

NERC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Sustainability (BESS)

Engagement Implementation Plan 2012-2016

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Promoting understanding of biodiversity and ecosystem services

1. Purpose of the plan

The BESS Implementation Plan has been designed to complement, add detail and extend the work as outlined in the [BESS Engagement Strategy](#). This strategy summarises the key stakeholders for the BESS programme, the main engagement activities that will take place and the desired outcomes of these activities.

The aim of the Implementation Plan is to give further detail on how the BESS directorate and individual project teams will communicate with different stakeholders and how knowledge exchange (KE) will be facilitated to maximise impact of the programme. The plan also gives information on how this impact will be measured, recorded and evaluated, at both project and programme levels.

Finally, the Implementation Plan is intended to be a living document. It will therefore be updated regularly as the BESS programme continues to develop and progress.

2. Stakeholder engagement plans

Overall responsibility for delivering the BESS Engagement Strategy lies with the Directorate. However, the Directorate will work closely with NERC, the project PIs and the BESS Research Fellows to ensure that the desired outcomes are met. There will therefore be communications activities occurring at both the individual project and programme level.

2a. Knowledge Exchange plans at a project level

Four consortia projects have been funded under BESS, each project conducting research in a different landscape (Table 1).

Each project within the BESS programme has been required to identify clearly which stakeholders it will engage with, and the impacts that the project is expected to have on these stakeholders in terms of policy and/or practice.

In addition to this, each project will be required to:

- Identify an individual to act as a Knowledge Exchange Officer (KEO). This person will be responsible for coordinating KE exchange activities within the project and liaising with the BESS directorate on KE matters.
- Produce an informative and accessible website which is updated regularly with news regarding research developments, process and findings. Interaction with social media for wider promotion of the project is also encouraged.
- Identify specific points at which stakeholders can get updates on progress towards programme goals and influence the direction of the research programme in addition to

website updates. These ideally need to be at regular intervals to ensure the programme has the opportunity to adapt to changing needs/priorities of the stakeholders.

The Directorate will work closely with the individual projects to ensure that engagement activities are complementary, and to identify potential partnerships, synergies and opportunities to maximise impact from BESS research (see below).

2b. Knowledge Exchange plans at a programme level

The BESS Engagement Strategy mapped five key stakeholder groups for the BESS programme (see [Figure 1, BESS Engagement Strategy](#)).

The key stakeholders for the BESS programme therefore include the following:

- The international community: Various including the European Commission, IPBES and Diversitas
- UK national government and agencies and Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Defra, BIS, DECC, DfT, Environment Agency, Natural England, JNCC
- Local government: Regional bodies, local councils, regional offices of NE, EA, LGA etc
- NGOs: Various including RSPB, National Trust and other local voluntary organisations and partnerships
- Corporate sector: Professional environmental management firms, private consultants, professional bodies such as IEEM, IEMA
- General public: including those involved in landscape-level management via local partnerships

The main activities, key messages and desired outcomes for engagement with specific stakeholder groups are provided in [Table 1 in the BESS Engagement Strategy](#). This table also describes the delivery mechanisms for this stakeholder engagement, indicators of achievement as well as possible evaluation metrics and is summarized in this document as Table 2. Specific activities being led by the BESS Directorate are shown in Table 3.

Knowledge Exchange at the programme level within BESS will take an adaptive co-learning approach. A Communications Advisory team, including representation from across our stakeholder community, will help us to identify the most appropriate means of engagement and knowledge exchange for specific stakeholder communities in respect to the desired outcomes of the BESS programme. As part of this process, the groups will also re-evaluate the outcomes and the delivery of KE as the BESS programme progresses, so that we can adapt the Engagement Strategy and Engagement Implementation Plan to best suit the demands of each specific stakeholder group.

3. Recording and sharing impact

Knowledge exchange activities for projects and the Directorate will be recorded within the Programme Monitoring and Evaluation software (BESS-MEC). This allows the identification of specific beneficiaries and activities, as well as providing a means of evaluating progress towards targets associated with these. For the Directorate BESS-MEC will be used to record project communication and outreach events in terms of the nature of the activity, beneficiaries and an appraisal of the effectiveness of the activity in relation to its objectives. This will be used for

learning, evaluation and adaptation of communication and outreach through time. The BESS-MEC system will also allow the archiving of presentations or digital media outputs.

Since KE for BESS will be an adaptive process, it is also important that we encourage sharing of good practice and experience concerning knowledge exchange among BESS researchers and stakeholders. This will be done through a private online forum accessed through the project website for registered users overseen by the BESS Directorate.

The forum will allow for information sharing on best practice as experienced by the members as well as flagging relevant questions for the group. The Directorate communications team will routinely (quarterly) analyse discussion threads to evaluate any learning and adaptation related to the forum discussions.

4. Evaluation, feedback/improvement and co-learning activities

Evaluation of knowledge exchange at the project and programme level will be accomplished using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative metrics, including the specific metrics listed in Table 1 in the Communications Strategy, will provide one means of evaluation. However, these provide only a partial indication of the success of a programme. We will therefore complement these quantitative metrics with qualitative evaluation tools, including narratives, case studies, blogs and video diaries, which will also be cross-linked within the BESS-MEC tool.

The Communications Advisory team will meet once per year to evaluate the previous year's KE activities and re-evaluate proposed activities for the subsequent year, including identifying any specific opportunities such as professional events or public science fairs.

The BESS programme will also share practice with those involved in KE activities within other LWEC-accredited programmes, through participation in the NERC KE group, and in the cross-programme KE group 'Stellar'. This group holds monthly teleconferences and an annual meeting to reflect on progress and identify any opportunities for cross-programme events and initiatives to maximise the impact of LWEC research.

Piran White, Steve Cinderby, Zoë Austin and Laura Harrison
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Table 1. Details of the consortia projects within the BESS programme

	Landscape			
	Lowland agricultural	Coastal wetlands	Upland rivers	Urban
Project title	Biodiversity and the provision of multiple ecosystem services in current and future lowland multifunctional landscapes	A hierarchical approach to the examination of the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem service flows across coastal margins	Diversity in Upland Rivers for Ecosystem Service Sustainability - DURESS	Fragments, functions and flows – the scaling of biodiversity and ecosystem services in urban ecosystems
Consortium name	Wessex-BESS	CBESS	DURESS	F3UES
Consortium Leader	James Bullock, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)	David Paterson, University of St Andrews	Isabelle Durance, Cardiff University	James Harris, Cranfield University
Area of Study	Wessex Chalk landscape	Two regional landscapes (Morecambe Bay and Essex coastline) with a broad UK-wide study	Upland Wales, river catchments	The urban areas of Luton, Bedford and Milton Keynes
Ecosystem services to be tackled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating services: climate regulation, pollination and pest control - Provisioning services: fisheries and clean water - Cultural services: recreation and aesthetics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating services: coastal protection and climate regulation - Provisioning services: goods obtained from the landscape - Cultural services: Recreation - Supporting services: nutrient cycling, healthy habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating services: water quality and decomposition - Provisioning services: the production of fish - Cultural services: value of fishing and river birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating services: carbon capture and storage, decomposition, runoff reduction, climate regulation - Provisioning services: urban food production - Cultural services: psychological well-being and aesthetics
Stakeholder community	Public bodies, NGOs and private companies	Central government departments, agencies and advisory bodies, regional and local government, planning organisations and non-government organisations	Range of stakeholders including academic researchers, the water industry, conservations, land managers, policy makers and regulators.	Organisations concerned with urban biodiversity, design and management at the local and national scale.

Table 2. Summary of the engagement activities across the BESS programme

Desired outcomes	Target stakeholders	Delivery mechanisms	Indicators of achievement	Possible evaluation metrics
Develop a thriving, interdisciplinary scientific community undertaking research related to biodiversity and ecosystem services	Education (including research community) and culture	Conferences, networks, workshops, fellowships	BESS-related science and research widely applied beyond the programme itself	Peer-reviewed publications, collaboratively authored presentations and papers
Raise awareness of biodiversity and ecosystem services among policy-makers across a range of sectors, and deliver an enhanced evidence base to underpin policy development, both nationally and internationally	International policy-makers, national and local government; public	Policy briefing notes, dialogue, engagement with other initiatives, e.g. Defra Ecosystems Knowledge Network, expert advice, work placements, BESS 'champions' in policy organisations	International policy development (e.g. IPBES) and research influenced by BESS research Strategic national and local-level environmental decision-making influenced by BESS approaches and science Discussions of environmental issues in popular culture influenced by BESS	References to BESS in international policy documents and research strategies Government department and agency website references to BESS Mentions of BESS in Hansard References to BESS in research requirements documents from e.g. Defra Traffic to policy areas of the BESS website
Engage with practitioners responsible for delivering ecosystem management initiatives, to enhance the application of BESS science to practical management	Local government, NGOs, business, partnerships	BESS partnerships with local landscape initiatives, e.g. in relation to NEWP initiatives Collaboration with existing science-into-practice initiatives, e.g. conservationevidence.com Collaboration with professional bodies e.g. IEEM	Landscape management influenced by BESS science and approaches	Reference to BESS in landscape initiatives Reference to BESS in material originating from professional bodies Qualitative information such as statements from stakeholders and practitioners
Enhance links between biodiversity-ecosystem research and the corporate sector, to build a greater awareness of the relevance of biodiversity for providing economic and societal value	Corporate sector bodies, including large, medium and small businesses	BESS partnerships with corporate sector Links with emerging initiatives, e.g. Environment Bank, Business in the Community	Corporate sector influenced by BESS science and approaches	Invitations to meetings with corporate bodies Invitations to speak at professional conferences Co-funding from business and collaborations with business
Improve public understanding of the value and importance of conserving biodiversity for the services and benefits it provides	General public including school children	Royal Society/UKRC Festival of Science events Science in Schools activities	Greater public awareness of the importance of biodiversity for underpinning health and wellbeing	References to BESS in traditional and social media Use of BESS materials in schools

Qualitative information based on media and other reports

Table 3. Specific engagement activities planned and in progress led by the BESS Directorate

Activity	Target stakeholders	Timeframe
Provide ecosystem services section to the ALGE Biodiversity Planning Toolkit	Local authorities, planners, environmental professionals	Discussions ongoing
Participate in Business in the Community activities, e.g. Responsible Business Week	Business and corporate sector	Discussions ongoing; Responsible Business Week held in April each year
Influencing policy and science strategies at national and international level through participation in workshops and working groups	International and national policy	Ongoing; contributions include IPBES, Diversitas, Natural England, UK NEA, LWEC Ecosystems Task Force
KE-type projects, teaming up researchers with businesses	Business and corporate sector	Ongoing
Crowdsourcing research project ideas	General public	TBC
App development (game)	School children, possibly through engagement with a local school or via a regional or national competition	TBC
Commissioned film	Business and public	TBC
Interactive user guide for metrics for evaluating and monitoring ecosystem services	Local authorities, environmental professionals	TBC, dependent on funding
POST or POST-type note	Policy-makers	Ongoing
Articles for policy notes and professional newsletters	Policy, business and corporate sector, environmental professionals	Ongoing; completed articles include LWEC Policy and Practice note, EKN newsletter article.
BESS materials for school curriculum and assemblies, via www.jointhepod.org	Public – schoolchildren	Ongoing
Festivals of Science etc.	Public	Ongoing

