

A COORDINATED AGENDA FOR MARINE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS SCIENCE (CAMERAS) (2011-2016)

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Thank you for consulting BioSS on the above. Given that BioSS operates across the RERAD science portfolio, we have decided it is appropriate for us to make just a small number of strategic comments, as follows.

1. BioSS welcomes the inclusion of statistics in the list of science areas in the footnote to P5, and encourages this to be interpreted in the broad sense of mathematical science pertaining to variation, uncertainty and risk.
2. BioSS welcomes the recognition of the need for integration between the research institutes and universities. Brief recognitions of this nature have appeared before, both in documents focusing on the institutes and in documents focusing on the universities. Deeper consideration of how such integration could be facilitated at a strategic level would be timely: the current pooling initiatives taking place in the university sector provide an ideal opportunity for such integration, but for this to be effective will require a funding stream for the institutes to complement the additional funding being made available to the universities.
3. BioSS considers that all three headline themes are important. For the second headline theme, we would welcome a change of name to promote a stronger element of stewardship (which is clearly intended, c.f. P5, Vision, bullet 2): 'Enhancing and Benefiting from Scotland's Natural Assets' would seem appropriate. On the issue of national capability (physical and intellectual), this is a key strength of the research institute sector.
4. It is not clear to BioSS what is meant by the provision of 'tools' (P11, paragraph 1; P20, penultimate paragraph) or 'access to an integrated evidence base' (P9, bullet 3 of 5). If what is meant is creation of some sort of computer-based decision support or information systems, then the level of investment in creating these should not be underestimated, likewise the dangers of using such systems for purposes for which they were not designed. This is particularly pertinent if they are to be used to guide policy development to address new or emerging threats. The value of having established experts on hand to consider how broadly recognised principles can best be applied to new situations should never be underestimated.