



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Capacity building in environmental accounts – a UK perspective

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# Central Framework

## Current state of play

- CF well-established within National Accounts framework since the 1990s
- Some accounts developed initially by the Ministry and then handed over, others initiated by an economist within the National Statistics Institute (NSI) and subsequently mainstreamed by a statistician
- Now routinely managed by compilers from other parts of National Accounts. Largely seen as production rather than development

# Central Framework - what has worked well

- ✓ Production line approach within the framework of the National Accounts
- ✓ Availability of training from Eurostat
- ✓ Connections with business and household surveys (although this could be exploited further)
- ✓ Familiarity with processes needed to systematise compilation definitely a plus
- ✓ Ministry involvement in the early stages helped to drive development

# Central Framework – what has not worked quite so well

- X Weak links with policy have inhibited development of extensions (remote location doesn't help)
- X Split of responsibility for environmental statistics and environmental accounts means that environmental accountants may have low familiarity with environmental data and environmental issues
- X Lack of a career path for environmental accountants
- X NSI may be less relaxed about use of 'softer' data sources (though this is changing in the economic sphere)

Question: Would exchanges help to provide more of a career path and better links with env. data/policies?

# Ecosystems accounts

## Current state of play

- Wide range of accounts under development
- Collaborative effort between Ministry and NSI
- Many new conceptual and methodological challenges
- Skill set demands are much wider – requires more inputs from economists, scientists, social scientists and Geographic Information experts as well as environmental accountants

# Ecosystems accounts – what is working (reasonably) well

- ✓ Collaboration:
  - Ministry provides the policy context and priorities; access to relevant data sets; access to specialist (science) skills and relevant research
  - NSI provides the statistical compilation skills – exploiting and reconciling different data sources, assessing quality etc.
- ✓ Economists in both organisations and outside are keen to be involved in the valuation discussions (though not always in agreement!)

# Ecosystems accounts – what is not working quite so well

- X Division of responsibilities not without problems (different cultures and different priorities)
- X Ministry tends to focus on specific policy applications, especially from spatially disaggregated data; NSI focuses on national level stats and indicators
- X Ministries seem to be more keen on valuation than NSIs (although in the UK ONS is unusual in its relaxed approach to valuation)
- X High dependence on a limited number of individuals and consultants

# Ecosystems accounts – capacity development challenges

- GIS applications currently contracted out - need to engage in-house capacity
- Social researchers (especially helpful for cultural services) not yet engaged
- Need to involve academic community more
  - deployment of MSc/PhD students to work in specific areas
  - mainstreaming accounting requirements into the research councils' agendas
- Continually losing expertise, as assistants move on to develop their careers

Question: Would it be useful to share expertise in specific habitat accounts? Could we work jointly on some accounts e.g. marine?