Partnerships & People

Countrywide Survey is supported by a partnership of government-funded bodies.

The Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (part of the Natural Environment Research Council) will carry out the Survey in England, Scotland and Wales; partners in Northern Ireland will carry out a linked survey there.

The Survey relies heavily on the goodwill of land owners and land managers across the UK, to allow surveyors onto their land.

The project is guided by a Steering Group, with members from each of the partnership bodies. There are also specialist groups providing advice in particular areas such as: soils, land cover mapping, fresh waters, landscape features and habitats, communications, statistics and reporting.

The preparations for Countryside Survey 2007 have involved consultation with many other stakeholders.

Delivery & Funding

Countrywide Survey is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council and a consortium of Government departments and agencies headed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The partnership contracts the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology to carry out the Field Survey and produce a Land Cover Map of the UK.

For more information please contact the Countryside Survey Project Office or visit the website:

www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk

Countryside Survey Project Office, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
Lancaster Environment Centre, Library Avenue, Bailrigg
Lancaster LA1 4AP - UK
T: 01524 595 811 E: countrysidesurvey@ceh.ac.uk

Countryside Survey is a unique and world-leading study of the natural resources of the UK’s countryside.

It helps us understand how and why the countryside is changing.

The findings will help to inform decisions on policies and plans that affect our countryside.

www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk
What is Countryside Survey?

Countryside Survey is a major audit of the natural resources of the British Countryside. Previous surveys took place in 1978, 1984, 1990 and 1998 (reported in 2000). The next Survey takes place in 2007 and will report in 2008. The Survey assesses habitat and landscape features, vegetation, water courses, soils and land cover using standardised scientific methods and analysis protocols. Together with quality assurance, this forms a robust and reliable evidence base. The Survey provides an internationally renowned series of data that enables us to track changes in terrestrial and freshwater habitats, and helps us to frame and evaluate countryside policy. Each time the Countryside Survey is carried out, the value of the time series data is increased, as is the scientific value, scope, and sophistication of the Survey. The survey has been designed to cover the UK and will also enable reporting at individual country level for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Aims of the Survey

Countryside Survey provides information to evaluate changes in our countryside. The Survey provides the evidence base used to support the development of countryside policy that will influence management decisions both now and in the future.

The Survey will:
- record and report on the stock, condition and change of natural resources - by providing information on land cover, terrestrial and freshwater habitats, landscape features and soils
- assess change in our countryside - by comparing what is found in 2007 with earlier surveys
- improve our understanding of how changes occur in natural resources - and the implications of these changes on ecosystem goods and services
- provide outputs including reports, data sets, analyses and analytical tools delivered via web, print and other channels - so that Countryside Survey data can be used and analysed alongside data from other projects

How will the findings of Countryside Survey be used?

The information collected will be used to:
- evaluate changes in the extent and distribution of broad habitats and some priority habitat types (e.g. Hedgerows, Arable Field Margins and Upland Heath)
- examine the relationships between different components of natural resources and the drivers of change, including policy interventions
- make a major contribution to the Government's reporting of biodiversity outcomes in 2010
- assess progress against target indicators in biodiversity strategies for the UK and constituent countries
- provide baseline data for assessment of, and adaptation to, climate change impacts
- improve scientific understanding of a range of issues in the countryside

A dedicated web gateway has been developed which will allow access to downloadable datasets and analyses.

Science and policy applications of Countryside Survey

- Biodiversity
- Natural Environment
- Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Stewardship
- Water Resources
- Soil Protection
- Sustainable Forestry
- Urban Development
- Air Quality
- Climate Change

Components of the Survey

There are two components of Countryside Survey: Land Cover Map and Field Survey:

The Land Cover Map:
- is a spatial database (GIS) of land cover and broad habitats at a 'field-by-field' resolution for the whole of the UK
- will be produced by combination of Earth Observation data, digital cartography, ground reference data and other information
- will provide data at a range of scales from local sites to the UK and will contribute to European land cover mapping

The Field Survey:
- involves sending sixteen teams, each of four surveyors, into the countryside to measure and record various features such as field boundaries and plant communities in a sample of 1km squares
- the squares are chosen so that a statistically robust sample of the countryside is obtained, representing the major habitat types in the UK
- the locations of the survey squares are confidential to avoid influencing management practices
- the number of squares surveyed has increased with each succeeding survey; in 2007 the survey will cover 629 squares
- the survey ensures the highest possible standards by using standardised field and laboratory protocols and quality assurance processes
- data is captured in the field using special tablet PCs and software, enabling faster and more efficient reporting of results

For more information on the last Field Survey, carried out in 2000, see www.cs2000.org.uk

www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk