

Evidence Position Statement

Name of Committee	National Park Authority
Date	28 th May 2021
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Purpose of Report	To seek member endorsement of the attached Evidence Position Statement
Single Integrated Assessment	N/A
List of Enclosures	Enclosure I Evidence Position Statement
Public Interest Test	N/A
Recommendation(s)	a) That Members endorse the <i>Evidence Position Statement</i> as the position of the Authority

1.1 Introduction or Background

The Authority is responsible for the development of policy which seeks implementation of our purposes and duty across the National Park area. It is imperative that all policy development is based upon a clear understanding of the best evidence we have available to us. This is both a statutory requirement, relating to the environmental assessment of plans and programmes and habitats regulations, but also a founding principle of our designation as an International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category V landscape.

As we progress development of NPMP21 and LDP2 it is timely to publicly define our position as an 'evidence led' organisation through the adoption of an 'Evidence Position

Statement' (Enclosure I to this report). This statement will seek to ensure that all parties (internal and external) involved in the development of the LDP/NPMP are clear that policy is driven by a known robust evidence base.

Members will recall that the Evidence Position Statement was presented to their meeting of the 16th of April for endorsement. At that meeting it was determined that there were elements of the Position Statement which could hold the Authority to challenge if endorsed. Officers considered Members view points, including those developed through discussion at Policy Forum (30/4/21) revisions have been made to the Position Statement, as detailed at Enclosure I to this report.

1.2 Proposals

The Evidence Position Statement creates the foundation upon which we undertake policy development. It sets out the Authority's approach to acquiring, managing, and using evidence in support of strategic policy development. It proposes that the evidence we utilise to formulate policy should be: -

- Methodologically robust, subject to quality assurance through peer review where possible
- Fully documented
- Accessible to all
- Timely and up to date
- At the right scale for intended use.
- Compliant with all regulatory control regarding use of personal data.

It is also proposed that as an organisation we commit to investing in the human capital of our staff to maintain high standards for data collection and analysis, it therefore proposes that the Authority:-

- Maintains the analytical and research skills of its employees by
 - o Supporting career development in specialist fields
 - o Include data maintenance as key objective within Performance Management Reviews (PMRs)
 - o Supporting attendance at key conferences, including promotion of our work as key speakers.
 - o Supporting relevant university placements for staff both as researchers/lecturers and students.
- Maintain our research prospectus and key work with partner research establishments
- Invest in our data storage software and train staff in its effective use.
- Invest in our data analysis and presentation skills

In adopting this Position Statement we do so with the knowledge that it is part of our role as the regulating Authority to ensure that all those who have a stake in the development of the policies and strategies are clear of the issues facing the park. We

must seek to ensure that evidence is clearly articulated and that difficult issues are explained for consumption by non-experts. For this reason the Position Statement also includes objectives to ensure close working relationships between communications and specialist officers.

The Position Statement also acknowledges that the Authority utilises a range of evidence sources in its policy development, some of which are more robust than others (see Appendix I of Enclosure I). The position statement seeks to enable those less able to engage with formalised data to be able to contribute to policy development through our own action as researchers working in the public interest.

1.3 Implications

Endorsement of this statement will provide a clear position relating to policy development. Moreover, adoption of the statement commits the Authority to supporting the analytical and research capabilities of our staff body in the interest of improving the quality of our policy outputs

1.4 Risk

Policy development based on weak or no evidence is unlikely to be effective, pass external scrutiny (such as the LDP examination) or achieve our objectives. It also places the Authority at risk of successful Judicial Review. The Position Statement allows the Authority a legitimate mechanism to dismiss calls for policy interventions based on unsubstantiated belief systems or political pressures.

1.5 Conclusion

The Authority is reliant on up-to-date robust evidence to ensure that future policy interventions are sound. The proposed Evidence Position Statement provides a mechanism by which we establish the significance of evidence to the policy making process, and commit to investing in the research and analytical skills of our staff. It provides a mechanism for rejecting calls upon our policy making which is unsubstantiated or refuted by our evidence base.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- a) That Members endorse the *Evidence Position Statement* as the position of the Authority**