiaries of ecosystem services affect how the ecosystem services are valued and managed?

7. What are possible negative effects of changes in ecosystems on society and who might be most affected? (refers to 'disbenefits' of ES?)

8. How might ecosystems and their services in the UK change in the future under plausible scenarios?

9. What high-level policy (responses) options may be appropriate to secure & improve (continued) delivery of UK ecosystem services under plausible future scenarios? (need to also have response options below high-level policy, supporting management of ecosystems)

10. What are the key ecosystem services upon which the UK depends that are not provided by UK ecosystems? (brief commentary)

11. What are the policy implications of UK-dependence on non-UK ecosystems? (brief commentary)

12. What are the uncertainties, and knowledge and data gaps for understanding and managing the supply of ecosystem services in the UK, including risks of sudden change, trade-offs between beneficiaries, and impact of policy responses? (including economic & non-economic valuation of ES)

Issues that the User Group wanted to have clarification on from the Expert Panel and Secretariat

- How do 'Agency' experts relate to and input to the Expert Panel – guidance requested.
- How to input to the definitions of ecosystems & services to be used – the definitions produced by the Expert Panel will be circulated to the User and Client Groups for comment.

Further definition of uses of the NEA

The meeting participants were asked to write on A5-size cards the uses of the NEA that their organizations and sectors would want to see. The uses were categorized under four categories:
- research guidance
- education and awareness raising
- policy making and implementation
- strategic planning

Potential uses of the NEA were identified in about equal numbers for all four categories. It was considered that use in strategic planning and policy making and implementation would be the principle uses of the NEA, but education, awareness raising and guiding research were also important and that products of the NEA should be also be suitable for these.

A more detailed analysis of the results this will carried out, to guide the design of the NEA and its outputs, and its stakeholder and communication strategies. However, only six members of the User Group participated in this first analysis, and further consultations will be needed with other members of the User and Client Groups.

NEA Products Design and Presentation

A brief discussion was held on the types and styles of products from the NEA. The main ideas and recommendations were:

- The NEA needs to identify its target audiences and produce appropriate products for each one. Audiences/user types include:
    - UK scale and England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Island
    - Different age groups – school children, young adults, older adults
    - Different socio-economic groups/ education levels
    - policy / decision-makers
    - research community
    - managers and users of the natural environment

- There was some discussion about whether the NEA should produce reports for different sectors, such as farming, fishing, mining, energy generation, etc. The conclusion was that probably it was best not to do this, but to make clear in the reports any 'hooks' and links particularly relevant to such sectors. It may be more effective to assist organizations representing particular sectors to produce their own materials to communicate the NEA results. However, two sectors of particular importance in establishing an 'ecosystem approach' and using the NEA findings that may merit specific products, are the education sector and the consultants and statutory bodies working in SEA and EIA, etc.

- Language and Terms:
    - For the general public and many professional and other users of the NEA the term 'ecosystem services' is not well understood and is frequently off-putting. Defra research found that people understand the concept when it is explained, but the term is not popular. Alternative or complementary terms need to be sought.
    - There is a need to co-ordinate/ encourage the common and consistent use of terms and vocabulary in the production and communication of the NEA, including its dissemination through the networks of the User Group, etc.

- Output types/ products suggested:
    - the NEA should produce a few key messages which are presented in media-friendly manner
    - As well as the principle substantive reports from Phases 1 and 2 there is a need for summary reports for technical and non-technical audiences.
    - A suite of PowerPoint slides and professionally-produced graphics should be available
    - Videos illustrating the issues and findings of the NEA, for different audiences and available through a live for a such as YouTube
    - Website, with the reports and an on-line GIS or maps
    - Data files and metadata/directory accessible (CEH and ERFF can assist)
    - Analytical and decision-support tools, methods, guidance and models (conceptual and computer) used in the NEA and adapted for different users.

Data access and use

The NEA Expert Panel, Secretariat and Lead Authors need to first define as much as possible the needs for data in the assessment, even if these are only aspirational and it is not sure if the data exists. Agencies such as Natural England, JNCC and Wildlife Link can then assist in finding suitable data. Personal visits to institutions are often the most effective way to identify and obtain data. The NEA Secretariat has appointed a Data and Analysis Officer to co-ordinate the way data is used in the NEA and assist authors in collecting and using data.
The Statistics Act came into force in April 2009 and the NEA Secretariat needs to determine how this will affect the sharing, storage and use of data.