

The British Geological Survey has published its Forward Strategy and called for comment, writes Executive Director John Ludden.

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During much of 2008 BGS has been developing its strategy for the next five years. The process has involved the whole organisation, from senior and middle management to geoscientists on the ground. There has also been external input. The strategy covers almost every aspect of BGS work – science, information and knowledge exchange, facilities and administration, and skills development. It aims to deliver the national geoscience capability component of NERC's strategy 'Next Generation Science for Planet Earth'.

Our strategy is innovative and ambitious. It requires us to lead, and to work in new ways across new boundaries with many partners, stakeholders and collaborators drawn from governments, industry and academia.

In the next five years we will focus our activities on key strategic issues related to energy and environmental change. We will address complex environmental decisions in the short and medium term, including carbon capture and storage, radioactive waste management, natural hazards, resource security and environmental protection.

We will deliver on six challenges. These are to

- acquire, interpret and enhance the UK geoscience knowledge base and make it accessible and interoperable
- improve the communication of geoscience knowledge so that it can better support policy and decision making by government and society
- apply a whole-systems approach to our science and improve understanding of the nature and potential impact of hazards and the sustainable use of resources
- understand, quantify and predict the response of the Earth's zone of human interaction to future environmental change
- enhance external partnerships to improve the quality, reach and impact of our science
increase the economic impact and relevance of our work.

The strategy continues a shift that has already begun - from a 'sheet by sheet' mapping programme to a 'geological modelling' approach. This will enable BGS to respond better to complex environmental issues that require real decisions in the short to medium-term. The strategy recognises the need for improved process and predictive modelling, and foresees significant effort in this area.

BGS is highly regarded for the way it has exploited digital technology to improve its workflows and delivery of information to users. Harnessing the potential of the World Wide Web for improved knowledge exchange is a priority; a key goal is to become a major 'hub' for geoscience data, information and knowledge exchange, to support research, policy, planning and regulation. A culture of commercial innovation and commissioned research will ensure that our knowledge is shared and exploited to deliver societal and economic benefits and impacts.

While maintaining a very active worldwide role in the geosciences in capacity-building, we will place particular emphasis on poverty alleviation, resource protection and natural hazard mitigation in Africa. Recognising common problems and borders, we will also develop strategic geoscience partnerships in the Europe's North Atlantic region.

In order to make a more effective contribution to the training and development of geoscientists, both in the UK and internationally, BGS will develop a 'GeoSchool' to provide practical and professional training across the range of its expertise in field mapping, applied geoscience research and information delivery.

The delivery of the BGS strategy will build significantly on the Survey's existing vision to be a world-leading centre for applied geoscience, and will also involve developing key state-of-the-art science and information facilities within BGS.

We will formally launch our strategy in early March at The Royal Society. However before that, and for the first time, BGS is also consulting with the geological community at large, and the wider public.

The Fellows of the Geological Society of London are one of BGS's most important stakeholder groups, and I urge you to take this opportunity to read the full document for yourselves and give us the benefit of your views.

Further information

Supporting John Ludden's piece is the full [BGS strategy 2009-2014: Applied Geoscience for our Changing Earth](#). This is available for download from www.bgs.ac.uk/strategy. Comments should be sent to strategyfeedback@bgs.ac.uk before 6 January 2009.

Editor's Note

Readers may wish to [read a comment piece](#) on the BGS strategy by former BGS scientist Mick Lee and Martin Culshaw