

Environmental Data Sharing Charter

[Short Introductory Paragraph to be inserted]

Key Principles

Organisations that sign up to this charter agree to the following key principles and adhere to guidance set out by WEISG:

- **Presumption to share**

In this context environmental information will focus on biodiversity but will also include geology, landscape, soils, water & air, historical/cultural, climate, noise, light, flooding, waste, access & recreation. Signatories will agree to share and publish any data that they are permitted to share that fits these criteria. Justification to restrict publishing or sharing should only be where signatories are legally required to restrict access through the Data Protection Act or by following WEISG agreed guidance on Environmental Information Regulation restrictions.

- **Timely submission of new data & update of published datasets**

Signatories will agree to submit data and update published datasets according to the timescales set out in WEISG guidance. The guidance will be developed to account for the needs of each sector or partner and in the context of end user requirements. *Timely submission and dissemination of data facilitates the implementation of the “collect once use many times” principle and allows decisions to be based on recent (or current) data.*

- **Submit data once to single appropriate custodian**

Data providers who sign up to this agreement agree to only submit data once to a single agreed data custodian. *This will help avoid data duplication and duplication of effort. A single custodian also gives users the confidence that they are accessing the correct and latest version of a dataset. The data custodian will then maintain and disseminate their collated records and datasets on behalf of the provider according to WEISG standards and practices.*

- **Adopt agreed model for data flow**

Signatories agree to follow the data flow models that will be agreed by WEISG for specific data types. *This will help avoid data duplication and duplication of effort. Agreed mechanisms and initiatives for sharing and publishing data types will be issued as WEISG guidance and updated as the charter is implemented.*

- **Acknowledge the source**

Signatories will always acknowledge the source of the recorder or the custodian of a dataset when publishing or sharing environmental data. *Acknowledgement recognizes the contribution of collector and custodian and helps the recipient to validate the data they receive.*

- **Users able to access all data through agreed routes**

Datasets will be shared between all relevant and approved initiatives or mechanisms from master copies. *This will enable users to access all relevant data through any one of the WEISG recommended initiatives or mechanisms as detailed in WEISG guidance.*

Developing Agreements Between Signatories to the Charter

The Charter has been drafted as a set of high level principles that the signatories will adhere to however, for the process to effectively free up data in the way that WEIF intended, there will need to be a more detailed document setting out a clear framework of behaviors and practices that underpins the higher level documents.

It is proposed that this could be achieved through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out the ground rules or a suite of WEISG guidance.

The MoU or guidance will therefore need to address the following issues:

- Need for a single master dataset and a way of identifying who holds and maintains it.
- Need to define the level of detail at which data is shared.
- Need to define the level of detail at which data is capture (set a minimum level)
- Roles and responsibilities in respect of data flow and management (from point of collection to point of use)
- Data completeness and accuracy (defining what signatories' agree to be a complete data entry)
- Methods of acknowledging the source and recording this (i.e. through metadata)
- Clarity about permissions
- The MoU will need to clearly define the role of the data custodian and approved practices within the framework that is being developed (for example data quality, provision of metadata, procedure for restricting access).
- Approved initiatives and mechanisms. Data Custodians will share biodiversity datasets through the NBN Gateway, LRCs and National Schemes and Societies as a minimum. Marine data will be shared and published through MEDIN.
- Clarity about timely submission and update: The needs of end users and the needs of the data providers will need to be matched in agreeing the appropriate timescale for each sector or organization. E.g. public, private and academic data providers may need to implement different timescales for publishing.