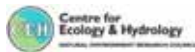


Benefits of understanding and engaging with evidence needs: An academic's perspective

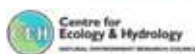
Bridget Emmett

*Head of Site
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Bangor*



Lessons learned using 2 examples

1) Specialist Adviser to House of Parliament Inquiry into Soil Health 2015

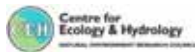


2) Commissioned by Welsh Government in 2016 to scope out options for a new 'Integrated Natural Resources Monitoring Framework'



Step 1

Who are you talking to? What is their role in their organisation or what are they tasked to do? How can you help them?

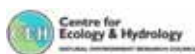


Invited to apply to be the specialist adviser to the Soil Health Parliamentary Inquiry

What is an inquiry?



- Select Committees work in both Houses.
- They check and report on areas ranging from the work of government departments to economic affairs.
- The results of these inquiries are public and many require a response from the government.



What is their job/role?

Environmental Audit Committee
whose Remit is:

- to consider the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development,
- and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets.

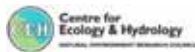


What did they want from me?

- Not to treat them like 1st year students and lecture them
- Be impartial – understand there are many calls on public money.
- Identify issues which really did have good evidence and was ready for action (i.e. this was not the forum to ask for research funding into soils)
- Identify evidence which was tangible and meant something to people (most people you want to influence have voters, a board or trustee who are one step even further away from the topic)

Step 2

Who are they talking to? Who do you work for? Are you pushing an agenda or are you an honest broker?



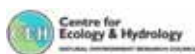
Why should they listen to you?

I have 3 years experience in....

I'm a researcher specialising in.....

They will google you so

- make sure your CV indicates an interest in policy issues with any track record on past work
- look after your international credentials (H index; Orcid ID, researcher id etc)
- and be careful about social media



Honest broker or pressure group or....?

Who do you work for?

CEH is a public body - one of 6 Centres and Surveys owned by the Natural Environment Research Council

What is your organisation's purpose?

Independent, not-for-profit environmental science in land and water

Why?

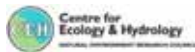
To deliver solutions for today's urgent environmental problems to achieve environmental sustainability

Where?

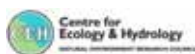
UK remit - 4 sites

How?

334 scientists, 129 support staff
200 PhD students



What evidence worked?



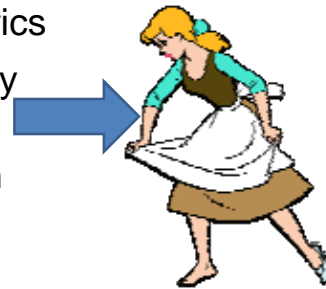
Which 6 pieces of evidence were used?

- Request for evidence
 - 78 responses to consultation
 - 350 evidence pages submitted
 - 13 witnesses called



Success more likely if:

- Simple, easy to understand metrics
- Use an analogy – something they know about
- It could lead to a specific action
- The benefits were clear



Which were not?

Failure if

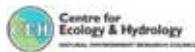
- Saying its complex doesn't help – long grass alert. They're usually not funders of research
- Secondary citations/ tweeted 'facts' – go to original
- You lose credibility if you offer opinions on areas outside your expertise
- Check your statistic does actually help you



Remember - you may not have powerpoint

How to go about getting people on board

Who do you need to talk to? What will be their concerns / priorities? Think about why should they spend their time talking to you?



Welsh Government 'Future Options'

Aim: Options for a New Integrated Natural Resources Monitoring Framework for Wales

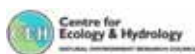
Just 4 months to:

- Map natural evidence needs across Government Departments and Natural Resources Wales
- Review current monitoring and evidence capture activity
- Identify overlaps, redundancy and assess risks of evidence gaps
- Identify opportunities from new technologies, e.g. earth observation, 'omics, data science etc
- Consider future resourcing and governance models



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

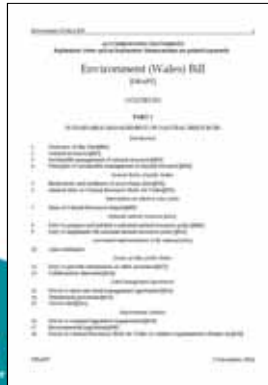


What has changed in Wales?

1. Well-being and Future Generations Act

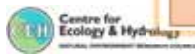
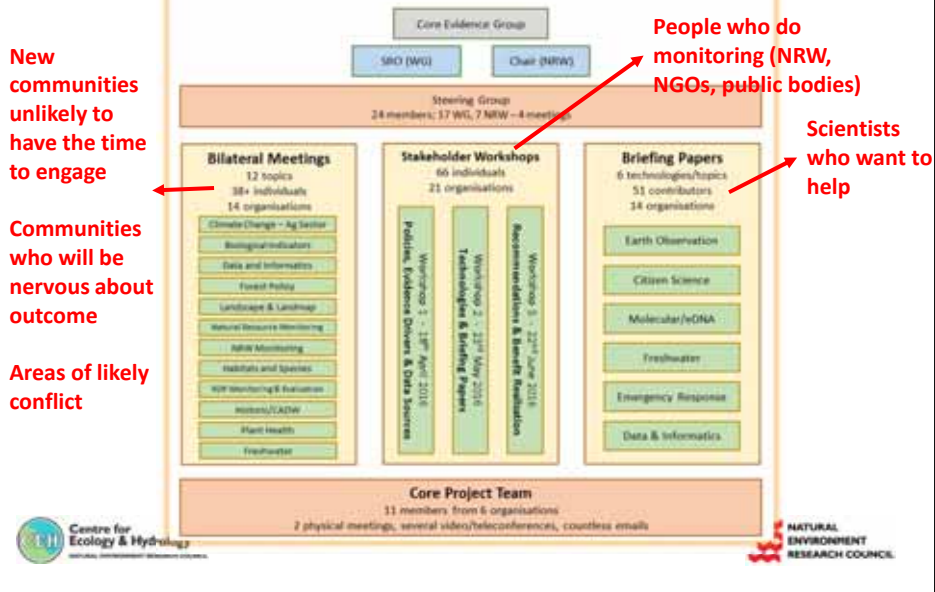
2. Environment (Wales) Act

3. Natural Resources Policy

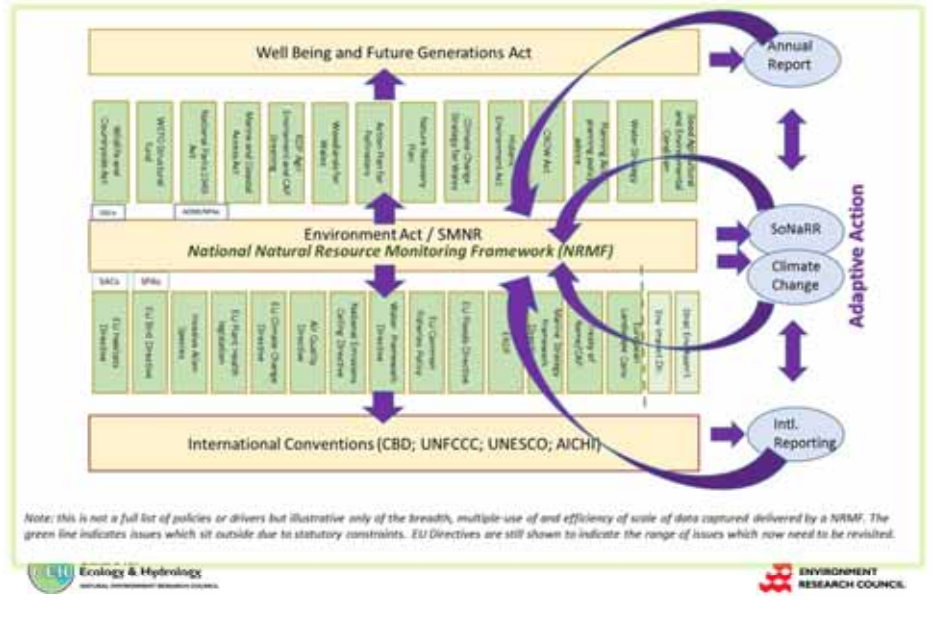


Who to engage, why and how

NRMF Future Options - Project Activities

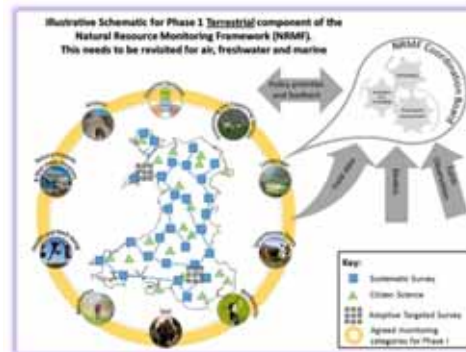


Develop schematics to try and capture you've heard all the complexity (and pressures people are dealing with)



Take incremental steps to explore the space and keep people on board

- Meeting 1 - Agreed 10 categories of evidence which would capture old and new schemes and policy needs
- Meeting 2 – identified and reported on 6 cross-cutting issues captured in technical papers
- Meeting 3 - 10 recommendations developed in partnership with Welsh Gov and agencies before testing on community
- Revisited word by word (e.g. discussion on using 'key' versus 'main' versus 'major' source of evidence took an hour)
- Tested again and again after each iteration to get as much buy-in as possible



Outcomes?

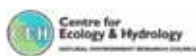


Report published No action. Not helped by politics / elections etc

WG commissioning a new programme based on the 10 recommendations

1) Specialist Adviser to House of Parliament Inquiry into Soil Health 2015

2) Commissioned by Welsh Government in 2016 to scope out options for a new 'Integrated Natural Resources Monitoring Framework'



Soils Round Table with the Minister (Michael Gove) to discuss soil and the 25 year Environment Plan **Welsh Gov just awarded £6M to deliver the recommended programme**

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Lessons learned

- Think how you can help them. Do your homework and read the policies and understand their pressures / deadlines.
- Are you an 'honest broker' or are you pushing an agenda (fine if so – just be clear)?
- Try out different ways of putting across your evidence for maximum impact on someone who is not an academic before going in.
- Is there consensus in the community? If not – see if you can help identify what everyone can agree on beforehand. Think about your method of engagement.

Is it worth it?

Yes – if you put the time in to do it well and get a kick out of seeing your work having some impacts

But a foot in each camp comes at a cost...



Questions

