



## **BBNPA POSITION STATEMENT ON: Evidence at BBNPA**

### **DATE APPROVED:**

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### **Our Position:**

The purpose of this Position Statement is to outline the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's approach to acquiring, managing, and using evidence in order to help deliver the objectives and outcomes of the BBNPA Management Plan and Local Development Plan.

The BBNPA creates policy, strategy and resulting work programmes, based on the best available evidence we can access. We source and analyse evidence to enable us to develop our policies, working practice and to support our advocacy. Use of sound evidence is fundamental to the reputation of the BBNPA.

The BBNPA evidence base must span the full remit of activity across our programmes of work. It will be used to inform all requisite statutory assessments and appraisals of our plans and proposals such as Strategic Environmental Assessment, or Habitats Regulation Assessment.

We gain our evidence from a wide range of sources including peer reviewed journals, published articles and reports, commissioned studies, expert advice, research by our own officers or data from our citizen science projects including analysis of our citizen assembly findings.

Where BBNPA has generated evidence, it should be:

- Scientifically robust (with adequate quality assurance and peer review where possible)
- Fully documented (with metadata and a specified data owner)
- Accessible and easy to interrogate
- Timely/up to date
- At the right scale for intended use (local, regional, national, international)
- Compliant with legal data protection requirements
- Made freely available whenever possible



Our evidence base should be fit for purpose. The standard of evidence required will vary according to its intended use, and we will use the most cost-effective evidence required in order to achieve its purpose. We will evaluate evidence to ensure that it is of appropriate quality for its intended use (see Appendix I).

In saying this, we acknowledge that in developing policy and actions based on evidence findings, we must be mindful of the lived experience of people who live, work in and visit the National Park. We will ensure that collaborative policy development includes robust mechanisms for including our communities' voices within decision making.

### **What we will do and are doing:**

We will **maintain our scientific and technical skills** - keeping up to date with latest developments in our fields of expertise and expanding our knowledge. To achieve this, we will:

- Support career development and maintaining knowledge in specialist fields.
- Include maintenance of data and analysis skills within objectives for all relevant staff.
- Support attendance at key conferences and encourage conference talks/posters.
- We will allocate time for relevant university placements, lecturing/research supervision and post-graduate qualifications to BBNPA staff.

We will also ensure that staff have adequate access to scientific literature and relevant journals.

Building on work to date, will **maintain existing links with key universities and research institutes** that work in our fields of interest to increase access to cutting edge research, share BBNPA expertise, offer student research opportunities and build a portfolio of practical demonstration projects.

We will **invest in data storage, management, and distribution** so that our staff and volunteers can readily contribute to and access our databases. We will keep our systems up to date and ensure that we **fund routine maintenance** of our existing databases. We will maintain and build on our Service Level Agreement with BIS (the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and the BBNP). We will also **invest in our data analysis and presentation skills** (e.g. use of GIS and business intelligence).

Our evidence outputs will be presented at the **relevant scale** – localised, Park-wide, regional, national, or international where needed. We will ensure that we **use the correct terminology** when we present regional, national, UK or international evidence. We will **produce bilingual versions of key evidence outputs**.

We will ensure that our **specialist and communications officers work closely** from the outset so that we present our evidence in the most compelling way, understanding our audiences and their needs. Where appropriate, we will **standardise** the process and format for delivery of evidence outputs. We will also **train our staff on effective communication of evidence**.



**We will endeavour to ensure continuity and consistency in our evidence and methodologies** in order to achieve meaningful trend analysis and insight.

**Evidence will be the best available** with the allocated resources, scaled to the example uses given in Appendix I, and presented with caveats and explanations regarding any incompleteness, uncertainty, ambiguity, or inconsistency. Where such qualifiers pertain in key evidence bases, such as the State of the Park Report, we will set out our aspirations for improvements in the future and our plans to achieve these.

We will maintain an **Evidence Plan** to list and prioritise our evidence needs and determine resources required. This will be supported by evidence and research catalogues.



### Appendix I - Evaluating the overall strength of a body of evidence<sup>1</sup> (and application within BBNPA)

Categories of evidence	Quality + size + consistency + context	Typical features of the body of evidence	What it means for a proposed intervention	Examples when this level of evidence may be applied/required within BBNPA
Very Strong	High quality body of evidence, large in size, consistent, and contextually relevant.	Research questions aimed at isolating cause and effect (i.e. what is happening) are answered using <b>high quality experimental and quasi-experimental research designs</b> , sufficient in number to have resulted in production of a systematic review or meta-analysis. Research questions aimed at exploring meaning (i.e. why and how something is happening) are considered through an <b>array of structured qualitative observational research methods</b> directly addressing contextual issues.	We are very confident that the intervention does or does not have the effect anticipated. The body of evidence is very diverse and highly credible, with the findings convincing and stable.	Legal challenges (e.g. Judicial Reviews)
Strong	High quality body of evidence, large or medium in size, highly or moderately consistent, and contextually relevant.	Research questions aimed at isolating cause and effect (i.e. what is happening) are answered using <b>high quality quasi-experimental research designs and/or quantitative observational studies</b> . They are sufficient in number to have resulted in the production of a systematic review or meta-analysis. Research questions aimed at exploring meaning (i.e. why and how something is happening) are considered through <b>an array of structured qualitative observational research methods</b> directly addressing contextual issues.	We are confident that the intervention does or does not have the effect anticipated. The body of evidence is diverse and credible, with the findings convincing and stable.	BBNPA Policy Position Statements Policy advocacy Government consultation responses and evidence to parliamentary committees.

Medium	Moderate quality studies, medium size evidence body, moderate level of consistency. Studies may or may not be contextually relevant.	Research questions aimed at isolating cause and effect (i.e. what is happening) are answered using <b>moderate to high-quality quantitative observational designs</b> . Research questions aimed at exploring meaning (i.e. why and how something is happening) are considered through a <b>restricted range of qualitative observational research methods</b> addressing contextual issues.	We believe that the intervention may or may not have the effect anticipated. The body of evidence displays some significant shortcomings. There are reasons to think that contextual differences may unpredictably and substantially affect intervention outcomes.	Policy development
Limited	Moderate-to-low quality studies, medium size evidence body, low levels of consistency. Studies may or may not be contextually relevant.	Research questions aimed at isolating cause and effect (i.e. what is happening) are answered using <b>moderate to low-quality quantitative observational studies</b> . Research questions aimed at exploring meaning (i.e. why and how something is happening) are considered through a <b>narrow range of qualitative observational research methods</b> addressing contextual issues.	We believe that the intervention may or may not have the effect anticipated. The body of evidence displays very significant shortcomings. There multiple are reasons to think that contextual differences may substantially affect intervention outcomes.	Campaigns (where evidence may be weak, but impact severe and rapid response required).
No evidence No/few studies exist.	Neither cause and effect, nor meaning is seriously interrogated.	Any available studies are of low quality and are contextually irrelevant.	There is no plausible evidence that the intervention does/does not have the effect indicated.	

- I. Based on Department for International Development How To Note, 'Assessing the Strength of Evidence', March 2014  
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