

17 Guildford Close Beverley HU17 8UL
United Kingdom

September 2025

GENERIC QUALITY MANAGEMENT POLICY

➤ CONTEXT - COMPANY BACKGROUND

- Steve Barnard is currently owner, Director, and sole employee Wolds Environmental Consulting Ltd.
- Wolds Environmental Consulting Ltd is a Micro-Business (an SME with less than ten employees) operating from a base in Beverley (East Yorkshire).

➤ FULFILMENT

In fulfilment of this Quality Management policy statement Wolds Environmental Consulting is committed to:

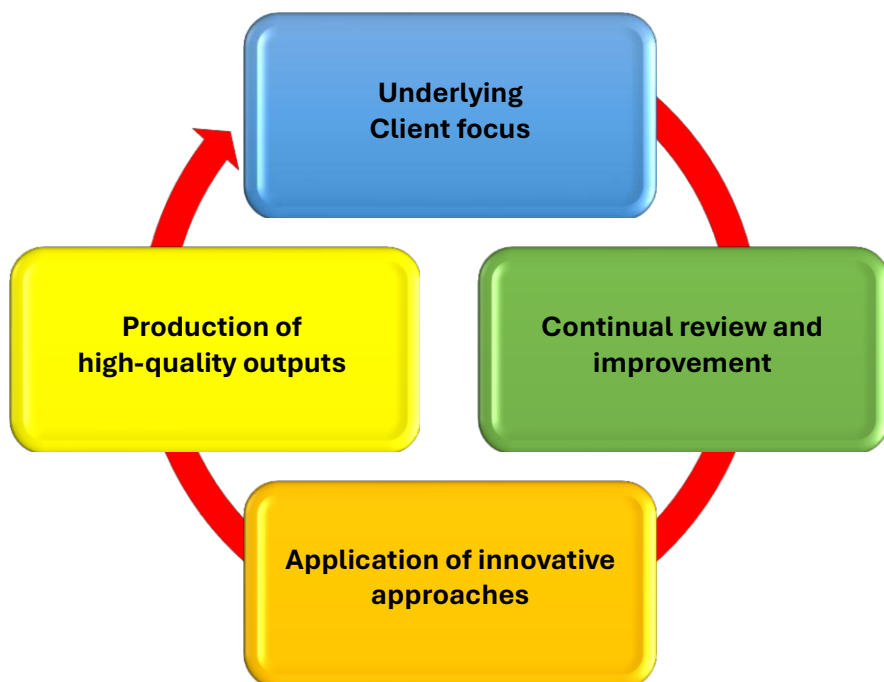
- working to prevent accidents and work-related ill-health;
- ensuring the safety of clients/customers/business associates at all times;
- ensuring potential risks arising from business activities are properly managed;
- maintaining safe and healthy working conditions, and adequate welfare facilities;
- using and maintaining the appropriate equipment needed for safe execution of each task, including Personal Protection Equipment where required;
- reviewing and, where appropriate, revising this policy on an annual basis.

➤ RELEVANT AIMS & OBJECTIVES FOR 2025-6

- to ensure H&S documentation is up to date; and
- to ensure that any specific required Risk Assessments are updated.

➤ **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Quality Management within Wolds Environmental Consulting is effectively a development of the fundamental 'do, plan, review' quality cycle, with an acknowledgement of the underlying importance of the role played by the client.



Wolds Environmental Consulting understands the importance of Quality Assurance (QA) in the provision of evidence that may be used to underpin decision-making in support of policy decisions. Of particular relevance across many projects (given the key role often played by supporting literature reviews) is consideration of bias, conflicting evidence and uncertainty, as well as quality assurance of expert opinion.

Specific quality assurance and standard management procedures that might be put in place are outlined below.

Standard procedures to ensure that evidence provided, and products delivered, are robust, "fit for purpose" (in scope and quality) and "right first time" include the following:

- Selection of appropriate expertise for project teams (where required);
- Clear communication and coordination between team members from the start of the project and throughout its development to ensure the project aims, objectives and approach are fully understood and met;
- Maintaining constant dialogue with the Client throughout the project through regular progress reports (via email and phone) and as and when needed to ensure the work is undertaken to the Client's satisfaction and to adjust/adapt based on the Client's feedback.
- Use of best scientific practice to undertake the work, also including assessment of quality and uncertainty associated with the evidence used to support interpretation and advice given;
- Internal review and quality check of deliverables before they are sent to the Client, as undertaken by the project lead and other senior scientists.

With particular regard to the process of collating, reviewing and interpreting evidence, this is carried out based on the principles established in CEBC (2009) which focus on relevance, objectivity and scientific method (quality) used, in order to maintain objectivity and scientific integrity, and to reduce biases:

- Articles which contain useful figures/tables/data are prioritised; articles not containing this information are considered provided that any statements made/conclusions drawn are objective and clearly justified.
- Biased and emotive articles, and studies that do not have a high degree of objectivity are avoided.
- Emphasis is, therefore, placed on articles containing primary details of methodologies and models for the assessment of marine biodiversity components and data with clear indication of method/model structure, data requirements, indicators used, and outputs.
- Articles must have clearly stated aims, objectives and hypotheses to be included.
- Articles are treated with caution or, possibly, excluded if the design, methods and data treatment are inappropriate/illogical.
- Studies which are not genuinely informative are excluded.
- Priority is given to peer reviewed scientific literature and Government Agency reports (written by qualified, practising scientists) but others can be considered provided that they meet the above criteria for objectivity, methodological robustness etc.
- Where 'grey' and unpublished literature is considered, these studies must meet the criteria for objectivity, method design and use of reliable literature in order for the conclusions of these studies to be considered in this review.
- Irrelevant titles are rejected. Broadly relevant titles can be considered but rejected if the article does not contain relevant information.
- Articles which do not directly relate to the question is rejected. Those which are indirectly related may be included if they meet all other criteria.

Search and selection processes are documented and traceable, from the establishment of a plan for searching, collation and review of third-party evidence, to the recording of the methods and criteria used during the process (e.g. search databases, terms used and their combinations and list of literature obtained), the assessment of the relevance and quality of the evidence collated and the correct citation of the selected literature in the report, using the Client's citation style where provided.

Where grey (non-peer reviewed) literature is used as a source, it will be assessed for objectivity, scientific robustness, etc. Also, and in order to avoid the loss of detail through a citation chain, the review work will focus (as far as possible) on primary work rather than reported reviews. Where used, reported reviews are treated objectively and care taken to avoid misinterpretation and the loss of detail or context surrounding the underlying science.

Findings derived from the review or assessment of multiple sources of evidence are assigned a level of confidence (high, medium, low) based on the type, amount, quality and consistency of evidence and the degree of agreement (for example, using the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) model, as embedded within the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) approach) (see **Table 1**, over).

Where applied, expert judgement to inform assessments will be in line best practice (e.g. guidance published in JNCC Report 490 (Barnard and Boyes, 2013¹) on the application of expert judgement, for which Steve Barnard was a co-author.

In terms of quality control it is also worth noting that, where assigned to a project, all members of a project team are generally experienced scientists with an academic research and consultancy background, and a track record in delivering high quality technical reports and in publishing the results of their research in peer review scientific journals.

¹ BARNARD, S. and BOYES, S.J. (2013) *Review of Case Studies and Recommendations for the Inclusion of Expert Judgement in Marine Biodiversity Status Assessments*, JNCC Report No.490. Report for JNCC by Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies (IECS), University of Hull.

Table 1: Example of confidence levels for findings sourced from review works

Confidence	Standard term	Criteria
High	Well established	High agreement between evidence and plenty of good to high quality relevant evidence available
Medium	Established but incomplete	High agreement but limited evidence
Low	Competing explanations	Low agreement albeit with plenty of evidence
Very low	Speculative	Low agreement based on limited evidence

Where associates are engaged to provide specific support on projects, such staff are usually senior level scientists who have each successfully managed projects, staff and complex workloads. Our standard procedure for consortium-based proposals requires that reports undergo internal QA review by all members of the project team, (where individuals focus on those sections delivered and reported by others rather than themselves). The project lead/manager (aided by the co-manager, where one is identified) has overall responsibility for ensuring that outputs are fit for purpose and that any advice provided is of appropriate quality and resolution.

Wolds Environmental Consulting operates under strict principles of independence and objectivity, providing best professional judgement in our reports. Feedback and critique from Clients are considered and incorporated into subsequent report revisions as appropriate.

Where applicable, independent contractors (associates) forming a consortium with Wolds Environmental Consulting have a general policy of, where possible, publishing research in peer reviewed journals (where client confidentiality is not an issue), with the aim of communicating work to a broader audience. In such case, we aim to ensure that Client collaborations are acknowledged in any such publications, with the inclusion of Clients as co-author(s) where appropriate.

The timely identification, management and mitigation of risks is part of the quality management system applied by Wolds Environmental Consulting. The general procedures for risk assessment and management are outlined in the next section.

➤ RISK ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT

Where appropriate, regular (internal) progress meetings will be held by project teams, allowing general progress against project milestones to be discussed and any implications for, or risks to, project deliverables (especially deadlines and scope) to be identified, reviewed and addressed. The timely identification of potential issues which could influence the ability to meet deadlines would result in immediate contact with the Client (or their nominated project contact). Such a rapid response enables Wolds Environmental Consulting to maintain a high quality of service. The project lead will provide progress updates to the Client on a mutually agreed schedule. The consortium of specialist scientists associated with Wolds Environmental Consulting have successfully worked together for many years, and this working relationship ensures projects run smoothly within a set timeframe. Increasing our familiarity with the project internally, within a project team, provides a buffer in the event of circumstances outside our control, such as medium- or long-term illness or compassionate leave. Once a contract has been awarded, a team is asked to plan their leave and other project commitments carefully to ensure deadlines are not compromised. In the case of protracted absences the temporary appointment of trusted subcontractors would be considered, with approval from the Client. As independent specialist scientists within a consortium, we each regularly assess our workloads in relation to imminent deadlines, long term work commitments (e.g. international research projects or long-term monitoring projects) and forthcoming/potential work (i.e. work for which tenders have been submitted) to ensure continuity of service to our clients and to avoid “double booking”.

Electronic storage of material relating to the project (project briefs, Gantt charts, meeting minutes, supporting material from literature searches, interim documents, draft and final outputs, etc.) are held on password protected computers and securely shared between consortium members, and are backed up regularly to their own computers. In addition, Wolds Environmental Consulting also maintains a secure backup of all files where access is password protected onto a secure cloud platform.

Any timescale and associated milestones (as reported via Gantt charts, etc.) that are provided in project tenders assume the timely award of contracts. Any delays in contract start dates that are outside of the control of Wolds Environmental Consulting may not be fully absorbed by an overall project timescale and so any such delays may result in a subsequent delay to overall project delivery. Delays which are under the control of Wolds Environmental Consulting, and the mitigation of such risks, are explained in the risk and residual risk table below (**Table 2**, below).

Such project risks have been quantified and control measures to manage and mitigate them have been identified. All activities at Wolds Environmental Consulting are undertaken in compliance with GDPR regulations, and all team members involved in this project are (independently) registered with the ICO.

Table 2: Generic project risks and subsequent controlled, residual risks

(NB all risks are defined here as Likelihood * Impact (where: 1= very low, 2=low, 3=med, 4=high))

Initial risk level, without mitigation	Control measures considered and extant residual risk level
Inappropriate expertise / Poor team performance Risk: 2*3 = 6	Project Team specifically selected for their complementary and comprehensive expertise in the areas required for this project. Roles clearly defined. Experienced project lead, and consortium familiarity with working with each other and with client, and delivery of similar products in other projects. Residual risk: 1*3 = 3
Team availability (timeline slippage, failure to deliver) Risk: 2*3 = 6	Multiple staff involved, with availability against scheduled timescale and milestones confirmed before tender submission. Team members fully briefed and aware of project needs. Regular internal meetings / workload assessment, and regular contacts with client to address any issues arising in a timely manner. All project information available via shared network drive allowing easy access on an as-needs basis. Residual risk: 1*3 = 3
Limited access to data/evidence Risk: 2*3 = 6	Access to extensive library resources and literature base (e.g. via University of Hull, with subscriptions to, for example, Science Direct, Web of Knowledge, and other article repositories. Good network of professional contacts. Residual risk: 1*3 = 3
Delays in collation of suitable evidence/data Risk: 2*3 = 6	Timeline will be agreed with client at inception meeting. Use of in-house resources including evidence such as texts, published and unpublished reports, and recent electronic information, including from recent cross-cutting projects (e.g. EU funded projects) to support data gathering. Residual risk: 1*3 = 3
Data loss (incl. GDPR issues) Risk: 1*4 = 4	Data held on a password protected cloud-based platform drive, which is backed up daily. All members of project team have previously undertaken GDPR training. Residual risk: 1*4 = 4 (note: risk before and after is the same here as mitigation procedures are already in place)
Exceptional circumstances Risk: 2*2 = 4	In such circumstances (e.g. weather events, power failures, flooding) team members are able to work at home and are able to access shared drives remotely. Residual risk: 1*2 = 2

➤ POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MAINTENANCE & REVIEW

As Company Director, Steve Barnard and is also responsible for related policy implementation and review.

➤ VERSION CONTROL

This version:	1.6
Originally produced:	September 2019
This review:	September 2025
Next review due by:	September 2026

Confirmed: 

Steve Barnard, Director