

THE IMPACT OF SWEEP

How a new approach helped to co-create and embed environmental knowledge into policy and practice, benefitting the environment, economy and communities, in South West England and beyond.

The natural environment and the economy are two complex systems whose fate is bound together. Yet they have long been placed in opposition to each other.

The South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity – SWEEP – used multi-disciplinary research, expertise and evidence to place the environment at the heart of policy and business decision-making. This delivered economic and social benefits to South West England, whilst protecting and enhancing the region's abundant natural resources.

Four intersecting principles shaped SWEEP's unique approach.

- 1. Natural Capital Approach:** taking into account the value of the natural environment for people and the economy.
- 2. Whole-Systems Thinking:** recognising the need to work at larger spatial scales, across landscapes, river catchments, coastal zones and seascapes.
- 3. Specialist impact teams:** connecting academic experts with research users to accelerate the translation and co-creation of knowledge.
- 4. Place-based approach:** establishing the South West as an exemplar, nationally and internationally, for Natural Capital-led economic growth, social gains and environmental improvements.



One of the key benefits of SWEEP's work has been to keep the latest evidence and ideas at the forefront of our thinking. This is improving conversations, both on the ground and at senior level, fostering greater understanding about how best to bring together the many different, often fragmented, strands of work, and stakeholders, to deliver more effectively."

Rupert Lloyd, Healthy Places Project Coordinator, Public Health Dorset

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

38
Policies, legislation, regulations (or their implementation) informed

£115M
Partner investments influenced or informed

£35M
GVA and 327 FTE jobs supported by leveraged funding (to 2028)

159
Tools and services created

£25M
Cost savings to business and public purse

1 SWEEP outputs **underpinned the world's first Marine Natural Capital Plan** within the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, shaped new fisheries management plans for five threatened, commercially important species, and underpinned a trawling byelaw protecting 304 km² of coastal seabed.

2 Novel mapping approaches **helped Cornwall Council implement its Environmental Growth Strategy** to 2065, informed the location of development decisions worth billions of pounds and is helping to inform delivery of the £30m Forest for Cornwall.

3 SWEEP **co-created 12 innovative evidence-based nature and health resources**, and strengthened regional and national policy including, Cornwall Council's Social Prescribing Strategy, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership's strategic

policy development, and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's contribution to Somerset's new 6,140 hectare 'super' National Nature Reserve.

4 A new, accessible, scientifically-robust method was co-developed **enabling Local Authorities to demarcate Coastal Change Management Areas predicting future shoreline positions**, in response to climate change and sea level rise. This method was applied to 115km of Devon coastline and is informing planning decisions.

5 SWEEP's **Regional Development Resources (RDRes)**, designed for use by **Local Authorities** to evidence the benefits of the Natural Capital Approach for business cases and new policy initiatives, includes information about a range of SWEEP tools helping to detect habitat loss, map natural assets, forecast wave hazards, and value changes in land-use.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

- SWEEP demonstrated how multidisciplinary environmental science can underpin interventions that benefit both the economy and nature.
- The programme transformed the decision-making culture and capabilities of organisations in South West England, inspiring and shaping large-scale regional investments.
- The development of new, integrated and impact-focused ways of working between researchers and non-academic partners, unlocked the value of research to society, at scale.

SWEEP LEGACY

🔗 **A library of open-access tools and resources** are extending SWEEP's impact far beyond the South West, from Yorkshire and South Wales to South Africa and Australia.

For the full story of SWEEP, read our **🔗 impact summary report** and explore the SWEEP website: **🔗 www.sweep.ac.uk**



University of Exeter



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH



Plymouth Marine Laboratory



Natural Environment Research Council

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