



Secondary data

Secondary data is existing information that has been gathered for some purpose outside the planning process. Obtaining Secondary data in practice normally means 'desk' or 'library' research. Information can be obtained from the data that is routinely collected by the planning organisation or from external sources. External data is gathered by other organisations either for their own use or for commercial use. General sources of external data are, for instance, various computerised databases, associations, other government agencies and different published sources such as libraries and newspapers. A computerised database can provide information on a wide range of topics, and lists of commercial databases are normally available in public libraries. Librarians can also be invaluable in the search for specific information for planning. Among the potentially useful data provided by government agencies are demographic data, employment data and special reports on industries. Other examples of Secondary data are historical information and the Census data. Associations may have valuable information about conservation or social aspects. To estimate the relevance of information for the planning process it is essential to know how and why the information was produced.

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Using Secondary data requires understanding of the methodologies of data collection and their limitations.

Equipment

- Standard office facilities are needed.
- A computer with a modem is required if databases are utilised.

Time

- Identifying relevant sources of information and going through the data may be very time-consuming.

Useful sources of information

Web

- Census Information Gateway: www.census.ac.uk
- General Register Office for Scotland: www.gro-scotland.gov.uk
- Office for National Statistics: www.statistics.gov.uk

Level of engagement

INFORMING: ★★

CONSULTING:

INVOLVING:

PARTNERSHIP:

Strengths

- It is usually relatively easy to acquire Secondary data.
- This is often an inexpensive source of information.

Weaknesses

- The vast amount of data available may make it difficult to identify information that is relevant for a particular occasion.
- Depending on the type of the data used, expert knowledge on the methodologies of data collection may be needed.

Training

- The Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research (Demographic Forecasting with POPGROUP): www.ccsr.ac.uk

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox