

A review of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey

Natural England Research Report NERR058

A review of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey

Gemma Smith



Published 30 June 2014

This report is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence - OGLv2.0 for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions. For details of the licence visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright. Natural England photographs are only available for non commercial purposes. If any other information such as maps or data cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the report.

ISBN 978-1-78354-115-7

© Natural England 2014

Project details

Project manager

Gemma Smith
Team Leader
Data Management & Reporting Team
Access to Evidence
Evidence Team
Natural England
Foss House
Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York
YO1 7PX
Tel: 0300 060 4321
gemma.smith@naturalengland.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The reviewer, Gemma Smith, wishes to thank the following individuals for their involvement in the task and finish group to help design the methodology of the review, run the follow up calls and provide comments and support along the way: Erica Wayman, Melanie Maylen, Hazel Thomas, Belinda Chell and Alison Darlow. Also, a thank you goes to Steve Herbert for his input in the design and analysis of the questionnaire. Finally a thank you to those involved in providing ideas and suggestions to inform the review through the follow up calls: Dave Stone, Sarah Escott, Andy Nisbet, Sheila Ward (Forestry Commission), Helen Ward (Defra), Jim Burt, Wendy Thompson, Sophie Rolls, Judith Hanna, Rachel Penny, Colin Maddison, Duncan Mackay, Dave Solly, Ruth Waters, Lucy Heath and Jill Hobbs.

Executive Summary

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) fundamentally underpins our evidence base on how people engage with the natural environment. MENE is widely recognised for its value as a continuous comparable dataset and provides a robust evidence source to inform the delivery of a number of initiatives of the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP), including supporting the biodiversity indicators for the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy and creation of Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs). It is also referenced in Natural England's new draft Strategic Direction as the key evidence base we will continue to use to understand how people use the natural environment and the benefits they gain from this.

This review of the MENE survey was commissioned by the MENE Project Board to examine the current value and extent of the use of MENE and to understand the impact MENE has as an evidence source to our partners and customers across a number of different sectors. The review provides some excellent examples of how people use MENE to inform policy, support national and local decision making, for research and scientific studies and to support projects and reports. In conclusion, MENE is highly valued and in consultation with users through this review, over 80% of the respondents to an online questionnaire felt that it was critical the MENE survey continues in the future.

Importantly, this review has not just focused on current value of MENE, but it has also explored the opportunities to deliver MENE in the future and captured information from our customers and partners on the barriers that prevent MENE from being used as widely as it could be. The findings show there is a host of areas for growth and that more could be done to engage with key partners to discuss how they could use MENE to benefit their work. The information captured from users is vital to help in understanding what could be done to increase the awareness, understanding and use of MENE in different sectors.

In summary, the review has concluded that there needs to be more time invested in developing targeted communications, showcasing what it is that MENE does using real-life examples and making these available to our customers. As our budgets are ever decreasing, the review has explored potential opportunities to seek greater investment into the survey including charging for core survey costs of additional questions; by exploring the opportunity for an equal share of funding from the partners currently involved in MENE; and through the delivery of a partnership plan to engage with key organisations who benefit from the survey to seek investment. In order to achieve the aspirations from this review, an analysis of the current resourcing was undertaken and it concluded that more senior leadership and clearer governance on the vision and priorities of MENE are required.

Taking the results from the user engagement and discussions with partners into consideration, it is recommended that:

- More time is spent on communications to showcase what it is that MENE does through case studies and that there is a more coordinated approach to communicating MENE.
- A network of MENE Knowledge Champions is developed to have ambassadors for MENE across Natural England who can share best practice, key messages and provide feedback to the project team to ensure developments of the MENE survey meet the user's needs.
- After the launch of the online software to host the survey and geocoded data on Instant Atlas, a review of the number of requests the project team receives in the 6 months must be undertaken to assess the impact this development has had on ad-hoc enquiries. This will help in evaluating if there is scope to set up a charging service for analysis requests and generate additional revenue to cover costs of providing this service.
- A series of short online training videos should be created to help develop a greater self-help culture and increase the guidance currently available on the MENE website.

- A review of the frequency of the reporting should be undertaken after two quarterly reports have been published to consider the value it adds and establish whether quarterly or six monthly reports are required by users.
- Continue with the current frequency of delivery (every year) for the next 2 years (to 6 year of survey), followed by a review of options to run the survey every other year in 2015/16.
- Begin discussions with Defra and Forestry Commission to look for more equal funding contributions in running the core survey.
- Include a 'full cost recovery' charge for additional questions to generate revenue back to the core survey.
- Seek a wider contribution and investment from other organisations to run the core survey, through the delivery of a partnership engagement plan.
- Invest in more resourcing, particularly to deliver any recommendations from this review and specifically a support role for the statistician and a senior leadership role to steer and coordinate MENE.
- Review the project board membership to ensure that it includes leaders who can steer and influence the delivery of the MENE project.

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | ii |
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 2 Review aims and scope | 2 |
| 3 Methodology | 3 |
| 4 Results | 4 |
| Questionnaire | 4 |
| Follow up calls | 12 |
| 5 Delivering in the future | 13 |
| Communication – How can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely? | 13 |
| Customer service – How can we improve the product and service for our customers whilst developing a great self-help culture? | 15 |
| Survey frequency – Can we make changes to the core survey without losing comparability and decreasing the value of the survey as a whole? | 17 |
| Funding – How can we maximise our income potential? | 19 |
| Resourcing – what resources would we need to continue delivering MENE in the future? | 21 |
| MENE 3 – 5 year plan | 25 |

Appendices

| | |
|---|----|
| Appendix 1 Scope of review | 27 |
| Context | 27 |
| Strategic re-positioning | 27 |
| Key elements that we would seek to clarify during the MENE Review | 27 |
| Resourcing | 28 |
| Recommendations and mechanisms for delivering MENE review | 28 |
| Appendix 1a - Strategic re-positioning of MENE (presented to MENE Project Board 06/05/2013) | 30 |
| PART I | 30 |
| Context | 30 |
| Key questions that we would seek to clarify during the 13/14 review | 30 |
| Recommendations and mechanisms for delivering 13/14 review | 31 |
| PART II | 33 |
| Appendix 2 Questionnaire | 37 |
| Appendix 3 Questionnaire results | 40 |
| Appendix 4 Follow up calls | 41 |
| Appendix 5 Follow up calls summary | 43 |
| Appendix 6 References | 47 |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey provides trend and volumetric data on visits and engagement with the natural environment.
- 1.2 The survey was commissioned in 2009 by Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission to provide baseline and trend data on the number of visits to the natural environment by the adult population.
- 1.3 In addition, the survey was also designed to:
 - Identify the barriers and drivers that shape participation to the natural environment.
 - Provide robust information on the characteristics of visitors and visits to the natural environment.
 - Measure other ways people use and enjoy the natural environment, such as gardening and volunteering.
 - Identify patterns in use and participation for key groups within the population and at a range of spatial scales.
- 1.4 The results from MENE provide Natural England, Defra, Forestry Commission and the wider sector with robust volumetric data on visits to the natural environment and the evidence has been used to support reporting of a range of targets, including:
 - as an national indicator for well-being by the Office of National Statistics (ONS);
 - as indicator 13 in Public enjoyment of the natural environment for Biodiversity 2020;
 - as a data source in the Natural Environment White Paper section on reconnecting people and nature, highlighting the importance of the availability and quality of local green space;
 - to support several Nature Improvement Area (NIA) indicators;
 - as an indicator on visits to woodlands to support the Forestry Commission's State of England's Woodlands; and
 - in the National Ecosystem Assessment work on Cultural Ecosystem Services.
- 1.5 The MENE project reports the findings of the survey each year in an annual report in accordance with the reporting requirements under the Official Statistics Guidelines. The annual reports are accompanied by technical reports and this year, the annual findings were also set out in an Infographics Report and Podcast. The project team also publish the findings of the survey in quarterly reports and MENE is referenced in many bespoke reports. The statistical data is made available through an online data viewer tool, and in SPSS and Excel formats. The MENE project team is currently developing an additional online system (Instant Atlas) that will allow users to run reports and create maps. The links to the online systems and all reports are published on the MENE webpage on Natural England's external facing website (www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx).
- 1.6 In order to better understand and confirm how MENE is currently valued, the MENE project board commissioned a review of the survey. The review highlights the ongoing value of the survey as well as considers requirements for delivering MENE in the future.
- 1.7 This paper sets out the findings of the review and provides a number of options and recommendations for the project board to consider.

2 Review aims and scope

- 2.1 The aim of the review is: to confirm the current value of MENE to Natural England, its partners and Government, consider its future relevance from a broader policy perspective across Defra and more widely, and clarify the necessary actions that need to be taken that will secure the future of the survey.
- 2.2 The review seeks to answer the following questions:
- Current value of MENE – what is the current extent of use of MENE including any evidence on the impact MENE has had on policy.
 - Communication – how can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely?
 - Customer service – how can we improve the product and service for our customers whilst developing a greater self-help culture?
 - Survey frequency – can we make changes to the MENE core survey without losing comparability and decreasing the value of the survey as a whole?
 - Funding – how can we maximise our income potential?
 - Resourcing – what resources would we need to continue delivering MENE in the future?
 - Strategic re-positioning – we need to consider a longer term strategic re-positioning of MENE and develop a 3-5 year vision/plan to make this happen.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 sets out the detailed scope of the review as agreed by the Project Board in July 2013.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The review started in August 2013.
- 3.2 The review has four stages: planning, evidence gathering, analysis and presentation.
- 3.3 In order to maximise our understanding of how MENE is used from both within and outside Natural England it was important to engage with users of the data and to do this, a short online questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was launched on 19th August and was open for three weeks until 13th September 2013. The questionnaire was advertised to all Natural England staff, 278 selected external contacts from across different sectors, including academics, local authorities, Defra, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Local Access Forums and contacts from the MENE mailbox. It was hosted on the MENE web page and also advertised to customers through Twitter, which included 3 tweets a day for the final 7 days that the questionnaire was open.
- 3.4 The questionnaire comprised of 16 questions to capture how people currently use the MENE data and establish what difference (if any) having MENE has made to people's work. It also asked customers to feedback on the barriers that may prevent MENE from being used more widely in their sector of work, and what they would like to see from the MENE survey in the future. The analysis of the questionnaire was completed with the help of Natural England's statistician. A summary of the results of the questionnaire are highlighted in Section 4. A copy of the questions can be found in Appendix 2 and the full results can be found in Appendix 3. Individual's names have been kept anonymous.
- 3.5 A series of follow up calls were also undertaken with 20 people who were identified as being closely involved in or heavy users of MENE. The aim of this exercise was to capture more specific details, views and ideas from those who use MENE the most in addition to the questionnaire results. The information gathered from the follow up calls has been used to help inform the options and recommendations for the future of MENE. A copy of the follow up call questions can be found in Appendix 4 and a summary of the calls can be found in Appendix 5. All responses have been kept anonymous.
- 3.6 In addition, a number of existing papers and reports have been used through the review and these are referenced in Appendix 6.

4 Results

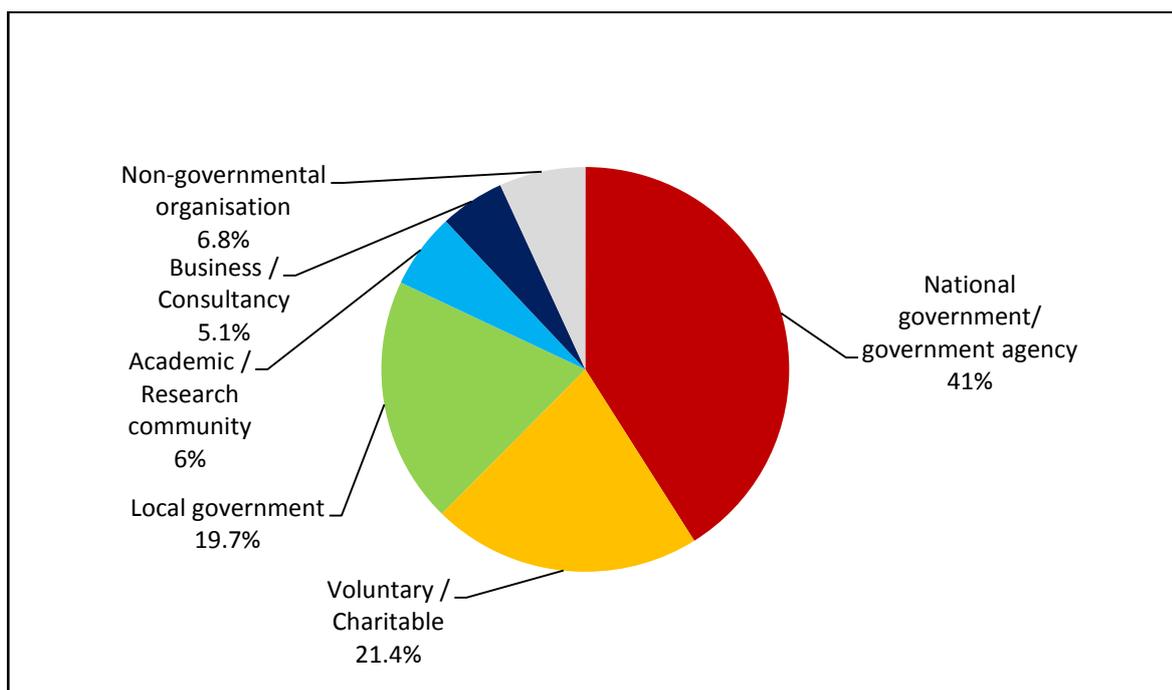
4.1 This section provides an overview of the results from the questionnaire and follow-up calls. To view the results, see Appendices C and E.

Questionnaire

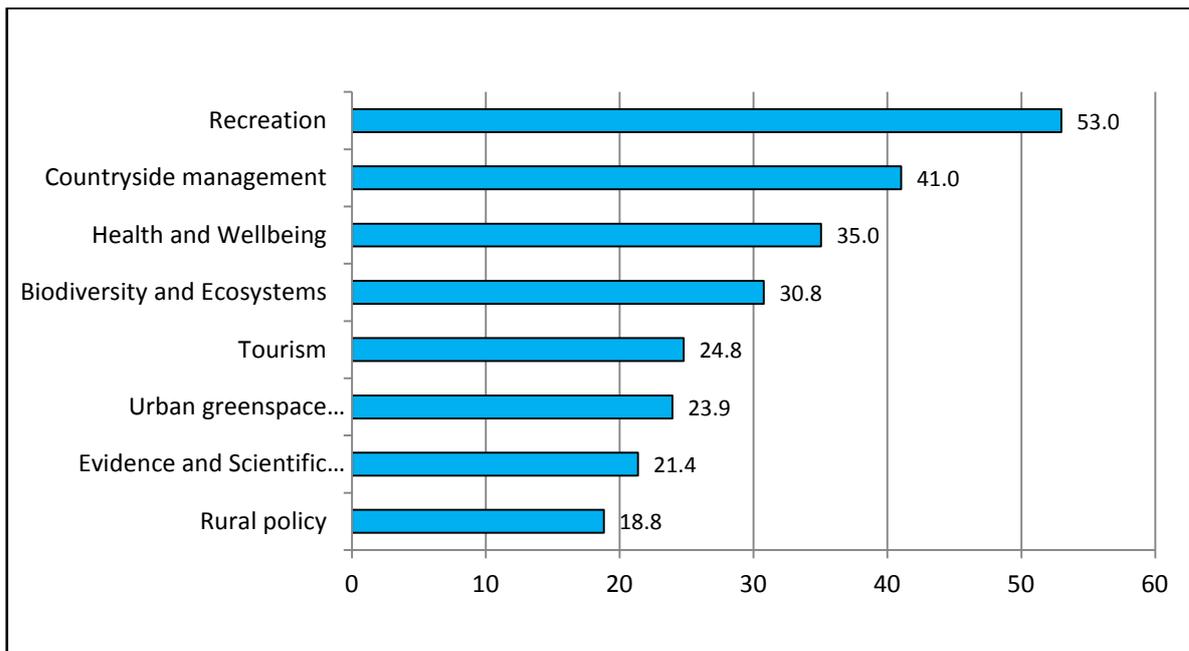
4.2 In total, 117 people responded to the questionnaire, of which 31 respondents were Natural England staff and 86 respondents from external organisations.

4.3 Question 2 asked respondents to provide the name of the organisation they work in and there was a really good range of respondents from a variety of organisations. These included; Natural England, Defra, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, National Park Authorities, Local Authorities, Universities, Local Access Forums, Kent Police, Office for National Statistics, Public Health England, Riding for the Disabled Association, Ramblers Association, British Horse Society, Bristol Natural History Consortium, Wildlife Trusts, Morgan Sindall Plc and Low Carbon Europe.

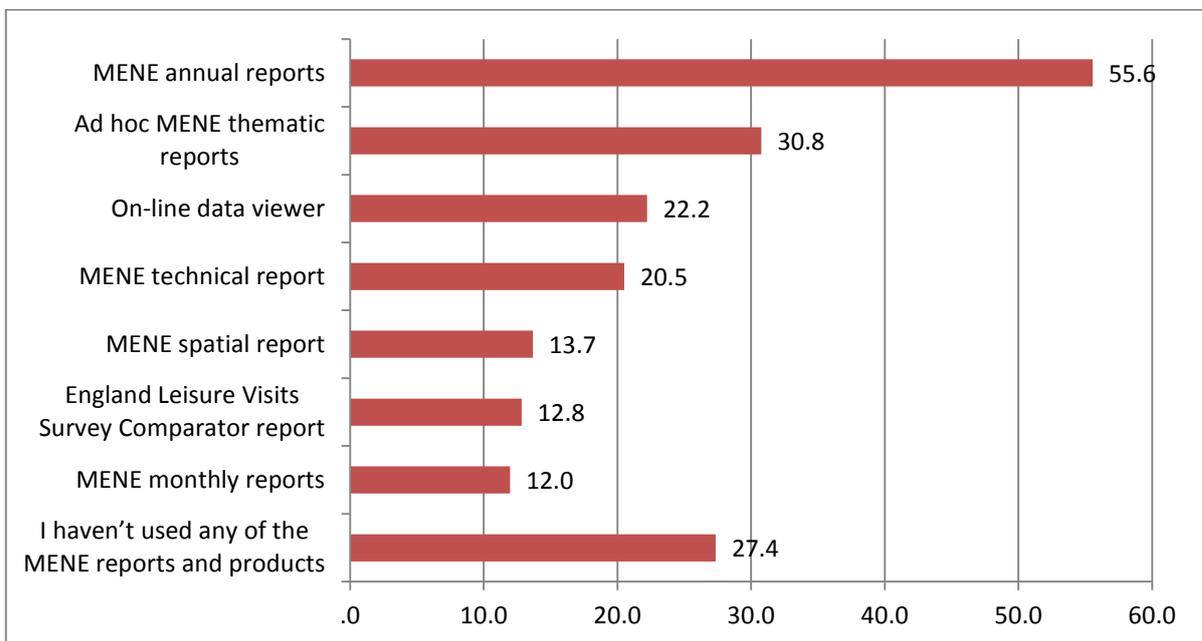
4.4 Question 3 asked respondents to select the sector they work in and this chart below shows that the biggest sector responding to the survey was National government/government agency, followed by Voluntary / Charitable sector and local government. There was a lower number of respondents who work in the academic/ research community, however all 7 of the contacts that the questionnaire was sent to from this sector submitted a response.



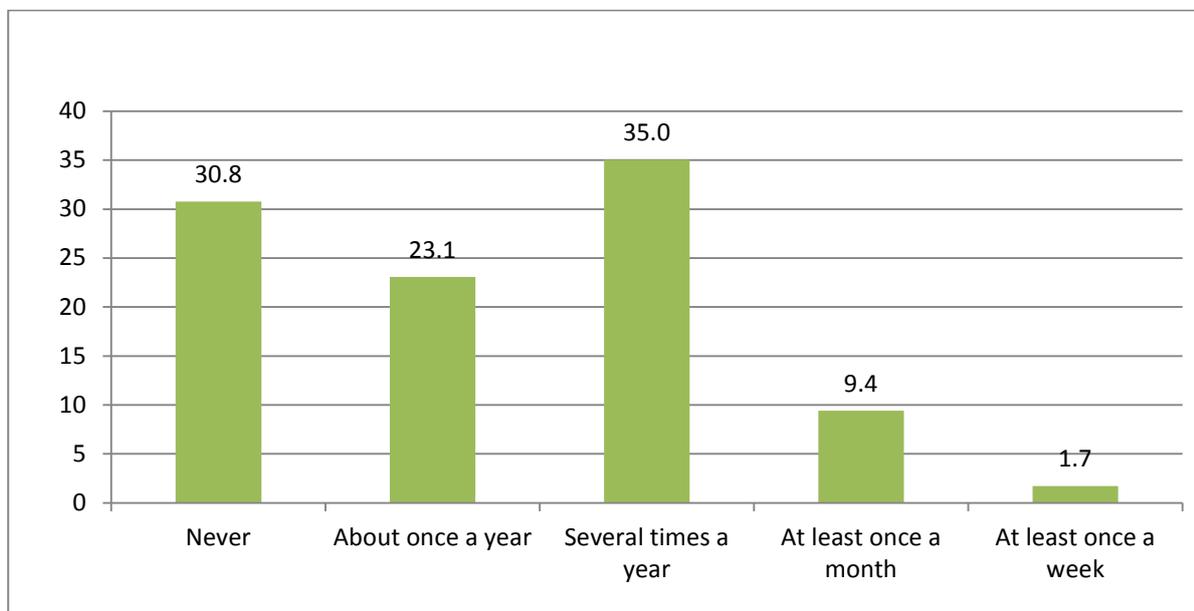
4.5 Question 4 of the questionnaire helps to provide some context for the main areas of work that the respondents are involved in. The main area of work the respondents are in is recreation, followed by countryside management and health and wellbeing. Evidence scientific research and rural policy represent 21% and 18% of the total respondents to the questionnaire.



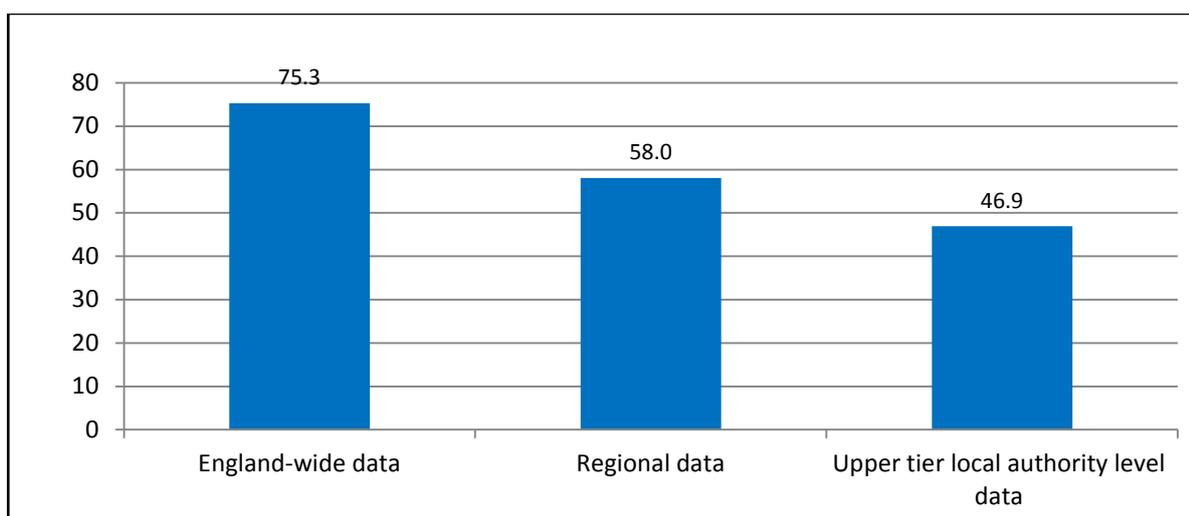
4.6 MENE data is made available online through the online data viewer, as well as through annual and monthly reports, spatial report and ad hoc thematic reports. Question 5 asked respondents to select the reports and products that they use most often. The results show that unsurprisingly the annual reports are used most often, followed by ad hoc MENE thematic reports. Of the 117 respondents, it was interesting to find that 27% of these had never used MENE products before. This response to this question also shows that the monthly reports are not accessed very much, with only 12% of respondents having used these reports before.



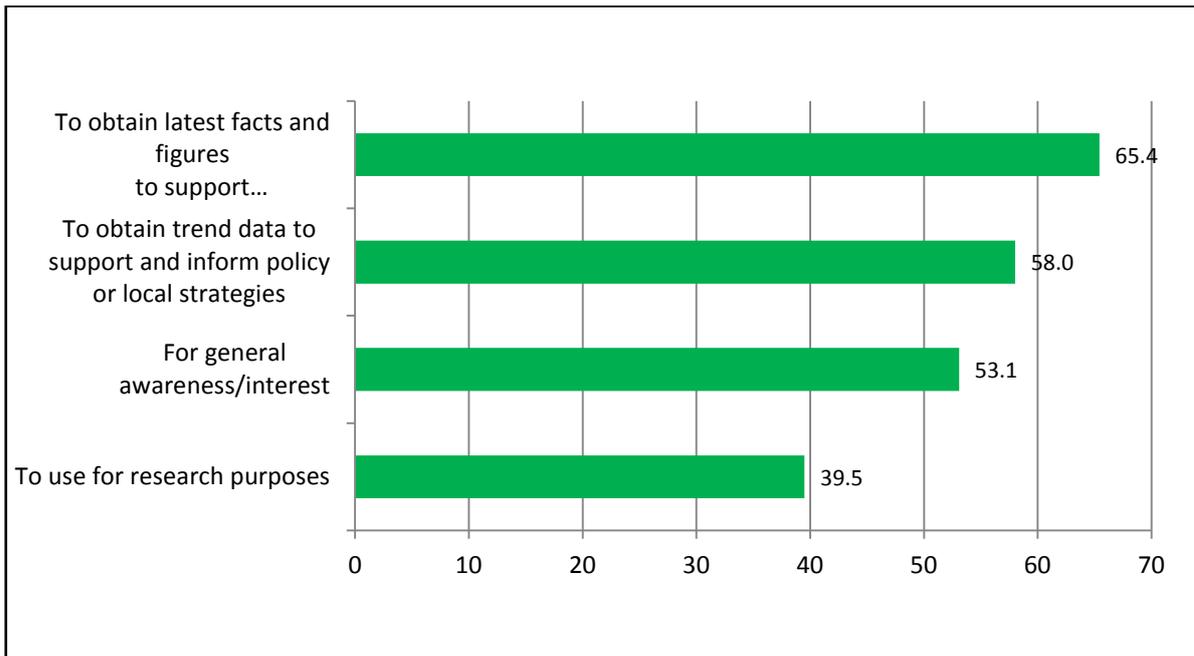
4.7 Question 6 of the questionnaire asked respondents how often they used the MENE data to inform their work. Just over 50% of the respondents use MENE either once a year or several times a year to inform their work. There is a low percentage (1.7%) that access MENE once a week and once a month. Interestingly, of the 117 respondents, 30% of these had never used MENE before, however they still responded to this survey. In analysing the next few questions it was important to be mindful that that 30% of the audience were not engaged with MENE products or use MENE to inform their work.



4.8 To understand more about the scale of MENE data that is used most often, question 7 asked respondents ‘which geographical scale do you use in your work?’ In this question, respondents could answer more than one option, but unsurprisingly the England-wide data is used most often with the upper tier local authority data used by only 47% of the respondents.



4.9 Question 8 asked respondents what they use MENE for. This was a multiple choice question where respondents were able to choose one or more option. In this analysis, those respondents who said they have never used MENE (Q6) have been taken out in order to see the answers from only those respondents who are already engaged with and using MENE. From this it can be seen that 58% of people use MENE to support and inform policy and local strategies and 65% of people use it to support reports and presentations.



- 4.10 In order to find out what impact MENE has made to people’s work and organisation an open ended question was included that asked ‘What impact has MENE had on your work and organisation?’ A definition for impact with some examples was provided; ‘by ‘impact’ we mean what has changed as a result of using MENE; this will help us understand the difference it has made to your work and/or organisation. For example: changed/informed the direction of future/existing policy; changed/informed the delivery of local services; informed a local project/funding bid; used in academic research.’
- 4.11 Of the 117 respondents, just over 60% put an answer to this question. The responses have been grouped under 5 themes as shown below, which are very similar to the themes in question 8, however the quotes and specific examples provided in this section are really useful to understand how people use and value MENE and the difference MENE has or hasn’t made to them. Some respondents stated that MENE has had a limited impact and the explanation of why they have not been able to use MENE is really useful in understanding any of the problems people may be facing with accessing the data, understanding the evidence or limited sample size for using at the local level. A few quotes from this question have been provided to show examples of responses to this question.

| Themes | Number of responses |
|--|---------------------|
| Used as evidence or research to support or inform work or delivery or services | 42 |
| Informed or helped to support a local project / funding bid | 5 |
| Used in academic research | 5 |
| Informed the direction of future policy or used to monitor progress of policy | 9 |
| None as of yet | 9 |
| Useful background reading / use for general interest | 3 |

“We see MENE as a crucial study to inform public policy. We also use the data to inform our own Organisational Strategy, and within wider partnership of which we are part. We use the research to provide market insights as a comparative performance metric. (NB Please ensure that you do attribute these comments to the National Trust – we don’t want to remain anonymous!).”

“Very limited impact, as I am keen to use and interpret the data at a local scale, but have been able to access this. I think there are big possibilities but lack of access (and perhaps understanding) is a severe limitation.”

“Crucial to informing policy discussion with partners and internal colleagues by providing evidence on which to develop our approach.”

“Until the MENE data can be cut to a meaningful/robust sample that matches National Park boundaries, the data cannot be used by us in a meaningful way. It’s useful to understand what the trends are nationally but it would be far more powerful if we could use it for the National Park.”

“We are currently working on the State of UK Parks research and we view MENE as one of the most robust datasets – this is the impact on our work.”

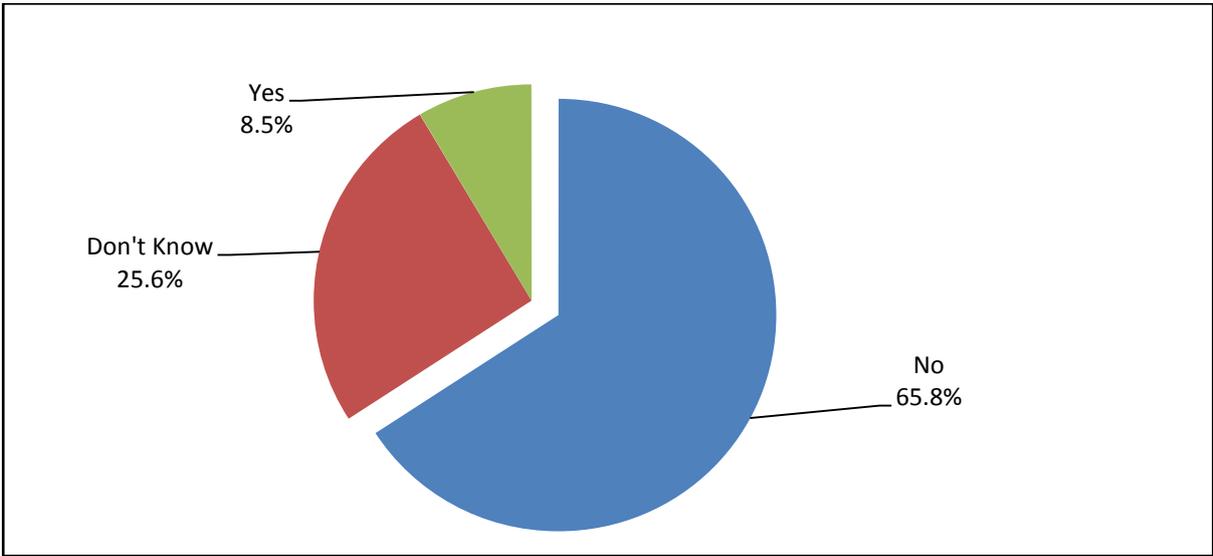
“It has helped provide vital evidence in my work, both raising awareness of the importance of the natural environment and also seeking to influence other organisations plans and strategies.”

“MENE has had a big impact...in terms of highlighting the diverse range of benefits that nature and engagement with nature brings to wider society. This, I feel has helped build confidence in promoting nature enhancement schemes as MENE evidence can help justify actions.”

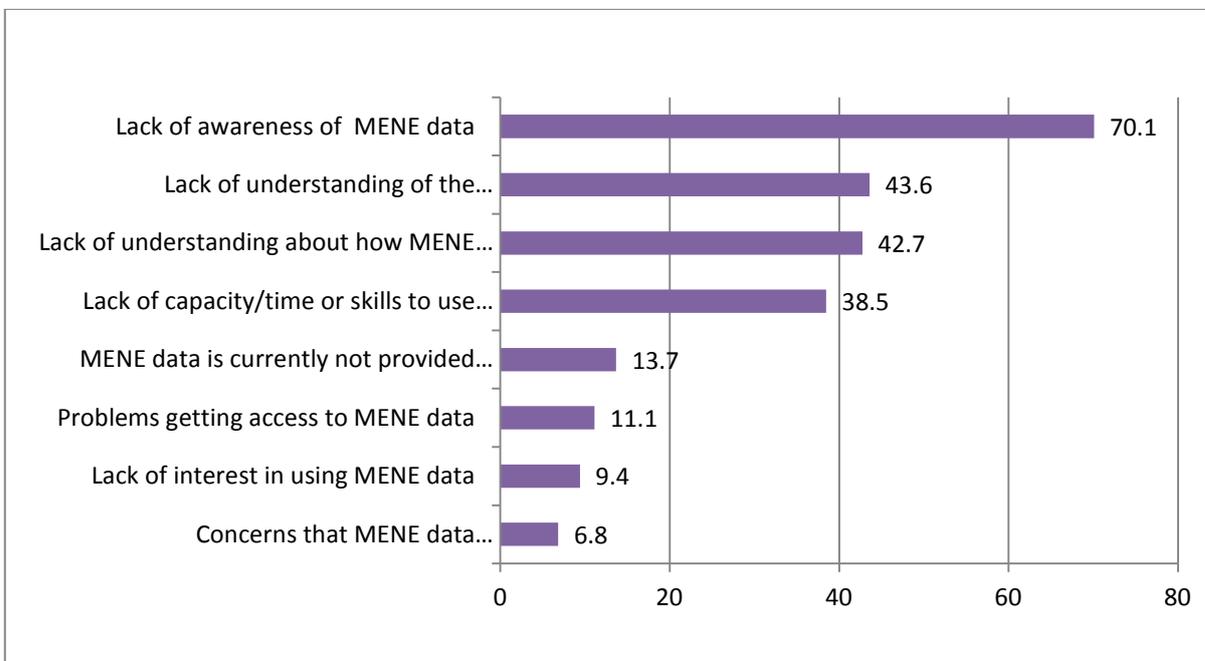
“Fantastic body of evidence to highlight to partners. Shows NE are well placed in developing evidence and using it to inform advice.”

“MENE is, in our opinion, one of the most useful pieces of work that Natural England has undertaken in recent years. As a result of MENE we are better able to develop intelligence driven policy and the data has been used to shape Hampshire’s future policy on Countryside Access.”

4.12 Question 10 of the questionnaire asked respondents to consider whether MENE was being used as widely as it could be across their organisation. The findings from this question are very interesting in that 65% of respondents felt that it wasn’t being used as much as it could be, with only 8.5% feeling it was and 25% not sure.



4.13 In this evidence gathering exercise, it was also important to understand why people did not feel MENE was being used as widely as it could be, and any barriers that may prevent MENE from being used. Question 11 set out some options for people to consider and respond to one or more things that they felt were limiting using MENE. In analysing this it is important to note that this is the individuals opinion and so we cannot say for sure that this is the view from across all of their organisation, but nonetheless it provides a good understanding of any barriers that people feel limit them using MENE.



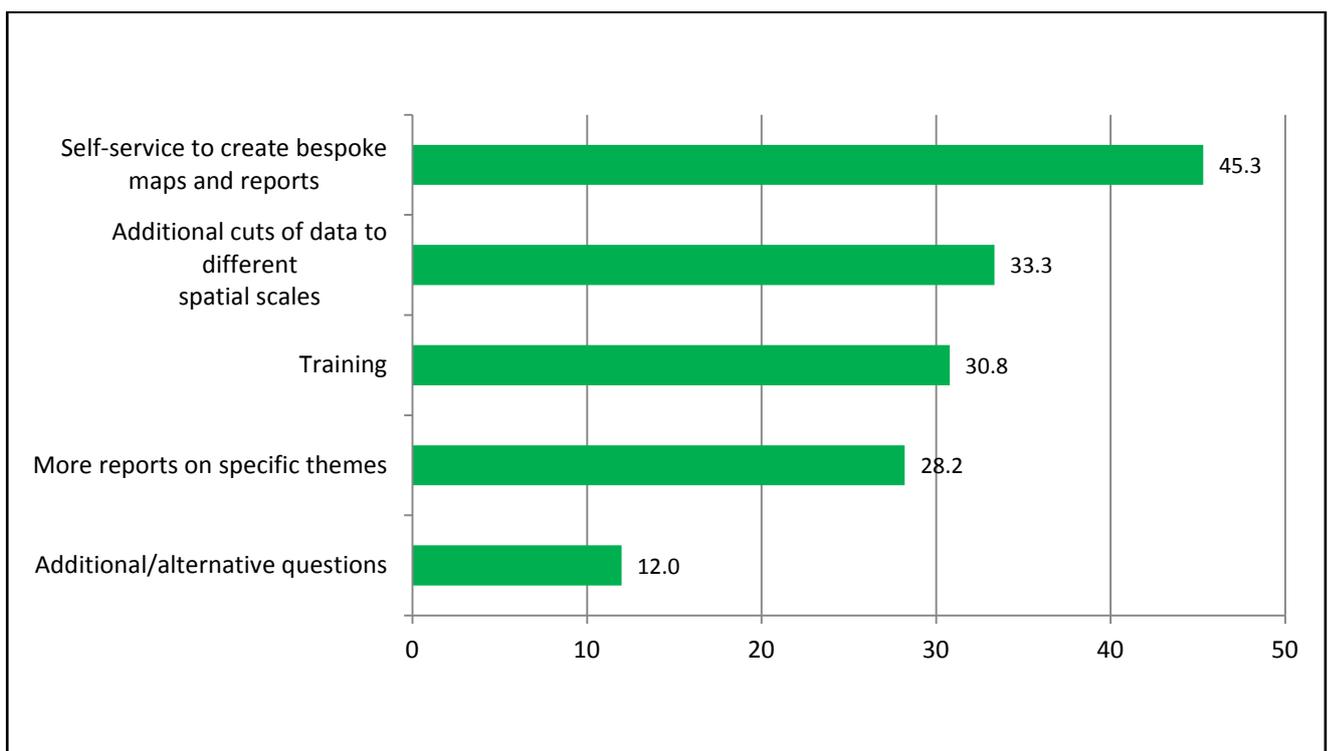
4.14 70% of respondents felt that a lack of awareness of MENE was the main reason why it is not used as widely as it could be, followed by a lack of understanding about MENE and how it can be used. What is good to see in this analysis is that only a very small percentage has concerns that MENE is not sufficiently robust and only 11% of respondents have problems getting access to the data.

4.15 This review is seeking to understand how people currently use MENE, but an important part of the review is looking towards the future and the questionnaire was a good opportunity to ask for people's ideas and opinions on how they could use MENE data in the future. This is the second of the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire to give respondents opportunity to share their thoughts and not be constrained by options that have been set. 50% of the respondents provided an answer to this and to amalgamate the results these have been grouped under different themes and quotes have been included below to support these findings.

| Themes | Number of responses |
|--|---------------------|
| Support or inform specific areas of work | 35 |
| Support or develop policy making | 4 |
| Develop it more within NE | 5 |
| Continue to use in the same way | 2 |
| Need more information on MENE | 4 |
| No specific ideas | 6 |
| Other | 3 |

- “Keen to work together to look at the sport and recreation angle of using the outdoors and link into a current project we are running which is all about encouraging entry level sport at National Trust properties.”
- “Many possibilities, particularly as more data accumulates allowing trend, seasonal and geographical analyses.”
- “It could be used increasingly to support health related initiatives with health improvement work now located with the local authority. Health professionals should be using MENE more to assess potential areas for increasing levels for physical activity.”
- “If there was more focus on people’s attitude and behaviour then I think it would be more relevant to a wider number of policies. As it stands, the data collected is rather static and leaves the reader saying “so what”? It would be good to get questions in that gave us some challenging results for policy consideration.”
- “I think MENE should be used post organisational refresh by local teams as a key tool in developing locally focused ‘team plans’.”
- “Main issue for the future is to ensure that there is sufficient awareness of the survey and what it can /can’t deliver.”
- “Overall, we would continue to use it in a similar way – the longer the survey is carried out the more strength it has.”

4.16 Question 13 asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to see from MENE in the future and this was a multiple choice question. A self-service to create bespoke maps came out as the top answer with 45% respondents feeling this would be a useful addition. This is encouraging to see there is demand for this as there has been a considerable investment made into developing a solution to create a self-service mapping and reporting tool this year.

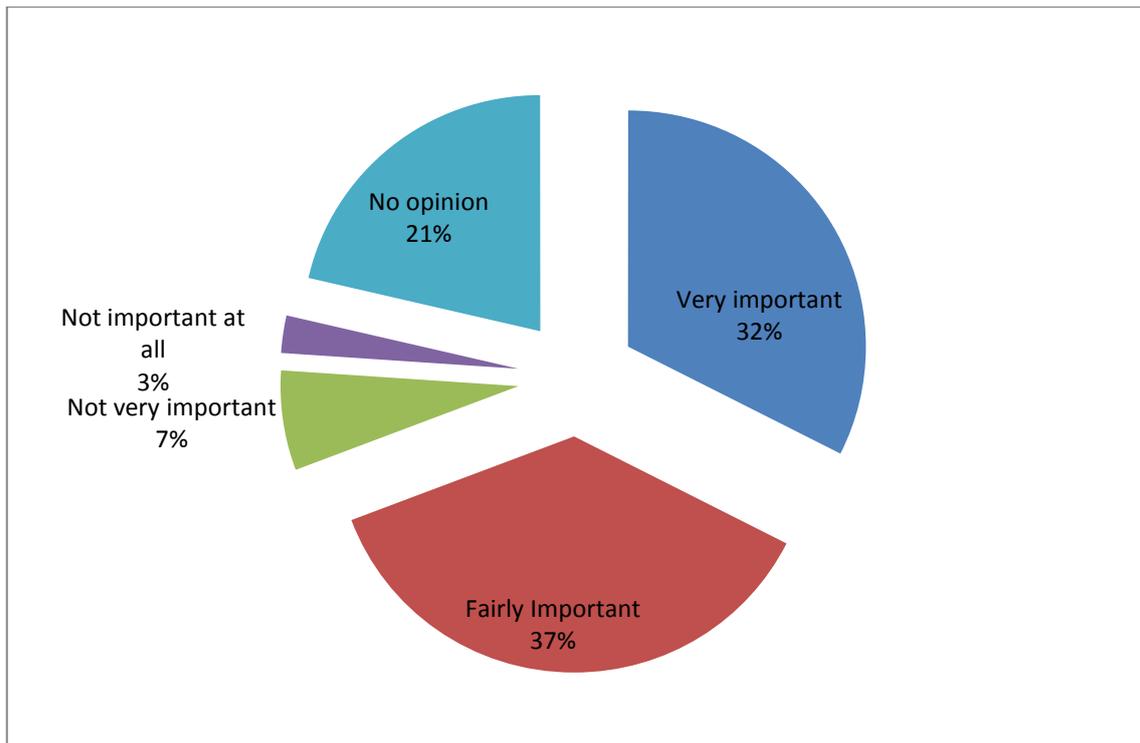


4.17 This question also gave opportunity for comments and a selection of these have been included below which expand on the options of the question. In total there were 21 additional comments to this question which included reference to include additional questions on specific themes, reference to specific projects that MENE data could be used for and more generic references on how to make MENE more user friendly.

- “It really needs to be simpler to use. Natural England website presents too many options for choosing data which is confusing.”

- “MENE findings could be possibly presented with more reference to policy.”
- “Examples of uses of the data would be useful.”
- “More help to understand and access the data at a scale I am working with.”
- “An introduction or general training session would be useful.”

4.18 Question 14 asked respondents ‘How critical is the continuation of MENE to you and your organisation?’ The pie chart below shows that over 80% of the respondents felt that MENE had some level of importance in their work. 21% had no opinion at all and only 10% felt it had no level of importance. In this chart this includes all respondents so includes the opinion of those 30% who have not used MENE before.



4.19 To end the questionnaire there was opportunity for respondents to provide further comments if they had not chance to earlier on in the survey. 24 people responded to this question to provide additional comments around either specific projects they are working on or generic comments about the survey.

- “Every academic and every audience is amazed at the strength and robustness of the MENE evidence and wish it continue. Most of these audiences wonder why NE has not used it to change its local operational focus.”
- “I feel it is a resource that could have much greater benefit for evidencing and informing what we do, but I’m personally daunted by the technicalities of accessing and interpreting the data it provides.”
- “Displaying, linking to or indexing the various reports and analyses that make use of MENE data would be a useful addition to the MENE website.”
- “This is a vital survey, and critical that it is continued to inform public policy. We would welcome more partnership engagement, but overall strongly support the continuation of the survey for the high quality data it provides.”

Follow up calls

- 4.16 The follow up calls aimed to gather more ideas and information from key people involved in the MENE project, and some heavy users of MENE to help inform the future opportunities for MENE.
- 4.17 In total 20 calls were completed and these included calls with members of the project board, including Defra and Forestry Commission statisticians, colleagues in Landscape and Biodiversity, Access & Engagement and Science and Evidence functions in Natural England.
- 4.18 In summarising the findings of these calls, there were two main themes that occurred through talks with a number of people.
- There was an agreement that there is more that could be done to communicate MENE and showcase what it is that MENE does and how it could benefit different areas of work. This will help engage partners in MENE and identify future funding opportunities.
 - Resourcing was identified as an issue on the project and particularly the time of Natural England's statistician who is responsible for providing all analysis and quality assurance of reports and statistical queries.
- 4.19 The calls helped inform the recommendations of this paper and identify opportunities where MENE could be used more within different sectors, referencing a number of different organisations who may be interested in MENE. These include:
- Natural England opportunities, through the Natural England Organisational refresh
 - Local Nature Partnerships
 - Health and Wellbeing boards – Public Health England, Department for Health
 - Department for Education
 - Department for Communities and Local Government
 - Local Authorities
 - Nature Improvement areas
 - National Ecosystem Assessment 2
 - Green space sector
 - Biodiversity 2020
 - Woodland – Forestry Commission England, Woodland Trust
 - National Trust
 - English Heritage
 - Universities
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships
 - Wildlife Trusts
 - Canals & Rivers Trust
 - National Parks
 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - Living Landscapes
 - Living with Environmental Change (LWEC)
 - RSPC
- 4.20 The follow up call questions included a question on the frequency of the survey options and the options people felt were possible with running the survey differently in the future. Suggestions such as 1 year collecting, followed by 1 year reporting, or running every 3 years and 3 times the sampling in those years were put forward. These have been taken into account in the recommendations around the survey frequency as set out in the next section of this review.

5 Delivering in the future

- 5.1 The review provided an opportunity to look at what is possible for MENE in the future to maximise its effectiveness and efficiency in delivering, sharing and using the MENE data.
- 5.2 This section sets out some options and recommendations under each of the questions posed in the scope of the review. The conclusions made take into account findings from the questionnaire and follow up calls.

Communication – How can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely?

- 5.2 Over the past four years the MENE project team have led the way in ensuring the MENE data is accessible to our users, that the results are supplied in different formats and that they think about innovative and more creative ways to showcase the findings. Examples of this innovation include the development of the Spatial Report, Infographics report and Podcasts which have helped to set out the key findings easily through simple graphical visualisations alongside the written report. The project team have received positive feedback on these new developments and these should continue in the future. But, alongside reporting the findings in new ways, can more be done to articulate the benefits of MENE more widely?
- 5.3 Some of the findings from the questionnaire and follow up calls highlight the need for improved communications. In the questionnaire 65.8% of respondents did not feel that MENE was used as widely as it could be and overall 70% of people who responded to the survey felt that a lack of awareness of MENE data was the main reason for lack of people using the data.
- 5.4 Communications in the past have focused on what MENE is and what the annual findings show. After four years of data, there is now a need to focus on what MENE can do for users and showcase how people are already using the data. Case studies are a great way to do this and show users real-life examples of how MENE data has been used in different ways to inform or decisions, develop policy or simply just to help build a general understanding of an area. Case studies will not only help the users understand what they are able to get out of the MENE survey, but it will also help the project team in showcasing the benefits of MENE better and highlight the importance of MENE in policy development and decision making. There are many examples that have been highlighted through this review that the project team could use to develop into a case study, such as Cannock Chase SAC, shaping Hampshire's future policy on Countryside access, Biodiversity 2020 and MENE in the National Ecosystem Assessment.

Example to highlight MENE in use:

MENE as an evidence source in Work Package 4 of the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) follow on project.

The aims of the follow on project are to further develop the evidence base set out under the original NEA, and to make it more relevant to decision and policy making, which has been particularly challenging in relation to Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES).

Work Package 4 deals with cultural services. It has a number of strands to it one of which is around developing indicators for CES.

The NEA follow on project is using the framework of environmental settings from which environment goods and benefits flow. Which is why MENE is has been helpful for their analysis. There are three main strands to this work:

- Developing new empirical insights
- Case study work
- Development of CES indicators

MENE has been used as the main data set for the new empirical insights work and development of CES indicators. The researchers commissioned an additional set of questions to be included in a couple of waves of the survey – to plug a gap around people’s use of gardens. MENE is the best and only real dataset that we have available on CES. The aim is to make CES work as a framework for how we manage and understand the interaction between people and place this really makes the case for continued investment in the survey, and would underpin work across the sector. MENE is the evidence to help put this framework in place.

- 5.5 In reviewing how the project team currently manage communications, each year a communications plan is developed to set out what the planned communications over the year, such as the annual findings report and any other planned products or reports. This is the central plan, but what is also important to note is that within Natural England there are a great number of people who also lead on promoting MENE through their networks and partnership engagement. This is really beneficial as it’s the additional talks at conferences, sourcing MENE within press releases and highlighting MENE to key groups which help to raise awareness of what MENE can do for others. However, through the evidence gathering of this review to establish what has already taken place, it has been found that there is currently no central place to store and record the communications taking place, and often, the project team are not aware or told about communications referencing MENE until it is published. The result of this is that it is often difficult for the project team to monitor who is engaged with MENE and obtain feedback on the survey to help inform the development in the future.
- 5.6 Therefore it is recommended that the project team develop a more **co-ordinated** approach to communications and set out a central place to record and store communications so that others can benefit from this. This should be both internal and external, and consider making changes to the MENE website to ensure there is a section that sets out clearly what MENE is, the benefits of having MENE and any news items or additional reports that contain references to MENE are linked on the main page to help users see the scope of using MENE across different areas of work. Internally, the same could be applied to have a central communications store, such as on the Technical Information Exchange, where users can store presentations, communications products and the project team can keep an up to date record of communications activity throughout the year. This will help avoid any duplication of effort, share knowledge and information, promote integrated working and help staff see how others are using and promoting MENE.

Recommendation 1 - invest more time in communications - showcase what it is that MENE does through case studies on the MENE website and develop a more co-ordinated approach to communicating MENE.

- 5.7 As referred to above, in considering how to manage and deliver communications internally there are a lot of people around Natural England who are already actively promoting and using MENE. Having people across the organisation who understand the MENE survey and can share the evidence source with others both internally and externally in a coordinated way is key tool to building the awareness and understanding of MENE across an organisation. Having advocates of MENE embedded across the organisation should continue and enhance in the future to develop a network of people who we can use to communicate central messages to our customers and partners.
- 5.8 An option to do this is to develop a network of people to be advocates of MENE who are embedded throughout the organisation in a mixture of local delivery and national roles. The champions should include people who are involved in partnership working, such as our existing Area Managers and Head of Profession. In the new Natural England organisational model, it would be important to have an advocate from each area team, someone who can advise on opportunities to use MENE at the local level and share best practice across other local delivery teams. This advocacy role for MENE should be part of people's agree role and responsibility. The leadership of this network will be from the project team, to coordinate a series of regular (quarterly) meetings, deliver training requirements if needed, and set up the tools and recording facilities of the network to capture and action people's views and uses of MENE.
- 5.9 The benefits of having MENE Knowledge Champions include:
- Project team can share uses, benefits and best practice of using/communicating MENE in a coordinated way across the business.
 - Forum to get feedback from those who use MENE to help identify new opportunities to explore partnership working or seek funding.
 - Champions are kept up to date on latest products and developments.
 - Champions can help test new developments to ensure the project team delivers products that are fit for purpose, led by user engagement.
 - Project team can formally record how our partners and users are currently engaging in and investing in MENE through feedback from the network.

Recommendation 2 - develop a network of MENE Knowledge Champions.

- 5.10 In the future, there may be scope to develop a network with our external partners to invite representatives from across different sectors to get involved in MENE, helping to share best practice with our customers, keep customer up to date with latest developments and most importantly get feedback from our customers to help inform future opportunities to developing the survey.

Customer service – How can we improve the product and service for our customers whilst developing a great self-help culture?

- 5.11 In 2013/14 the project team have put in place a number of actions to develop a greater self-help culture, particularly through the investment of developing an online tool called Instant Atlas.
- 5.12 Instant Atlas is an online server hosted software package that will allow customers to visualise survey data and spatial data in the format of user friendly reports and maps. This will enable users to access the data easier and develop their own maps for their own areas. Currently, this functionality is not available through the online cross-tabulation viewer tool. The launch of Instant Atlas in early 2014 will help to encourage a greater self-service approach and accessibility to data

and maps for our customers. At present, the project team receives a number of ad-hoc queries and request from customers through the MENE mailbox. This varies each year, but 2012/13 saw 46 requests, and so far in 2013/14 the team have received 28 requests. The requests range from analysis around a certain geography, enquiries about indicators or specific reports, data accuracy and checking of statistics, mapping work and general signposting of where to find data. The aim with investing in an online tool is that we can decrease the number of ad-hoc requests that the team receives. The current project team have also recently set up a prioritisation method to ensure they meet the Natural England customer service excellence standards in responding to requests as they come in. This includes having a prioritisation route for different requests, recording the number and type of requests and developing standard responses. The introduction of this prioritisation process for managing requests and also in particular the launch of Instant Atlas will help users be able to run bespoke requests, without the need for statistician time.

- 5.13 With the development of Instant Atlas underway and the mailbox prioritisation in early use, these solutions already put in place will start to develop a greater self-help culture and improve the service we provide for our customers. It is important that the when the software is launched, that clear guidance is published with it and training if required is delivered in a timely manner. It is important that the project team review the success of this system before any future developments are made to considering how to develop a greater self-help culture.

Recommendation 3 - review of the number of requests the project team receives in the 6 months after Instant Atlas is launched is undertaken to assess the impact this development has had on ad-hoc enquiries.

- 5.14 To undertake the review, the project team will need to continue to monitor the request through the MENE mailbox and keep a record of the types of requests coming through to establish whether these are in addition to the capability of the new software.
- 5.15 To further develop a self-help culture there is also scope to increase the amount of guidance currently provided on the MENE website to support users in using the existing online data viewer tool. The project team have planned to create a series of short training videos online to run through how to access the MENE data through the online data viewer and how to analyse the data to different needs. This would really benefit developing a self-help culture, providing users with sufficient guidance to take on analysis tasks themselves.

Recommendation 4 - prioritise the development of short online training videos.

- 5.16 The training videos should include an introduction to MENE and training guides on how to access the MENE data through the online data viewer. The development of these should be as soon as is possible by the project team and these should be hosted on the MENE website.
- 5.17 Under the customer service section, the products that are currently available have also been reviewed. The results of question 5 in the questionnaire provided a good understanding of which products users are accessing the most. The results clearly showed that the annual reports are most heavily used and there is a low percentage of respondents accessing the monthly reports (17%).
- 5.18 In 2013/14 the project team undertook a user consultation to change the frequency of the monthly reports. The project team received zero responses to the invite to feedback on the requested change so the decision was made to reduce the frequency of the reporting from monthly to quarterly reports. The first quarterly report is currently under development. In consultation with NE's statistician during this review, it was noted that to answer how often reports should be produced, we need to think about the value the additional commentary is adding for users. In analysing the data for the first quarterly report, the variations between the four years of data within each quarter are not showing significant differences so this makes it difficult to provide value in the commentary to explain why this is the case and what this means. The project board needs to consider what value having mid-year reporting adds to MENE against the time it takes for the statistician to deliver a report. The first quarterly report has taken around a week to

analyse the data and write the short report. There may be scope to further reduce the amount of reporting the team undertakes to produce additional reports only every six months.

Recommendation 5 - to review the quarterly reporting and value it adds and consider extending the intervals to six monthly.

- 5.19 For any change in the frequency of the reporting a user consultation would be required. The project team are able to monitor numbers of people who view the report on request to the NE web team, so it would be beneficial after two quarterly reports to establish the benefit this has added against the time taken by the statistician to analyse the data and produce such a report. Reducing the frequency of the report would not mean users cannot access the latest data; this would still be available through the online data viewer. By further reducing the amount of reporting that the project team delivers will benefit the team in by being able to spend more time on delivering bespoke products, developing case studies and supporting other areas of NE business.
- 5.20 In reviewing the products, it was also important to highlight the innovative and creative addition of the Infographics and Podcasts that were developed this year. The project team have received really positive feedback on these products from across Natural England and also from our external partners. These should continue in the future to support the launch of the annual findings.

Survey frequency – Can we make changes to the core survey without losing comparability and decreasing the value of the survey as a whole?

- 5.21 This question of the review set out three different options of making changes to the MENE core survey and asked the review to consider each one and establish what could be possible in the future. In thinking around the options, there were a number of variables to take into account, particularly budgets, the value of the data and how the data is used.
- 5.22 The options for making changes to the frequency of the survey for consideration are:
- Option 1 - run the survey less frequently, changing from running the survey every year to every 2 years, where year 1 is data collection and year 2 is reporting.
 - Option 2 - reduce the frequency of individual questions on an annual basis.
 - Option 3 - don't change anything – continue running survey each year with the ability to add extra questions for a fee.
- 5.23 In considering the options, it must be noted that a clear stipulation under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics is that any changes to the core survey must involve user consultation.
- 5.24 The benefits and risks of Option 1, reducing the frequency of the survey to deliver every other year, are set out in the following table.

| Benefits | Risks |
|---|---|
| Reduce contract time and costs. | Reduce amount of data collected each year – implications on using data at the local level as small sample sizes. |
| Reduce staff time and costs. | Annual reporting requirements in place for indicators. |
| Wouldn't have significant impact on the variation in annual statistics and national level data. | Reduce ability to analyse annual and seasonal fluctuations and understand behaviour changes in response to changing weather and climates and how this affects the patterns of visiting. |
| | Cannot forward commit on budgets so risk of losing funding if there is a break in the survey. |

- 5.25 As 4 years of data has now been collected the local level demands are ever increasing and we need to consider this in the future plans to ensure we meet user demands. Natural England's new delivery model to have integrated local delivery teams is a good opportunity to increase the awareness and understanding of MENE to help inform local planning and strategies. Through the questionnaire, some respondents who deliver at the local level have referenced their difficulty in analysing the data for small areas due to limited sample sizes, such as the National Park or Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty (AONB) geographical scales. The sample sizes at the local level will only improve however as we continue with the survey and this gives scope to a huge range of potential opportunities to engage with local delivery teams and use the data to help inform local policies.
- 5.26 In reviewing the reduction of frequency of individual questions, the benefit is that this would save on contract costs, but this would not be a significant amount over the whole contract fee (~10%, depending on how many questions are amended). The project team have worked hard over the past four years to learn what questions have worked and adapted others to suit. This has made savings to the contract cost, however not significant (low thousands) and to change questions again it would need to be driven by users and as part of this the project team would need to run a user consultation on any changes to questions.

Recommendation 6 - continuation of the current frequency of the survey for the next 2 years (to 6 years of survey), followed by a review in 2015/16.

- 5.27 There are a number of reasons for continuing as is and these include:
- The ability to use MENE data at the local level is just being made possible and continuing to year 6 will ensure that there is continued collection and this will increase the sample sizes at the local geographic boundaries such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty.
 - A significant investment has been made into systems like Instant Atlas and continuing for the next year will ensure we have sufficient data available on the new systems for users to access.
 - Due to procurement and financial rules, we are not allowed to forward-commit on budgets so each year we must review the contract costs against the available budget. If there is a break in the survey, there could be a risk that budget is not assigned to delivering MENE every other year.
 - To make significant changes to MENE would involve user consultation. The findings from this review show that MENE is valued and people could and want to make more use of it, therefore reducing the frequency of delivering the survey could pose implications on how people are starting to use MENE, such as for climate change analysis.

Funding – How can we maximise our income potential?

5.28 In reviewing this question, there are a number of options to consider the opportunities to maximise the potential income invested in MENE. These are set out below with an indication of the benefits and risks of each option.

- **Get more money from current contributors so that it's shared more equally between Defra, Forestry Commission and Natural England.** In 2013/14 the survey cost £389,425 (inc VAT) to commission TNS to run the core survey. Natural England Evidence Programme budget provided £324,425 with contributions of £55,000 from Defra and £10,000 from Forestry Commission. Can this be shared more equally between the partners? This would ensure that we can continue delivering the survey in the future through a partnership approach with more equal contributions of money. There needs to be discussions with the relevant organisations and budget holders to agree this approach.
- **Don't do as much and reduce frequency of survey.** As set out in 5.21-5.26, there are options to reduce the frequency of the survey but the recommendation is that this should be reviewed after year 6 due to the risks around collating sufficient data, how the data is now being used at local level and the inability to forward commit on budgets.
- **Consider new methods of delivering a survey – such as online survey, rather than face to face to reduce costs.** This could be an option for the future and more investigation into the possibility, benefits and risks of changing the current format of delivering an online survey would be required. There are existing examples of organisations that are now using online methods to run annual surveys, such as Visit England who commissioned a survey to measure the volume and value of tourism day visits in England which is carried out weekly using an online methodology. There would be benefit in speaking to both TNS who contract this data and also Visit England to assess the advantages of using online and the difference in costs to running the home surveys.
- **Include 'full cost recovery' for additional questions – take back investment to keep for core survey.** This option would ensure that when additional questions are added to the survey an additional fee is included to contribute to the delivery of the core survey. In 2012/13 there were 8 additional sets of questions added into the survey, totalling £135,000. If full cost recovery was added to this at a value of 10% to each of these additional questions, this would be an additional £13,000 that the MENE project can invest back into the project. The fee would cover the overheads of procurement, project management and statistician time to set up the additional questions, as well as securing funding for contributing to the core survey. The number of additional questions will vary each year and there is also currently contract constraints on the number of additional questions that are allowed each year against the core survey costs (these are being looked at by the project team), but adding an additional fee to this service is an easy way to generate revenue back into running the core survey. In order to achieve this, the project team would have to work with procurement to set this up into the additional questions and contract amendment process.
- **Charge for ad-hoc analysis services.** This option is to add a charge to the analysis service that Natural England provides to customers and partners who request bespoke reports or analysis. Currently, Natural England provides an analysis service free of charge, where customers can contact the MENE project team through the mailbox and request additional services beyond the reporting and data supplied through the MENE website. In 2012/13 the project team received 46 requests (internal and external) over the year for additional ad-hoc queries, ranging from bespoke analysis around a specific geography, contribution to bespoke reports, data accuracy and checking statistics. In this review, the option of whether it is viable to charge for such a service was assessed. Under the Treasury Guidelines for charging for services, it is made clear that the charge wouldn't be for the data we provide. Under the Official Statistics Code of Practice the MENE data must be made available for free. The charge would therefore be a payment for

statistician time to deliver the project, as well as covering overhead costs such as estates, procurement time and contribution to Natural England's evidence programme. Natural England currently provides a charging service in Land Use (Discretionary Advice Service) and in seeking advice from an area of the business that has already set such a system up, it is estimated that it would take around 6 months to clarify the legal basis for setting this up, developing the charging scheme, setting up back office to administrate the service and going through the appropriate approvals. There are examples outside of Natural England where the provision of statistical analysis is charge for, such as the Office for National Statistics who provide bespoke reports and tailored data to users need for a charge. In deciding whether this is a viable option for the MENE team, it was also important to think about some of the developments that are already underway for MENE, specifically Instant Atlas. The aim for investing in an online solution for reporting and mapping of the MENE data is to reduce the number of ad-hoc requests and develop a greater self-help culture. Therefore once this is delivered there may not be such a demand for additional analysis services, therefore the investment to set up a charging scheme may not be required. In thinking about the resources that would be required to deliver a charging scheme, it is important to note that currently Natural England only has one statistician who manages and services the analysis requests. An increase in resource to ensure that the team can manage charging requests, have back-up support when staff are on leave and deliver to customer service excellence standards and timescales set on responding to charging services would be required. There would also be investment needed in resourcing a 'back-office' team to administrate the service will be required.

Finally, it is also important to note that the contractor who currently delivers MENE (TNS) has a facility in place to charge for ad-hoc analysis services and the project team have started to steer external people to if they wish to have bespoke reports made or analysis undertaken. TNS have the capacity to deliver this service and in setting up a service like this, Natural England will have to ensure they can deliver to the standards required. If the service was set up, the project team would also have to be clear on how priorities are treated, specifically internal requests versus external requests. The Treasury Guidelines state 'treat all customers must be treated evenly irrespective of the nature of the organisation' and this would be the default position to take. If there were people who we want to be exempt from this, then the project team would have to set out a rationale for why they would not charge every customer the same.

- **Wider contribution to funding core survey – show the value MENE can add and seek funding.** A final option to consider is to seek funding from wider contributors. There have been a number of talks in the past between Natural England staff and partner organisations in looking for funding for MENE, including Big Lottery and the Heritage Lottery Fund. There is still an ongoing opportunity to seek wider investment from others, such as Environment Agency, Public Health and the National Trust. In pursuing this, it needs to be clear from the outset what it is required and set out a plan for seeking additional partnership support. However, it's not an easy or quick process and the Project Board in considering whether this is a viable option need to look at what they expect to get versus what it costs to chase investments. In order to seek investment, the value of communications and showcase what MENE could add to their work is vital to undertake first and discussions around investment opportunities will follow. This review has captured a number of different potential organisations who people have felt could work with MENE more closely, so in pursuing this it would be recommended to make use of the results from this review and develop a partnership engagement plan. In resourcing this option, it is recommended that the project team includes a senior leader to coordinate and run this work to engage with partners and potential investors, including re-visiting those who have been contacted in the past.

Recommendation 7 – discuss funding contributions with Defra and Forestry Commission – aim to have more equal share.

Recommendation 8 – include 'full cost recovery' for additional questions.

Recommendation 9 – seek wider investment through delivery of a partnership engagement plan.

Resourcing – what resources would we need to continue delivering MENE in the future?

- 5.29 The current resourcing of the project has been highlighted as an area to discuss in this review and particularly highlighting the need for greater support on analysing the statistical data has been noted through the follow up calls as an area to increase on resourcing in the future.
- 5.30 In order to deliver any of the recommendations of this review, it must be noted that this will be additional work to the current planned outputs of the project team and therefore the Project Board need to be mindful there needs to be sufficient resources in place to deliver the aspirations of the project that may result from this review.
- 5.31 The current project team resources for 2013/14 delivery are set out below:
- Project management – Lead adviser from Integrated Monitoring & Reporting team (0.7FTE)
 - Project management support – Lead adviser from Science Unit (0.5FTE)
 - Statistician – Senior Adviser from Science Unit (0.4FTE)
 - Cartographer – Adviser from Geographic Information & Analysis Services Team (0.1FTE)
 - Management steer – Principal Adviser from Access & Engagement (0.1FTE)
- 5.32 The current project team lead on managing the MENE contract, delivering the annual and quarterly reports, managing additional questions, leading communications, developing Instant Atlas, responding to ad-hoc queries and delivering additional requests throughout the year.
- 5.33 In reviewing the current resourcing, it has been clear that there is a gap in senior leadership to manage and steer the project. There needs to be a dedicated Principal Adviser who oversees the MENE project, provides thought leadership and delivers the partnership engagement plan to find opportunities to work with partners, coordinate how MENE is being used and provide that strategic level thinking and links with other Principal Advisers / Specialists / Area Managers across the organisation to seek opportunities both internally and externally to showcase MENE. Currently there is a lot of people internally engaged with MENE and sharing MENE within Natural England and this needs to be led in a more coordinated way to ensure the project team has that feedback loop to help showcase how MENE is being used. A leadership role to ensure this is delivered and also find those opportunities and links with others is required.
- 5.34 It is also clear that there is a gap in the support for Natural England's statistician to deliver the reporting and analysis requirements and to have back-up support on the project to cover staff leave. The role of the statistician at the senior adviser level should focus on quality assurance and future development and their role should be to coordinate and quality assure reports and analysis, oversee queries and lead the development and technical input into new products and ways of running MENE. The statistician should be supported by a statistical analysis or data analyst who is responsible for providing statistical outputs for reports and ad queries and responding to the MENE mailbox requests and input to technical development of systems as required. This role should be at a lead adviser level and may require training in the software and skills to analyse the statistical data, which may take time. The statistician and data analyst will be supported by a cartographer whose role it is to provide all mapping for reports, presentations and ad hoc analysis requests as required.
- 5.35 The role of the project manager is currently at a lead adviser level and the project manager is responsible for managing the MENE contract, overseeing and undertaking the day to day delivery of the project, developing and delivering a communications plan, managing the budget and contract amendments, working closely with procurement and managing the MENE requests. The project manager is supported by a lead adviser who is responsible for administration of the MENE project, managing the MENE mailbox and supporting the project manager in managing the contract.

In reviewing the role of the project manager and what is required for the project to take forward the recommendations from the review, there is opportunity to have a senior adviser role in leading the project and particularly supporting the principal adviser to deliver the partnership plan. This role would involve leading and influencing others to deliver the partnership plan and proactively engage with partners to find new opportunities to use MENE and seek funding. They would also deliver the communications plan and lead the network of MENE knowledge champions. They would then be supported by a lead adviser whose role is to manage the day to day running of the MENE contract, reporting on budgets and supporting the Project Manager in delivering the communications plan. They would also manage the MENE mailbox and respond to request as necessary. The support they provide would ensure the project manager can provide more thought leadership, strategic thinking and development of the communications plan. This is an option for the Project Board to consider.

Recommendation 10 – Invest in more resourcing, specifically support for statistician and leadership to drive forward and coordinate MENE.

- 5.36 The options for resourcing to deliver MENE in the future have been set out below and indicate that an increase of resourcing is required in the future. A brief overview of each role has been provided, along with an indication of the estimated time required by each person. This is an estimate of resourcing required and will be dependent on the work the project board want to deliver going forward, so will need agreeing with the current project team and project board before taking forward. The resourcing for the project should be reviewed each year to ensure there is sufficient capability to deliver all core reporting and additional requests.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Senior Responsible Officer - Principal Adviser (0.2 FTE) Responsible for project and role to oversee the delivery of MENE. Provides thought leadership and strategic overview of where MENE could be used. Leads partnership engagement work to seek opportunities through different areas of work. Key skills: Influencing, negotiating & leadership (expert) | | |
| Statistician – Senior Adviser (0.4 FTE) Quality assurance role. Co-ordinates reports, oversees ad hoc requests, leads development of new products, provides technical knowledge. Key skills: Statistical analysis (expert) | Option 1 – Lead Adviser – Project Manager – coordination and delivery role (0.5 FTE) Responsible for managing MENE contract and day to day delivery of MENE, including contract and budget management, working with procurement, managing MENE requests, delivering the communication plan and lead network of MENE knowledge champions. Key skills: project management (practitioner) | Option 2 – Senior Adviser – Project Manager – leadership and delivery role (0.5 FTE) Leading and influencing role. Supports the PA in delivering the partnership plan – proactively engaging with partners to find new opportunities to use MENE and seek funding. Leads the development and delivery of the communication plan and lead network of MENE knowledge champions. Key skills: Influencing, negotiating & leadership (practitioner), project management (practitioner) |
| Data Analyst – Lead Adviser (0.2 FTE) Support statistician through provision of MENE data for annual reports and ad hoc requests. Key skills: Statistical analysis (practitioner) | Option 1 – Project Support – Adviser (0.3 FTE) Responsible for managing MENE mailbox and responding to requests as necessary. Responsible for administration of meetings and supports PM in contract management. Key skills: project management (basic) | Option 2 – Project Support – coordination and delivery – Lead Adviser (0.5 FTE) Responsible for contract and budget management, contract amendments, and delivers communication plan. Need support from adviser who supports LA in administration of meetings and managing MENE mailbox. Key skills: project management (practitioner) |
| Geographic Information Analyst – Adviser (0.2 FTE) Provides all mapping for annual reports and ad hoc requests. Key skills: ArcGIS (practitioner) and Spatial Analyst (practitioner) | | |

5.37 The project team reports to a Project Board whose membership includes representatives from the Evidence function in Natural England, Access & Engagement in Natural England, Statistician in Defra and Statistician in Forestry Commission. It is chaired by one of Natural England's Deputy Chief Scientists. When the Project Board was first set it, it's agreed role and purpose was to:

- provide oversight and support to the Project Team;
- ensure the project is delivered to an appropriate scale, a quality product is delivered and that we get the most out of the outputs from the survey;
- play a vital role in making hard decisions and managing competing demands on the survey; and
- play a role in managing opportunities as well as risks.

5.38 The role and purpose of the Project Board should continue as agreed at the start of the project and in addition they should also have a role of identifying opportunities (not just managing) and be responsible for showcasing MENE in their area of work to help in raising awareness and

understanding of how MENE could benefit their organisation. The project board membership should include people that can influence and steer the direction of MENE and these need to be people in leadership roles, as well as including a selection of users of MENE to provide direction on what is/isn't possible with MENE which includes NE, Defra and FC statisticians.

Recommendation 11 – review project board membership.

- 5.39 The scope of the MENE review also posed the question about where MENE should sit within Natural England. Currently, MENE is delivered from the Evidence function, where the project management, project support, geographic information and statistician resource is located. The main users of MENE are from other parts of the organisation, primarily colleagues who sit within the current Access & Engagement function.
- 5.40 The project needs to have a clearer governance structure in place to lead MENE into the future. Competing priorities between different functions and limited resources are meaning that the direction of where the project is going and who owns the project is fuzzy. This needs to be set out clearer going forward.
- 5.41 Natural England is currently going through an organisational structure so this is a good opportunity to take stock of the vision for MENE and consider where it is best managed from within the new teams. In considering the options going forward, it's important to also think about what the role is of the new evidence team and what the role is of the new Access & Recreation team. There will also need to be an element of compromise and flexibility of resources in coming to a decision around this. To help, a review of two options and the associated benefits and risks have been set out in the table below. The two options are: continue to deliver from within the Evidence team or deliver from a delivery focused team (Access & Recreation).

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>MENE is managed by Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Delivered centrally through Integrated Monitoring Programme ❖ Statistical and analytical skills sit within Evidence ❖ Communicated well through the Evidence programme ❖ Overview of all work areas for everyone to access MENE • Disadvantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Resources in Evidence used for BAU products, rather than on innovation and development ❖ Competing priorities between suppliers and users ❖ Lack of communication and feedback between users and project team – limits development in future ❖ Reduced knowledge of key contacts | <p>MENE is managed by delivery team (Access & Recreation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Have better links with partners and can maximise existing partnerships to communicate MENE and consider future funding opportunities ❖ Clear understanding of how MENE is used in sector which could benefit promotion of MENE • Disadvantages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Statistical and analytical skills in Evidence so need clear roles and responsibilities to ensure good links and access to skills ❖ MENE used wider than just Access & Recreation so need to ensure development also incorporates other areas of work |
|--|--|

Recommendation 12 – review governance of project and consider options for delivering MENE in Natural England new team structures.

MENE 3 – 5 year plan

- 5.42 In thinking about the future of MENE over the next 3 to 5 years, it's first important to set out and agree a vision for what it is that you want MENE to achieve in the future. This will help in measuring what success is and defining what the project team does to make this happen. For example one of the objectives is that:

'MENE is embedded as a key evidence base in Government policy and in making national and local decisions to improve the quality of our natural environment.'

- 5.43 The Project Board requested in the scope of the review that a 3 to 5 year plan is set out. This has been difficult to pull together as it is very much dependent on the decisions of the Project Board on the vision for MENE and recommendations they wish to take forward, so this should evolve after this review. But for a starter, the timeline below sets out areas to focus on over the next few years, taking into account recommendations from the review.

November 2013 – March 2014

- **Project Board** to agree on the recommendations of review to take forward. To be discussed as soon as is possible, in line with the designing of the structure and planning of the 2014/15 Evidence Programme.
- **Project Board** to agree on a vision for MENE.
- **Project Board** to agree the resources required to deliver MENE in 2014/15. The project team must have defined roles and responsibilities as set out in review.
- **Project Board** to begin discussions around budgets – is there scope for more equal share of funding between Natural England, Defra and Forestry Commission?

Year 1 (2014/15)

- **Project team** - prioritise communications – develop case studies to showcase how MENE is used and develop training videos to help 'self-help culture'.
- **Project team** - Set up network of MENE knowledge champions.
- **Project team** - Continue to review the number of requests and self-help culture after launch of Instant Atlas – has the number of requests increased / decreased, is there still scope for developing a charging service?
- **Project team** - Review the quarterly reporting – how many people view the reports versus time taken to write them. How much value is added, would six monthly reports be enough?
- **Project team** - Work with procurement to include a full cost recovery charge for additional questions.
- **Project team** - develop partnership plan and begin delivery to seek wider investment. Priority approach, taking three organisations each year such as National Trust, Environment Agency and BIG Lottery in year 1.

Year 2 (2015/16)

- **Project Board** - review Year 1 progress – have we developed a greater self-help culture, is there scope to charge for analysis services? Do we need quarterly reporting? Have we raised awareness and understanding of MENE through increased communications focusing on case studies and showcasing the benefits of MENE? Is there more that needs to be done?
- **Project Board** - review the frequency of the survey – can the survey be delivered every 2 years?
- **Project team** - research alternative methods of delivering the survey, such as online.

- **Project team** - continue delivery of partnership plan to seek wider investment. Review progress of year 1 – have we gained wider contributions to running the survey?

Year 3 to 5 (2016 - 2018)

- **Project Board** - consider who should own and run MENE. Could MENE be delivered by research / evidence body? Could MENE be owned by Defra?

Appendix 1 Scope of review

Context

MENE was initiated at the end of 2009 with its original purpose being to provide trend and volumetric data on visits to the Natural Environment and to provide data about the potential link between visit patterns and 'engagement'. The MENE Project Board considered a discussion paper (see Appendix 1a) outlining the options for the strategic re-positioning of MENE on 7th May 2013 when a unanimous commitment to the continuation of MENE was reaffirmed. The MENE Project Board requested a refreshed and re-focused MENE Review scoping paper that brought out the key issues the Review needed to address by the end of September 2013 in order to feed into the next Corporate Planning round.

Aim of a review: To confirm the current value of MENE to Natural England, its partners and Government, consider its future relevance from a broader policy perspective across Defra and more widely, and clarify the necessary actions that need to be taken (by the end of Q2) that will secure the future of the Survey.

Strategic re-positioning

MENE provides evidence of public engagement with the natural environment and is already being well used providing an important cross departmental evidence base that helped to underpin our approach to improve engagement with the natural environment across England (see Appendix 1a). The Project Board endorsed the need to consider a longer term strategic re-positioning of MENE and develop a 3-5 year vision/plan to make this happen (The MENE Review). This review should highlight the ongoing value of the Survey within the Defra Evidence Programme, across Government and also to Natural England and its partners. In spite of the ongoing budget and staff pressures Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission have confirmed their commitment to MENE.

Key elements that we would seek to clarify during the MENE Review

The MENE Project Board would like to see the formation of a MENE Review task and finish group to undertake the following:

- Examine the current extent (breadth and depth) of use of MENE including evidence of impact on policy.
- Consider current and future policy imperatives across Defra and wider government network.
- Undertake an analysis of the component parts of the MENE survey to identify potential opportunities to secure additional support.

Key Questions:

The questions that we feel we must be in a better position to answer by the end of the review include:

- Improved Customer Service

How can we improve the product and service for our customers whilst developing a greater self-help culture?

- Use of MENE

Can we make changes to the MENE core survey without losing comparability and decreasing the value of the survey as a whole? Options include:

- Continue with the core focussed survey that provides a long-term annual dataset (no change)
- Continue with a core focussed survey that provides a long-term data set but less frequent survey (for example, every 3 years)
- Reduce questions and focus on core longitudinal data on annual basis
- One of options above plus additional ad hoc questions to better address extant policy needs.

- Communication and resourcing

How can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely to gain increased support from partners both in terms of acting as champions for the survey as well as maximising the potential for raising external contributions thereby securing future continuation?

Resourcing

The Project Board felt that a full review as outlined in the discussion paper (see Appendix 1a) would be too ambitious and could not realistically be achieved by the refreshed deadline of the end of October. We have sought support from Natural England's Leadership Programme to secure resources to lead the task and finish group. It has now been confirmed that Gemma Smith will lead the review.

Recommendations and mechanisms for delivering MENE review

| Task | Detail | Mechanism | Timescale |
|--|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Secure Staff resource for MENE Review | Assess and secure MENE review resourcing requirement – from Leadership Group and PB members Agree Tasks | Task and finish group | June 2013 |
| Establish Task and finish group | Develop project plan and assign tasks to individuals within the Task and finish group | Task and finish group | July 2013 |
| Outline new purpose of MENE and the Review | Refresh ToR | Task and finish group | July 2013 |
| Phase 1 – Evidence Gathering | Assess the current value of MENE. Refer to Customer Survey, review of ad hoc queries key internal and external contacts etc. Examine the current extent (breadth and depth) of use of MENE including evidence of impact on policy. Consider current and future policy imperatives across Defra and wider government network. Undertake an analysis of the component parts of the MENE survey to identify potential opportunities to secure additional support. | Task and finish group | July / August / Sept 2013 |

Table continued...

| Task | Detail | Mechanism | Timescale |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| | <p>Is there sufficient partner support to ensure the necessary resource commitment required to deliver a more strategic and sustainable 3-5 year proposal for MENE?</p> <p>How can we maximise income potential?</p> <p>How can we become better at promoting the true value of MENE to secure future continuation, funding and resourcing?</p> <p>Improved Customer Service. How can we improve the product and service for our customers and develop a greater self-help culture?</p> <p>Communication. How can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely to gain increased buy in from partners both in terms of resources and also to act as champions of the survey?</p> | | |
| Phase 2 - Analyse results | Analyse and draw conclusions on phase 1 activities to produce a 3-5 year plan for MENE (to include Comms and Partnership Plan) | Task and finish group | Early October |
| Sign off | Present Outputs from MENE Review and agree next steps | MENE Project Board | Late October / early November |

Appendix 1a - Strategic re-positioning of MENE (presented to MENE Project Board 06/05/2013)

PART I

Context

MENE was initiated at the end of 2009 with its original purpose being to provide trend and volumetric data on visits to the Natural Environment and to provide data about the potential link between visit patterns and 'engagement'. The latter of these has risen in importance post NEWP though MENE's contribution to this is not always widely recognised. Nevertheless, MENE is now increasingly chosen as the source of data on public's engagement with the outdoors, and is gaining increased political interest (see **Part II - How has MENE demonstrated its effectiveness/relevance so far**), as well as contributing valuable evidence for Natural England's statutory work that is outlined in Part II of this paper. After four years, it's now a good time to review the scope of MENE and the need to reflect on the rolling value of MENE within the Defra Evidence Programme. This will also help us to consider the options for the future to include assessing its value to Natural England, its partners and across Government. There is a need for a strategic re-positioning of MENE and development of a 3-5 year vision/plan. **Part I - Key questions that we would seek to clarify during the 13/14 review** sets out a summary of questions that we need the MENE Project Board to consider and **Part I - Recommendations and mechanisms for delivering 13/14 review** some recommendations and mechanisms for undertaking a review in 13/14. Part II provides more detail to help the Project Board to consider the review options.

Aim of a review: To assess the current value of MENE to Natural England, it's partners and Government and its future scope.

Key questions that we would seek to clarify during the 13/14 review

We ask the MENE Project Board to consider the key questions below (that are informed from the narrative contained within Part II of this paper) and provide their recommendations for the proposed 13/14 MENE review.

Strategic re-positioning

MENE provides evidence of public engagement with the natural environment and is already being well used (see Part II - **How has MENE demonstrated its effectiveness/relevance so far**). What is the future potential for the MENE survey and data?

Is the MENE survey an important cross departmental evidence base that helps to underpin our approach to improve engagement with, quality, and increase the value of the natural environment across England or a 'nice to have'?

Do we want MENE to evolve into a collaborative monitoring project or are we selling a high quality, high value and robust piece of evidence?

Do we still need MENE and all of its current elements and what are the risks of not continuing with MENE?

Funding and resourcing considerations

This discussion paper also raises important issues and begins to outline the necessary steps (if it is recommended MENE is developed) during the 13/14 review. This is ambitious and we need to assess how much staff resource is needed and how it will be secured?

Is there sufficient partner support to ensure the necessary resource commitment required to deliver a more strategic and sustainable 3-5 year proposal for MENE?

Can we maximise income potential or even obtain full cost recovery for MENE?

Can we become better at promoting the true value of MENE and reduce the risks to future continuation, funding and resourcing?

Improved customer service

Can we improve the product and service for our customers and develop a greater self-help culture?

Communication

Can we articulate the benefits of MENE more widely to gain increased buy in from partners both in terms of resources and also to act as champions of the survey?

Making changes to the MENE core survey has the potential to cause ‘scope drift’. If we are not careful we could find ourselves in a position where annual MENE data loses comparability which will decrease the value of the survey as a whole. The review therefore needs to evaluate the following:

- Do we need to have a core focused survey that provides a long-term annual data set? (no change)
- Do we need a core focused survey that provides a long-term data set but less frequent survey? (for example, every 3 years)
- Do we need a core focused survey that provides a long-term data set and can we bolt on add-on surveys as appropriate that are better structured to address extant policy needs?

Recommendations and mechanisms for delivering 13/14 review

| Task | Detail | Mechanism | Timescale |
|--|---|-----------------------|-----------|
| Assess value of MENE | Customer questionnaire, review of adhoc queries etc | Task and finish group | Q1 |
| Outline new purpose of MENE and the Review | Refresh ToR | Task and finish group | Q1 |
| Secure Staff resource for MENE Review | Assess and secure MENE review resourcing requirement | Task and finish group | Q1 |
| Phase 1 Scoping | where we are at the moment where to do we need to position MENE what it is we want to know and how has this changed | Task and finish group | Q2 |

Table continued...

| Task | Detail | Mechanism | Timescale |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------|
| | <p>who is benefitting from MENE at the moment and who downloads reports</p> <p>how organisations are using the data, what difference has it made</p> <p>what their needs are going forward and if there is potential to meet these</p> <p>whether there is a need to review the core survey</p> <p>the shape and frequency of future reports and who should take a lead on developing</p> <p>what we want going forwards</p> | | |
| Sign off phase 1 scoping | Collate and present results of scoping exercise | MENE Project Board | Q2 |
| Phase 1 Stakeholder Workshop | Obtain input from partners and stakeholders stemming from the findings of phase 1 scoping exercise | Stakeholder workshops | Q3 |
| Sign off Phase 1 | Collate and present results of phase 1 stakeholder workshop | MENE Project Board | Q3 |
| Phase 2 Analyse results | Produce 3-5 year plan for MENE if appropriate (to include Comms and Partnership Plan) | Task and finish group | Q4 |
| Sign off Phase 2 | Present 3-5 year proposals for MENE | MENE Project Board | Q4 |

PART II

How has MENE demonstrated its effectiveness/relevance so far?

MENE provides evidence of public engagement with the natural environment and is already being well used. Examples of this are outlined below.

Within Government and the environmental sector, the data from MENE is being used to evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions on access and green infrastructure. It is also being used to shape future policy on realising the benefits of access to the countryside and greenspace, in terms of promoting health and wellbeing; supporting local economies and encouraging environmentally sustainable behaviours.

Evidence from MENE was cited in the NEWP, forming part of the evidence base to justify our approach to improve the quality, and increase the value of the natural environment across England.

The National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) used the MENE data to help develop an economic valuation approach that could estimate visitor numbers and values from additional recreational opportunities. In the future it may be possible to use this to develop a tool which can be used to estimate visitor numbers and values for a range of interventions from a national, to local level. MENE is also now providing data on 'cultural services' for NEA 2. NEAFO is using MENE to provide recreational values of different land use scenarios. It is worth highlighting the reason MENE is so valuable for economic valuation is that it is the only survey that provides enough detail on location of visit and where travelled from, that enables these methods to be used. The detailed spatial information collected enables more accurate economic valuations where impacts are location-specific as well as enabling data to be presented powerfully by mapping it against other environmental goods and services.

MENE is the evidence source for the Biodiversity 2020 indicator on public engagement with the Natural Environment, and is likely to be the major source of evidence for taking forward the Biodiversity 2020 outcome on increasing the number of people engaged with biodiversity, aware of its value and taking positive action. It is also being used to inform the set of NEWP indicators, which are currently in the process of being finalised, and due for first publication later in 2013.

MENE data is also used by the Department of Health (at Defra's recommendation) to inform the Public Health Outcomes Framework (Access for Health).

In July 2012, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, in its inquiry into the Natural Environment White Paper, made recommendations for new targets on public engagement with nature. The government response did not accept the need for a target but agreed that it is important that we are able to assess whether the activity to engage people with the natural environment is delivering positive outcomes and pointed to the ongoing development of the Biodiversity of NEWP indicator sets. As noted above, these rely on MENE.

Natural England are also working with Department for Education to assess the usability of MENE data for a children's indicator.

MENE is also the data source for:

- Office for National Statistics wellbeing indicator.
- Nature Improvement Area indicators.
- FC England woodland visits indicator.
- The UK Environmental Observation Framework as part of Living with Environmental Change Research Council work.

Options for going forward

MENE is being well used and is widely respected and Natural England has always sold the benefits of the survey on the basis that there was a need for reliable trend data. However, we have never actively promoted MENE as long-standing survey, even though Natural England did originally set out to provide continuous long term data. Continued budget restrictions have meant that the future of the survey has been questioned every year, making it increasingly difficult to secure partner buy-in. Alongside this it has always been unclear whether MENE has been seen by Natural England and partner organisations as a 'nice to have' and many of the underlying issues alluded to in this paper could be seen to stem from a lack of consistent commitment to the survey. Now that MENE is becoming more longstanding there is an opportunity to highlight its true value. However we also need clarification on whether we are fully committed to the continuation of the survey into the future. Some of the issues and options for going forward are outlined below.

There is an opportunity to embed MENE as a key evidence base across other areas of Government Policy. However with current staff and financial pressures there is clearly a forward resourcing issue in doing so.

There is a need to articulate the benefits of MENE more widely in order to gain increased buy in from partners both in terms of resources and also to act as champions of the survey. However we also need to take a pragmatic approach as there is a limit to how widely MENE can be 'sold'. Simply put; MENE was never designed to be a panacea for data on outdoor engagement. Primarily it was designed as a national survey of national and regional trends. Even with nearly four years fieldwork completed we can only provide Upper Tier Local Authority level data on most questions. In addition our ability to report against certain designated landscapes such as AONBs, NPs, NIAs etc, is limited. We need to manage expectations of partners and be honest about what they can expect in return for investment.

In order to fully understand the different components necessary to undertake this strategic re-positioning we need clarification on the product we trying to sell. Do we want MENE to continue and should it evolve into a collaborative monitoring project or are we just 'selling' a high quality, high value and robust piece of evidence?

The time is right to review the options for the core survey, its continuation, frequency and future requirements. If it is to continue we need to develop a forward looking 3 – 5 year plan; which would be the main output from the work during 13/14. However it is difficult to see how this work can be successfully completed within the existing financial constraints we face and a decreasing Natural England staff commitment to MENE.

What are the necessary components of a MENE review?

In order to fully consider the re-positioning of MENE we need to understand the following:

- a) where are we at the moment;
- b) where we need to position MENE;
- c) what it is we want to know and how has this changed (if it has) from the original inception of MENE;
- d) who is benefitting from MENE at the moment and who downloads reports;
- e) how organisations are using the data, what difference has it made;
- f) what their needs are going forward and if there is potential to meet these;
- g) whether there is a need to review the core survey;
- h) the shape and frequency of future reports and who should take a lead on developing them;
and
- i) what we want going forwards (particularly in relation to securing partner buy in and funding).

The benefits of strategic re-positioning of MENE

There is an opportunity to move MENE into a more visible and strategic place. However once again the question is raised on the necessary resources required to undertake this work. To enable this to happen we need to do the following:

- a) Outline new purpose of MENE, the Project Board and the Review and agree new Terms of Reference that adequately reflect our refreshed positioning and wider representation of partners (if appropriate).
- b) Explore the opportunities in advance, engage with other departments and partners; and (if appropriate) effectively moving the survey from a reactive to proactive model.
- c) Consider the policy and indicator opportunities and (if appropriate) start to recognise MENE as a tool and deploy it more proactively.
- d) Develop our thinking around a strategic shift and the potential for stronger financial foundations.

A forward look for funding and resources

If the decision is made to continue with MENE there is an opportunity to revisit and review the way MENE is resourced in the future with some of the potential components outlined below.

As Natural England's staff resource decreases there is potential for Contractors to undertake increased analysis. Alternative analysis delivery models need to be investigated and costed to ascertain if efficiencies can be made by contracting work out instead of doing this in house.

Revising thinking around funding. Rather than just covering costs of additional questions there is a need to consider how we can maximise income potential or even obtain full cost recovery. We must bear in mind that adding additional questions takes a considerable amount of staff time as it involves amendment to contracts and MoAs drawn up and agreed via the existing MENE contract.

Careful thought needs to be given to any 'extra value products' derived from MENE and ensuring increased funding potential is built into the revised model. At the moment the provision of basic data is free, but there is scope to charge.

We have already begun to explore the potential commercialisation of MENE (through discussions started by Access and Engagement) but we need to build on this work and if appropriate agree a way forward; however there are issues with this course of action that are outlined below:

- Primarily, MENE is designated as official statistics, so there is limited scope to charge under the Code of Practice.
- In addition, the introduction of Instant Atlas should enable the vast amount of analysis to be done for free by the customer anyway.
- We may find ourselves in a situation where the paying customer competes with internal customers so where should our priorities lie?
- We would need considerable additional staff resource in order to provide a reliable service for the paying customer and where would this come from?
- The implications of reduced staff resource within Natural England means that we can only cover core reporting and any additional requirement would be problematic to deliver. Therefore there is a need to investigate the shift of responsibility for costs to individual projects and to ensure that analysis and quality assurance of MENE data is built into projects from the outset. An example where this has already been put into practice is for the Children's Indicator work. The costs for statistical analysis are being included in the costing of the project so brigading core resource gains to central projects.
- Securing new software (Instant Atlas) for MENE data will enable end users the freedom to visualise the data as they please. When up and running this will result in a staff resource saving though initially we will need to support this transition.

Improving customer service

An additional but important element of any MENE review is considering how we can improve the product and service for our customers. This does not necessarily mean doing all the work ourselves but if MENE is to continue it will require initial input for the creation and support of a transition to a self-help culture.

Firstly we need to ascertain how useful MENE data has been to all stakeholders and if appropriate consider a smarter approach for the presentation of the survey and results for the future.

Monitor the download of reports and couple this with the development of a more robust and proactive customer feedback process.

Develop a more proactive customer service. We do have a user engagement survey but we need to assess how we would improve and build on this.

Analyse the results of the recent MENE workshop to provide the necessary training and support mechanisms required to up-skill Natural England staff. This would reduce the demand for the ad hoc statistical analysis service we have been offering to date enabling end users to interpret and analyse MENE stats for themselves. However, there is a question as to how far we can expect staff to self-serve. There may need to be some QA of statistics and also how these are interpreted and used.

Arrange a workshop with customers/stakeholders to find out what they want from MENE for the future (and if they do want MENE to continue) and also to explore the online 'self-help option' outlined above for external partners.

Communication

Outlined above was a need to articulate the benefits of MENE more widely in order to gain increased buy in from partners both in terms of resources and also to act as champions of the survey. Even within Defra and the FC there is an acknowledgement that MENE is not well known or understood and there is a need to raise awareness and the high level profile of MENE. Part of the solution could be through the development and implementation of a partnership and communications plan which would be a useful delivery tool to help raise the high level profile of MENE.

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION TEXT

Natural England is undertaking a review of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. The review seeks to:

- better understand how MENE is used by our customers and partners;
- assess the impact of MENE on different sectors; and
- understand future requirements of the survey.

The review will run until late October, with the outcomes published on the Natural England website in November.

As a customer of MENE or lead partner in delivering the survey, we are seeking your input to this review. We would like to capture your use and views of MENE and to do this we have designed a short questionnaire. All responses will be treated in confidence, and comments will not be attributed to particular individuals.

The closing date for responses is the **13 September 2013**.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

QUESTIONS

Question type in green (* for all questions where an answer is required – Q1-4)

- 1) Name **Text box ***
- 2) What organisation do you work for? **Text box ***
- 3) Which of the following sectors do you work in? **Multiple choice – only one answer***
 - a) National government/government agency
 - b) Non-governmental organisation
 - c) Local government
 - d) Academic / Research community
 - e) Business / Consultancy
 - f) Voluntary / Charitable
 - g) Other (please specify)
- 4) What is your main area of work? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers***
 - a) Recreation
 - b) Urban greenspace management
 - c) Countryside management
 - d) Rural policy
 - e) Biodiversity and ecosystems
 - f) Evidence and scientific research
 - g) Tourism
 - h) Health and wellbeing
 - i) Other (please specify)

- 5) Which of the following MENE reports and products have you used to inform your work? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers**
- a) MENE monthly reports
 - b) MENE annual reports
 - c) MENE technical report
 - d) MENE spatial report
 - e) On-line data viewer
 - f) MENE thematic reports (for example 'Attitudes towards the Natural Environment', or 'Visits with children', or 'Access to the natural environment between social groups within the adult English population')
 - g) I haven't used any MENE reports or products
 - h) Other (please specify)
- 6) How often do you use MENE to inform your work (for example use data from the online viewer or from a report)? **Multiple choice – only one answer – skip logic for option f**
- a) At least once a week
 - b) At least once a month
 - c) Several times a year
 - d) About once a year
 - e) Less than once a year
 - f) Never
- 7) MENE data is available at various geographical scales. Which of the following do you use in your work? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers**
- a) England-wide data
 - b) Regional data
 - c) Upper tier local authority level data (County councils/unitary authorities/London boroughs/metropolitan boroughs)
 - d) Other (please specify)
- 8) What do you use MENE for? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers**
- a) To obtain latest facts and figures to support reports/presentations
 - b) To obtain trend data to support and inform policy or local strategies
 - c) For research/academic purposes
 - d) For general awareness/interest
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 9) What impact has MENE had on your work and organisation?
- By 'impact' we mean what has changed as a result of using MENE; this will help us understand the difference it has made to your work and/or organisation.
- For example: changed/informed the direction of future/existing policy; changed/informed the delivery of local services; informed a local project/funding bid; used in academic research. **Text box.**
- 10) Do you think MENE is used as widely as it could be across your organisation? **Multiple choice – only one answer – Skip logic – if answered Yes go to Q12.**
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know

- 11) What do you think prevents MENE from being used more widely across your organisation? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers**
- a) Lack of awareness of MENE data
 - b) Lack of understanding of the range of data in MENE
 - c) Lack of understanding about how MENE data can be used and applied to work
 - d) Problems getting access to MENE data
 - e) Concerns that MENE data is not sufficiently robust
 - f) MENE data is currently not provided at the geographical scale required
 - g) Lack of interest in using MENE data
 - h) Lack of capacity, time or skills to use MENE data
 - i) Other (please specify)
- 12) Have you any ideas about how you and your organisation could use MENE in the future? For example, to support specific areas of work or policy where it is not currently used. **Text box**
- 13) Is there anything else you would like to see from MENE in the future? (Select all that apply) **Multiple choice – multiple answers**
- a) Self-service to create bespoke maps and reports
 - b) Training
 - c) More reports on specific themes
 - d) Additional cuts of data to different spatial scales (for example, more local level data)
 - e) Additional/alternative questions (Please comment)
 - f) Other (please specify)
- 14) How important is the continuation of MENE to you and your organisation? **Single choice – only one answer**
- a) Very important
 - b) Fairly Important
 - c) Not very important
 - d) Not important at all
 - e) No opinion
- 15) Please use this space below if you wish to provide any additional comments to inform the MENE review. **Text box**
- 16) Please supply your email address below if you wish to receive notification when the MENE review is published. **Text box**

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix 3 Questionnaire results

The questionnaire results are in Excel format - please see the accompanying spreadsheet. Individual names have been removed.

Appendix 4 Follow up calls

AIM OF CALLS:

What is the overall aim of the review? (Key messages taken from last project board)

- We want to paint a picture of the aspiration of MENE.
- We need to record how partners are currently engaging in and investing in MENE.
- We need to look at how MENE is currently used, what those users' information requirements are and what they need from the survey.
- We want to consider what the future could look like for MENE and set out some options and recommendations. We will look at what the options are for future funding and delivering the survey (looking at the frequency of survey and core survey questions). We will also consider where MENE should be positioned in the new NE refresh, the resourcing requirements to deliver MENE, whether we need to change the products and customer service aspects of the survey, and look at ways the benefits of MENE could be articulated more widely.
- We need to have advocates for MENE and this review also want to look at how best to embed MENE in people who are in the key roles involved in partnerships.

What is the aim of the follow up calls?

- To contact a selection of people who are closely involved with MENE, heavy users of MENE or people who we have identified who could benefit from using MENE more (for example, Area Managers).
- A questionnaire has been sent out to customer and partners – this will provide a good indication as a whole on what MENE is currently used for, who uses MENE and it will also go some way to help us assess the impact of MENE and options for delivering the survey in the future.
- The questions in the follow up calls will capture more specific details, views and ideas from those who use MENE the most above the questions in the questionnaire. This will help us in our consideration of the options for the future of MENE.

What questions do we need to ask?

- TIER 1 QUESTIONS - to ask all
 - 1) Have you any ideas on how you / NE / partners could better utilise MENE in the future? Are there any specific groups you see could benefit from using MENE in the future?
 - 2) Do you have any ideas around how NE / you could become better at promoting the true value and articulating the benefits of MENE more widely?
 - 3) Funding – We want to consider how we can maximise income potential for MENE, including the possibility of charging for requests for specific analysis, incorporating core survey recovery costs into additional questions and considering how to increase partner funding to the core survey. Have you any ideas or things you would like to consider in this? Do you have any ideas on who our key partners could be to target for funding?
- TIER 2 QUESTIONS - to ask if appropriate
 - 4) Current use: Have you used MENE statistics in any specific presentations/reports? (Please ask the respondent to share links after the call if possible) Who is the audience for those outputs? How important was MENE to the outputs finding/recommendations?

- 5) Survey questions – We are exploring what is possible around making changes to the MENE survey in terms of changing the frequency of questions or tweaks of questions to make the data more useful. Do you have ideas or things you would like us to consider in this?

Appendix 5 Follow up calls summary

The following notes are a summary of the conversations and answers to the questions posed in the follow up calls.

Funding options

- More money from other people so that it's shared – consider potential to have a more equally way across Defra and NE.
- Don't do as much. 1 year collecting data, 1 year reporting. Risk of not doing it every year is that it's not included in the budget and we don't have a steady budget. Also indicator consideration to think about here. And essentially capturing less local level data.
- After 5 years of data – could you do 5 years and then cut down to every 2 years. Changing it this way wouldn't make too much difference to statistics used at the high level policy and decision making, but it would to collecting local level data.
- Running every 3 years and 3 times sampling every year would continue increasing the local level data, but don't have that forward look on budgets to secure this so risk around this not working.
- Visit England use an online survey (after extensive piloting) for their day visits survey, and the relative merits of face to face / telephone / online surveying – could this be an option for the future and consideration for reducing the costs of the survey by switching to a cheaper method using online.
- Success of funding would be to get more engagement with partners, then sell the evidence. Find out what they need and show the value MENE can add.

Where should MENE sit within NE?

- Access and Engagement are the primary users of the evidence.
- To what extent is evidence role delivering Business as Usual of the Evidence Programme? Or do we expect other parts of the organisation to deliver that and we don't deliver individual projects but provide budget? Such as some of the marine programme, Land Management programme and some L&B programmes. Is the Evidence function all about innovation and helping to develop new evidence projects, but once BAU as MENE is then we use resource to develop new projects and expect other parts of the business to take ownership of it.
- Need to have a clear governance. Historically this has always been sat within Evidence and difficulty with competing priorities between A&E and Evidence. Would be nice to have clear governance and ownership of the survey.

Areas of growth for future

- Health sector – discussions are just starting to take place with the health sector and this is a good opportunity to consider potential partner funding.
- Another growth area is the district level Local Authorities and people operating at that sort of scale as the level of MENE data is just opening up to that. First 3 years couldn't say much about District level, but now we can. Last year the PHOF 1.16 indicator was established and we have had significant amount of queries through the MENE mailbox from Local Authorities – biggest customer enquiries? MENE is a national data set to add national context to compare against local data this could be a growth area. A lot of people within Natural England focus on local areas, and you can't really get data at that level, so it doesn't support local delivery, and that is a problem.
- Valuable to NE and partners at landscape scale initiatives particularly as part of an integrated delivery model that encompasses landscape, biodiversity, access and engagement issues –

for example, helping to inform more integrated projects, useful for highlighting engagement with the natural environment close to where people live for GI projects, useful for people engaging with local partnerships, for example, NIAs, LNPs, LEPs - helping to inform their engagement with local economic partners.

- Promote widely in Defra through Defra statisticians and other bits of Government social science networks – need to make MENE relevant to them and show how it can help. Need to have Government saying this is a fantastic resource how can we pay for this, not just NE.
- When MENE was set up it was never supposed to be used at the local level, but for national policy. As 4 years of data has been collected – we can see the local level demands increasing and we need to consider this in our future plans to ensure we need user demands.

Project Resourcing

- Resource commitment to support analysis required for new markets. We need more time going into MENE and resources and people actively trying to push MENE forwards.
- Not much money available so need to look at allocating staff time to invest in sitting down and talking to partners and teasing out 'What could MENE do for you?' Need to prioritise partnerships and commission someone to do this talking to partners, in a more coordinated way, rather than ad-hoc as it is now. We can prioritise partners to speak to and ask those questions to come back and help inform how we could improve in the future. This will involve someone leading this work and talking to partners, with the help of statistician for technical experience (for example, knowing what limitations are of data, etc) and others who have links with different sectors.

Self Service

- Takes time and will still require statistician time to carry out analysis. Training NE staff to support statistician takes time (about a year) to get up to speed and develop skills in statistical analysis. Instant Atlas should help. Making it spatial will become more attractive and look at much more visual impact.
- Review Instant Atlas after 6 months before considering charging for service. Ensure details of types of additional requests coming up and responses are logged to consider if there is a demand on Steve's time. Aim is to reduce ad hoc analysis through having this service so measure success of this before considering next step.

Charging for service

- Principal of data being freely great. But there is enough demand and too much work for statistician to cope with – we need to factor in over heads for producing our work – facilities involved, not just statistician time, required to enable him to work.
- If did charge for service, need to ensure we have sufficient resource to cover logging requests, meeting customer service excellence standards, covering for staff when on leave (particularly statistician). Need to also have a prioritisation in place – internal vs charging request scenario. Puts us in direct competition with TNS and we would have to demonstrate we can put up a comparable service who would have the resources to do it. Also difficulty in providing estimated times and templates to cover each situation as the demands vary. Problems with implementing charging service now as reliant on one person. Would need a whole team setting up to deliver this – mechanism for collecting money, quality assurance, etc.

Charging for additional questions

- Recommendation to put this into the system to gain revenue to cover core recovery costs.

Potential partners to work closely with in the future:

- Department for Education
- Department for Health
- DCLG – how can we link this into the planning system – how far people travel to greenspace.
- National Trust
- English Heritage
- Universities
- LEPs
- Wildlife Trusts
- Canals & Rivers Trust
- Can we develop a partnership delivery model comprising of research bodies, funders and users to have a stronger integrated base to support MENE?
- Is it better owned by a research / evidence body?
- National Parks
- AONBs
- NIAs
- Living Landscapes
- Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) – lots of research councils sit on this .
- EA – multiple outcomes from a catchment would cover a range of topics including recreation and access. Has synergy's with projects like WFD, Bio2020,
- Public Health England could be a potential source of income for core data outcomes framework.
- Land Trust
- RSPB
- Woodland Trust

Survey questions

- Evidence gap around climate change questions repeated every couple of years to identify how people modify their behavior in response to climate change – for example, hot summers, floods storms, etc.
- Is there scope to adapt questions to help widen the use of them – for example, spend questions would be more useful if able to include a question about the proportion of spend that could be attributed to the outdoor visit.
- 3 years ago we reviewed the frequency of questions, but the savings were not amountable. Need to be realistic about what we lose against how much we could save?
- Only way to change things under Official Statistics would be to go through user engagement.
- Over the last 4 years we have learnt what questions have worked and have adapted the frequency of questions to suit. We shouldn't be afraid to change data if it's not being useful for the sake of comparability, but changing questions must be user led.

Communication

- Case study to demonstrate how MENE has contributed will help to make things more real to people.
- Need to make some more noise about MENE and show how useful it is to different groups.
- Potentially having people more aware will help make it easier to use and analyse – even for those in the know it is sometimes difficult to drill into data when you want to apply it for your uses.

- Challenge is the depth and showing how useful it can be. It's great that we are building a national dataset and overtime it will become increasing valued at the local level but we need to be stronger at providing information for different users – tailoring what we offer and need from an audience point of view to show the benefits that MENE can add. Need to make it relevant for people.
- Online data tool is great, but not very straightforward so consider refining a bit to make more user-friendly.
- Annual report is very long and you get the 'so what' type of questions. Could it be refined to be a shorter, more focused report – Infographics help with this.
- Can we have an area of the website that links to other uses of MENE – so people can see what's been done with it as well as potentially reducing duplication.
- Case studies.
- We don't spend enough on showcasing what it is that MENE does. We know it is good and people use it, but we don't formally record it so this makes it difficult to know where to go with it in the future. We need to promote it differently to how we have in the past to show that things can be produced and then used.
- Need to work more on the communications planning – drilling down examples for local areas to tell them specific info that you can get from MENE (for example, how many visitors to x local area).

MENE Champions / Ambassadors

- Base level advocates with support from high level to help explain why it's relevant for them.
- Champion for MENE at the Senior Level – Director / Exec?

Project Board

- Overall the Project Board role is to provide oversight and support to the Project Team. They have a role to play in managing the opportunities of MENE in the future, as well as the risk and they have a vital role in making hard decisions and in managing the competing demands on the survey.
- The Project Board needs to be mindful of:
 - a) ensuring the project is delivered to an appropriate scale;
 - b) we deliver a quality product; and
 - c) that we get the most of the outputs from the survey.
- The Project Board is responsible for providing the Project Manager with the necessary decisions for the project to proceed and overcome and problems.

Appendix 6 References

Natural England Evidence Group paper– Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: future of the survey beyond year three (December 2011).

Commercialisation Strategy for the MENE project paper (2010).

Natural England's Draft Strategic Direction (November 2013).

Natural Environment White Paper (December 2012).

Resource requirements for in-house MENE reporting: year four onwards paper (2011).

Bringing Ecosystem Services into Economic Decision-Making: Land Use in the United Kingdom, Ian J. Bateman (2013).



Natural England works for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas.

www.naturalengland.org.uk

© Natural England 2014