

## Chapter Eight Information and Data – weaknesses in the evidence base

This is the first state of the local environment report of its kind to be compiled within Brighton & Hove and it is hoped that this will be developed further in the future to improve our local evidence base. There are weaknesses in local environmental evidence and elements are addressed below.

### General weaknesses:

- Some of the data and information we have drawn upon is old and therefore may not be a true snapshot of the current state of the environment. This is not a local issue and environmental data is often lagging.
- In some cases the data used within the report is limited or partial; this is especially the case when looking at trend data.
- Environmental data is resource intensive to collect and in many cases local data does not exist for key indicators of the environment (this is discussed in more detail below)
- In some cases, robust quantitative data about the environment simply does not, and may not ever, exist

### Specific gaps in evidence:

- **CO<sub>2</sub> emission data is lagged** and this makes it difficult to attribute interventions to changes. This is the national situation though.
- **The local picture of renewable energy generation and consumption is unclear.** There is no one source of information for renewable energy and this is probably because this technology is developing. With a clear steer in this direction locally and nationally supporting evidence needs to improve. The planning department at Brighton & Hove city council are improving their data collection methods to incorporate renewable energy generation.
- **Data to show linkages and relationships of the environment with the health and wellbeing of the population is weak.**

- **Data for construction and demolition waste across the city is missing.** Considering this accounts for approximately 60 percent of the total waste stream it is difficult to get accurate data because the local authority have very little control over this apart from through planning applications and site waste management plans. Little information exists for commercial and industrial waste also.
- **Information describing the condition of the countryside and specific habitats other than SSSI's is lacking.** The collection of this type of information is resource intensive and this is the reason what information we have is old. The condition of Local Wildlife Sites are being reviewed in 2011 which will provide updated figures but the issue still remains that resources are lacking to monitor this on an ongoing basis which is necessary in order to track improvements or declines.
- **Monitoring of particular species**– particular species can often be a good indicator of the quality of the surrounding environment. We do not have reliable monitoring information for this, only records.
- **The way in which farmland is managed is not a clear picture.** There is information available through Natural England and local knowledge but this dataset could be improved if we had accurate information relating to the Brighton & Hove farmed estate, leased or privately owned. This would be a useful data set for understanding the impact farming practices have on the surrounding environment.
- **Soil Quality is difficult to measure and often requires the use of proxy information.** Proxy data i.e. crop yields can be very difficult to interpret and were omitted from this report.
- **Sustainability and planning.** Much more useful information needs to be drawn out of the planning process, for example area of green walls and roof spaces, carbon reduction achieved in major developments via renewable energy and the percentage of new developments increasing important or sensitive habitats. The planning department at the council is improving data collection to track these sorts of things and this information will hopefully be available in the future.

- **Outlets selling local and/or organic produce.** There is a gap in intelligence regarding food and produce that is grown or reared 'locally' and what/where the end destination of this is.
- **There is limited data available for making the links between the economy and the environment.**