

Know Edge Ltd Case Study Defence Estates Rural Audit



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Defence Estates – Rural Environmental Data Audit



Summary

Defence Estates manages all Ministry of Defence land holdings in the UK and must conform to all relevant environmental legislation. There is an increasing need for environmental information for monitoring performance and for presenting results to management, government and the general public. This exercise looked in detail at the available data for four different rural MoD sites and made recommendations about the collection, management and dissemination of the information to meet Defence Estates' requirements.

Study

Defence Estates manages some 240,000 hectares of land in UK, with the majority of that in rural areas including training grounds, airfields, ranges and storage facilities. This land must be managed efficiently for the purposes of national defence but in line with government policy on the environment.

Integrated land management plans have been documented for some facilities but there was no overall picture of the information available, the detail within the plans or the degree to which they were monitored and updated. In particular there was concern that data available for monitoring was not being systematically collected or properly managed.

The audit took place over a three month period in 2002 and looked at four assorted sites across the country. Visits were made to the local management responsible for the bases, to central MoD and Defence Estate offices responsible for aspects of environmental management and to both local and national environmental and heritage bodies. Detailed assessment of conservation dossiers, local records and various map based datasets was made. It was found that some obvious data sources were being ignored, that some data was comprehensively collected and that most data storage and management was fragmented and often incompatible.

Recommendations were made to improve Defence Estates performance in monitoring and presenting environmental factors. These included the use of aerial photography, digital mapping and GIS which were already in use for other purposes and the base data for which is available to the organisation. Collaboration with outside bodies should be put on a more consistent basis and the methodologies of data collection standardised to coincide, wherever possible with the best outside practice. The adoption of key performance indicators where measurable parameters existed was strongly recommended.

