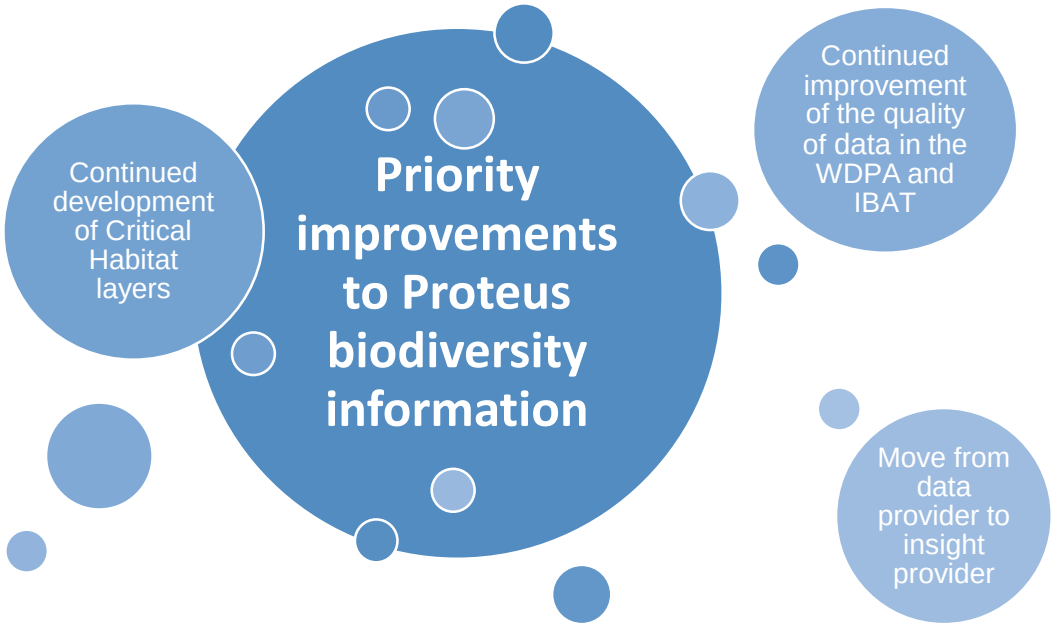
Utilisation of data in policy decisions by Proteus Partners – Proteus Impact Survey 2016

Summary

Proteus Partners were invited to complete a survey on the impact of the Partnership prior to the Annual Meeting 2016. 22 responses from eight Proteus Partner companies were obtained, with respondents asked to assess the value of the data, information and support provided, detail the utilisation of data in policy decisions and provide suggestions for improvements. This exercise will be undertaken annually to allow UNEP-WCMC to track the impact over time. The survey revealed the following high-level results:

1) Policy/corporate users tended to be more familiar with the Proteus Partnership than technical/data users
2) Data provided through the Partnership is used to shape decisions
3) Proteus data are widely used in project-level risk assessment and site selection, screening investments, projects and country access, internal and/or external reporting and company-level risk management
4) IBAT tended to be the most regularly used tool/website within the Proteus toolkit
5) Policy/corporate users suggested that Proteus can add value in biodiversity and ecosystem services assessment



Methodology

Respondents were asked to evaluate the value of the data, information and support provided through the Proteus Partnership and suggest how the value can be increased going forward. The survey was conducted between May and June 2016, and collated information on the company and asked tailored questions depending on the respondent's role within the company: technical/data user or policy/corporate user. Technical/data users were asked specifically about data access, including the monthly release of the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and internal GIS systems, whereas policy/corporate users were asked about the impact of data provided through Proteus on project development decisions, priority biodiversity and ecosystem service issues, and where Proteus can add value to these. Both were asked about the value they derive from the Proteus Partnership, their uses of the data, future suggestions to meet Proteus Partner needs in the next five years, as well as their use and value of the various Proteus tools and resources.

Results

Survey demographic

The survey yielded 22 responses from eight Proteus Partner companies, located within the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the UK and the USA. The responses were evenly split between roles within the companies, with 11 technical/data users and 11 policy/corporate users, however these users were based in many different parts of the company (Figure 1). Many users were from corporate health and safety, sustainability and environment teams, but there were also site-based and technology users.

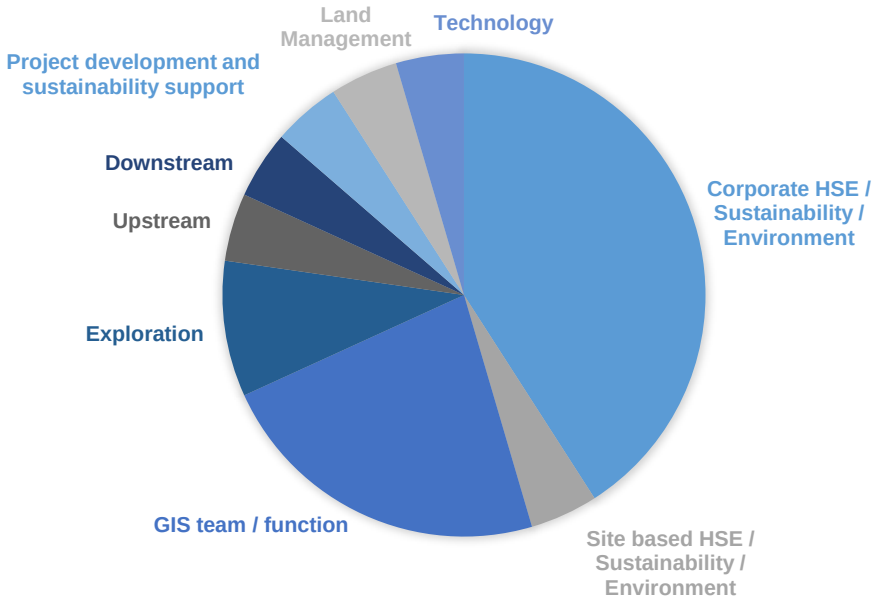


Figure 1. Location of survey respondents within Proteus Partner companies.

High – level survey results

Here, we present five high-level results from analysis of the survey responses. Additional results, as well as all questions asked in the survey, are provided in the appendices.

1) Policy/corporate users tended to be more familiar with the Proteus Partnership than technical/data users

The majority of policy/corporate users were extremely familiar with the Proteus Partnership and assigned high or moderate value to the Partnership. Six policy/corporate users were extremely familiar with the Proteus Partnership, two were very familiar and three moderately familiar, with none slightly or not at all familiar. Whereas, no technical/data users were extremely familiar with the Proteus Partnership, three were very familiar, two moderately, three slightly and none not at all familiar (Figure 2A). Likewise, policy/corporate users tended to derive higher overall value from the Proteus Partnership, with four assessing the Partnership as high value, six as moderate, one as low and none as slight value or don't know. Whereas, two technical/data users assessed the Partnership as high value, four as moderate, none as low or slight and two that do not know the value (Figure 2B). The low value attributed by one policy/corporate user is due to the need for more location specific data, local or national datasets, to inform project development decisions and for use beyond screening.

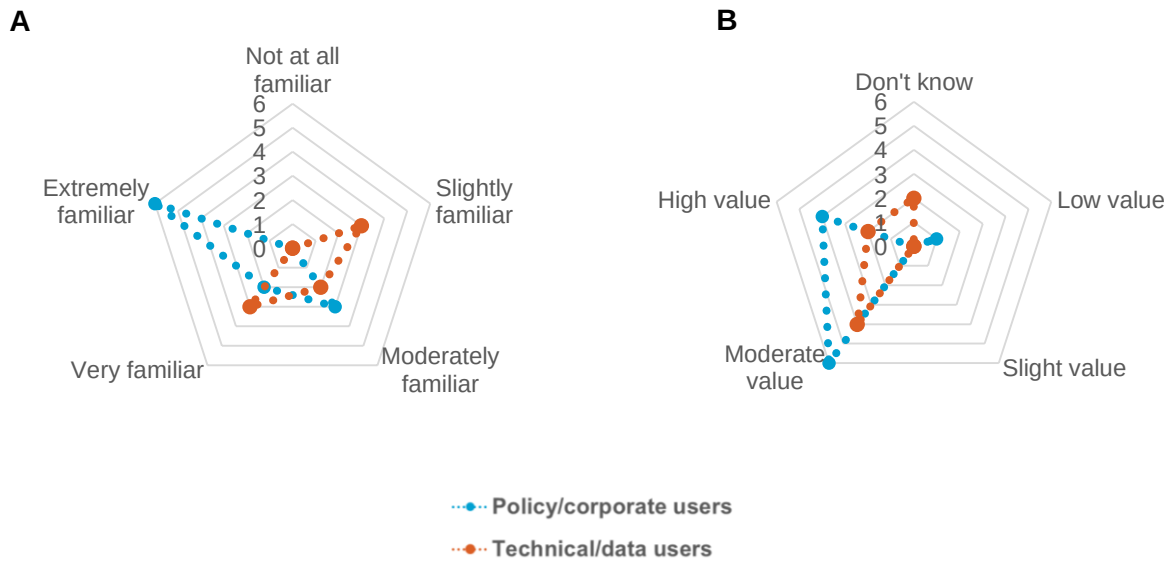


Figure 2. Policy/corporate and technical/data user familiarity (A) with the Proteus Partnership and overall derived value (B).

2) Data provided through the Proteus Partnership is used to shape decisions

Data provided through the Proteus Partnership had great impacts on project development decisions in the last year, with eight respondents indicating that additional management actions were taken as a result, two indicating that data was one of a number of factors that led to a decision not to develop and one company making a decision not to develop based on the data (Figure 3). However, three respondents answered that data were not used to inform decisions or that data was used to inform decision making, but no related actions were taken. One respondent noted the usefulness of Proteus data for screening, but that more location specific data were needed to inform project development decisions.

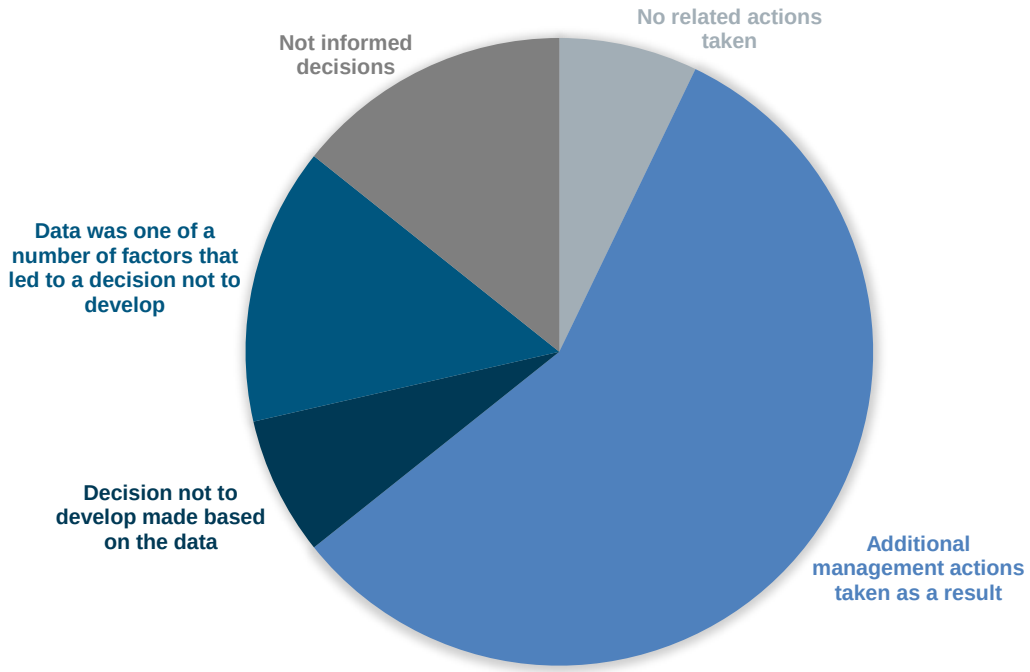


Figure 3. Impact of data provided through the Proteus Partnership on decision making.

3) Data derived from the Proteus Partnership were most widely used in screening for new projects

Based on results from policy/corporate users and technical/data users, the top four uses for data derived from the Proteus Partnership were: project-level risk assessment and site selection, screening investments, projects and country access, internal and/or external reporting and company-level risk management (Figure 4). However, data were of low use for business-as-usual predicted impacts and liabilities, internal and/or external reporting (widely used by some users, but low use by a number of other users), and oil spill preparedness and response. The latter is of particular interest given the roots of WCMC's business engagement in oil spill response and preparedness. In addition, data derived from the Partnership were required by company management systems for the top four uses in Figure 4, as well as for the mitigation hierarchy/biodiversity action plans, defining areas important for biodiversity within policy and understanding of biodiversity impacted.

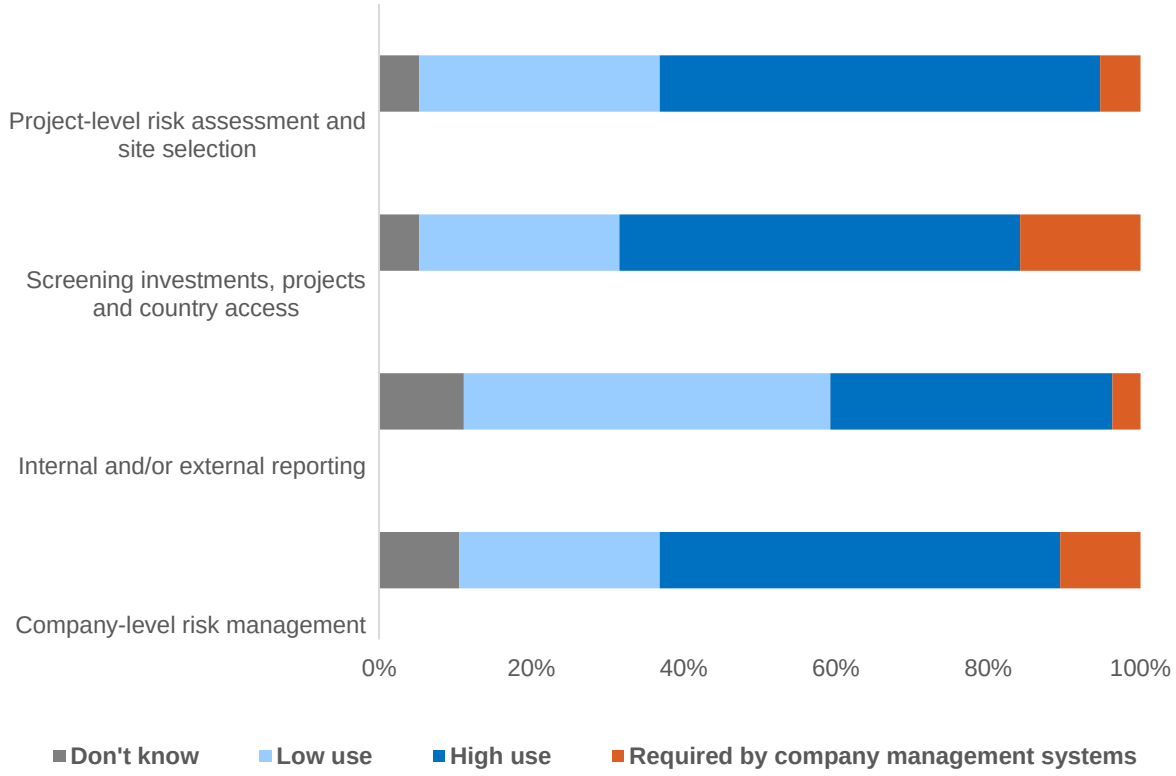


Figure 4. Top four uses of data derived from the Proteus Partnership and/or requirements in company management systems.

4) IBAT tended to be used more regularly than other tools and websites within the Proteus toolkit

Although none of the tools and websites provided through the Proteus Partnership were accessed on a daily basis, the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) and Protected Planet tended to be used more regularly, with a large proportion of policy/corporate and technical/data users accessing these on a monthly basis (Figure 5). The IBAT Map Viewer and data download features tended to be the resources of most value, and although many users were aware of the IBAT country profiles, these were found to be of low value. There were a large number of respondents using IBAT and other websites, specifically the Biodiversity A-Z and Proteus website, less than once a month, with many never having used the Ocean Data Viewer (ODV). A number of users did not know about the ODV metadata sheets and were not aware of the technical briefing notes, Global Biodiversity Agenda (GBA) documents and other resources on the Proteus website. Upon further analysis, these users were all found to be within technical/data roles.

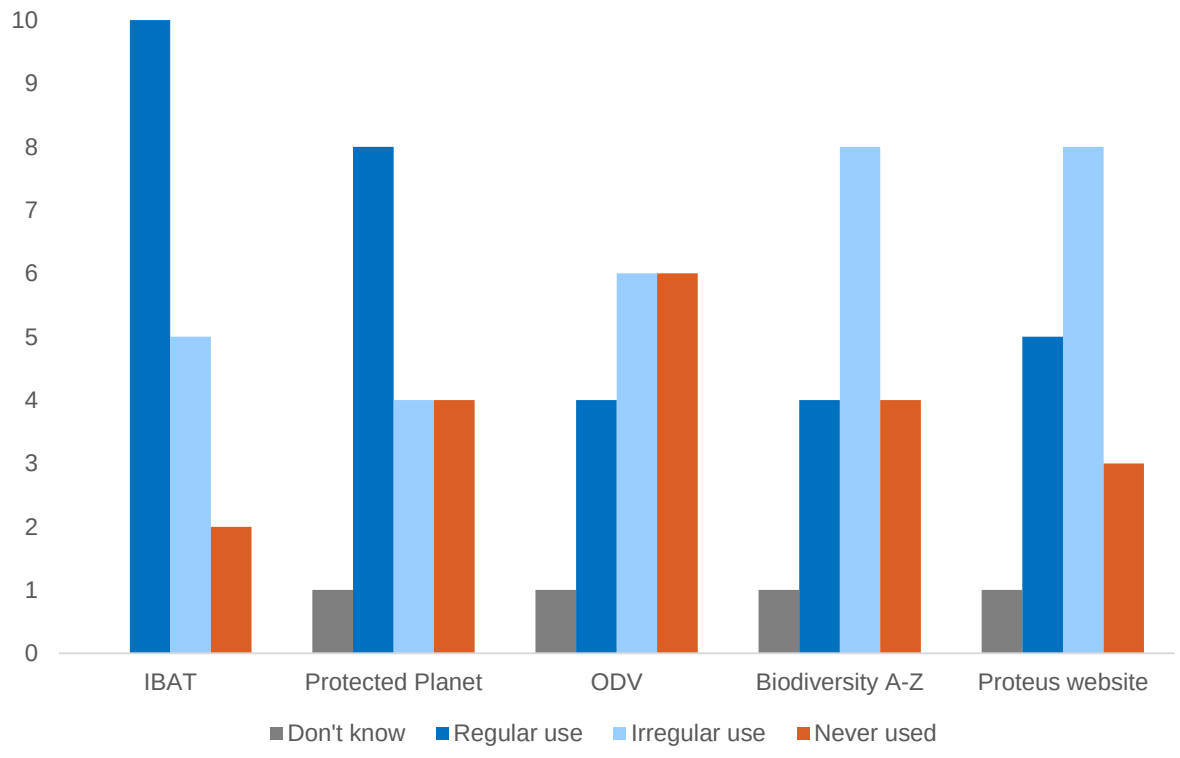


Figure 5. Use of tools and websites within the Proteus toolkit.

5) Proteus can add value in biodiversity and ecosystem services assessment

The majority of policy/corporate users indicated that Proteus could add value to biodiversity and ecosystem services assessment (Figure 6A), but few hold ecosystem service assessment as a priority (Figure 6B). Application of the mitigation hierarchy was seen as a priority for many companies and a place where Proteus could add value. Whereas, biodiversity management and metrics were a priority for many companies, but were areas in which users thought Proteus would be less able to add value. One respondent commented that it was too early to assess the role of Proteus in terms of natural capital, with many not knowing if this was a priority for the company or if Proteus could add value. As part of this same question, a number of companies expressed the need for more information on Ecosystem-based Adaptation, climate impacts and risks in biodiversity management, although these were ranked as a low priority for companies and an area in which Proteus may be less able to add value.

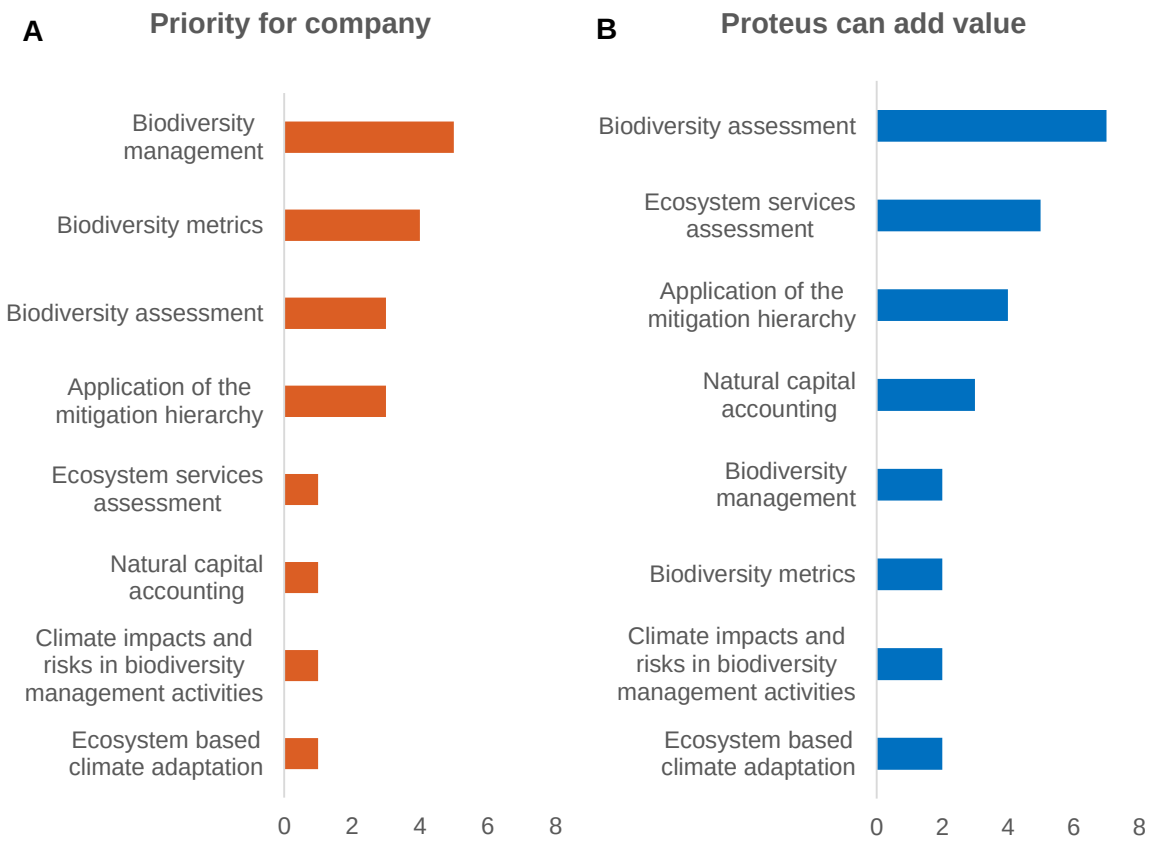


Figure 6. Priority issues for Partners related to biodiversity and ecosystem services (A) and the potential value of the Proteus Partnership in adding to efforts (B).

Proteus Partnership in the next five years

As part of the survey, users were asked how Proteus could evolve to meet their needs with regards to biodiversity information in the next five years. The suggestions were mostly around data delivery, quality and developments, with Partners invited to prioritise these during the Annual Meeting (Table 1). Respondents indicated that Proteus was a very useful and high value resource for updates on international policy developments, new country entry, horizon scanning and internal compliance, and reiterated the value of the WDPA as the core service. But, they noted the difficulty in justifying the annual cost given the current commodity cycle in which a lot of new country entry is not being undertaken.

Table 1. Prioritisation of suggested improvements to Proteus biodiversity information in the next five years by Partners at the Annual Proteus Meeting 2016.

	Suggestion	Priority?
Communication	Better communication of the Partnership and information provided	2
	Continue to share case studies of Partner data applications	1
Data delivery	Offer WDPA and other data as direct web services	1
	Move towards a single web-GIS based platform for all data	2
	Ensure relevant business units as well as corporate functions can access data	1
	Timely provision of accurate geospatial data on protected areas	0
	Further support and development of data gathering, checking and timely publication	1
Data developments	Provide data on ecosystem services	1
	Continue to develop Critical Habitat layers and improve accuracy/effectiveness	**6**
	Expand to regional/local applications	2
	Share baseline data from Environmental Impact Assessments	1
Data quality	Continue to note importance of data quality and coverage	1
	Continue to improve quality of the data, in particular the WDPA and IBAT, with a focus on capturing IUCN Management Categories in developing countries	**5**
	Improve the data available for individual protected areas	1
	More frequent updates of the WDPA, and more polygons rather than points	0
General suggestions	Strengthen biodiversity and ecosystem assessment capability	0
	Use data to support metrics and performance indicators	0
	Promote web-based training on a continuous basis to share evolution of biodiversity areas, onshore and offshore, overlapping with Partner development	1
	Move from data provider towards insight provider	**5**

Follow-up actions

- Increase familiarity of technical/data users with resources and information provided through the Proteus Partnership
    - Ensure technical documents, such as briefing notes and metadata, are distributed to these users as well as policy/corporate users
    - Identify Proteus member's communications tools for technical users and provide information on biodiversity data for them
    - Discuss ideas for proposed GIS technical users group
    - Conduct regular webinars and work with Proteus Partners to integrate Proteus tools into their management systems
- Investigate the reasons for Proteus data not being required in company management systems, and reasons for it not being used by some in internal and/or external reporting, and oil spill preparedness and response
- Investigate why Partners do not view ecosystem service assessment as a priority
- Investigate why Partners think Proteus would be less able to add value in biodiversity management and metrics
- Discover what further information is required on Ecosystem-based Adaptation, and climate impacts and risks in biodiversity management
- Explore views on natural capital and why Partners feel Proteus would be less able to add value on this topic
- Investigate why IBAT country profiles were found to be of low value
- Explore Partners' reasons for never having used the Ocean Data Viewer
- Consider what the new KBA standard will mean for Proteus Partner policy commitments, including availability of species data and number of commitments on threatened species vs. companies accessing IUCN Red List data.

Follow-up actions based on suggested improvements

- Consider revisions to IBAT functionality to incorporate ecosystem services data, finer scale data (national), and integration of critical habitat mapping
- Use results to target engagement and technical support to those Partners where Proteus had yet to be incorporated into decision making
- Set performance metrics to monitor our own progress e.g. XX members use Proteus datasets in decision making, XX% report frequent use of IBAT, usage of X tool increases by XX%
- Feed results into business plan review for IBAT
- Check access to the Cultural World Heritage Sites download. One user noted that their firewall blocks access.

Appendices

Survey questions

All

1) Which of the following companies do you work for? (This information will only be used to group results and will be anonymised in reports)
2) Where are you located?
3) What part of the company are you based in?
4) Which of the following best describes your role within the company?

Technical/data users

5) How familiar are you with the Proteus Partnership?
6) How would you assess the overall value that you derive from the Proteus Partnership?
7) How do you use the data derived from Proteus?
8) Looking 5 years into the future, how can Proteus evolve to meet your needs with regards to biodiversity information?
9) How often do you access the following through the Proteus Partnership?
10) Which of the following Proteus resources do you find most valuable?
11) Do you have access to the latest version of the World Database of Protected Areas (WDPA) via the monthly release email?
12) How regularly do you use this data?
13) Which features of the monthly release do you find most useful?
14) Have you used the Global Map of Marine Critical Habitat (defined as per IFC PS6) published in 2015 by UNEP-WCMC, based on 2013 versions of underlying biodiversity datasets?
15) Would it be helpful to receive regular data updates of the Global Map of Marine Critical Habitat?
16) How many staff are you aware of within your company that have access to data provided through the Proteus Partnership?
17) Do you have an internal GIS system for providing staff with access to biodiversity data to integrate into company risk planning?
18) Are you able to provide more information on your internal GIS system, for example what data is included?

19) Do you access biodiversity data from any other sources? Are you able to provide more information on the other data sources?

Policy/corporate users

20) How familiar are you with the Proteus Partnership?
21) How would you assess the overall value that you derive from the Proteus Partnership?
22) How do you use the data derived from Proteus?
23) What impact has data provided through the Proteus Partnership had on project development decisions in the last year?
24) Please provide examples of projects (anonymised if required) that have not taken place following analysis of biodiversity data in the last year or for which management activities have been amended following analysis of Proteus data.
25) Which issues related to biodiversity and ecosystem services are a priority for you and which do you feel Proteus can add most value to your efforts?
26) Looking 5 years into the future, how can Proteus evolve to meet your needs with regards to biodiversity information?
27) How often do you access the following through the Proteus Partnership?
28) Which of the following Proteus resources do you find most valuable?
29) As part of a formal risk assessment and management process, to what extent is biodiversity data considered within your HSE/sustainability requirements?
30) If you are able, please provide the summary text for the internal commitments containing this biodiversity information?
31) Do you have an internal or external no-go commitment? What is its scope e.g. World Heritage sites only? If you have decided against such a commitment, why have you done so?
32) What training and awareness raising has been undertaken in relation to the use of biodiversity data to inform decision making and what further training and awareness raising would be useful?

All

33) How familiar do you now feel with the Proteus Partnership?
34) Do you have any further comments on the Proteus Partnership?

Additional survey results

Data access

WDPA monthly release

Of the technical/data users that have access to the WDPA monthly release, two use it weekly, two monthly and two less than once per month, with no responses from five of these users. The data download and highlights were found to be most useful (Figure 7), with only one user finding the WDPA Data Factsheet useful and none the WDPA by Numbers.

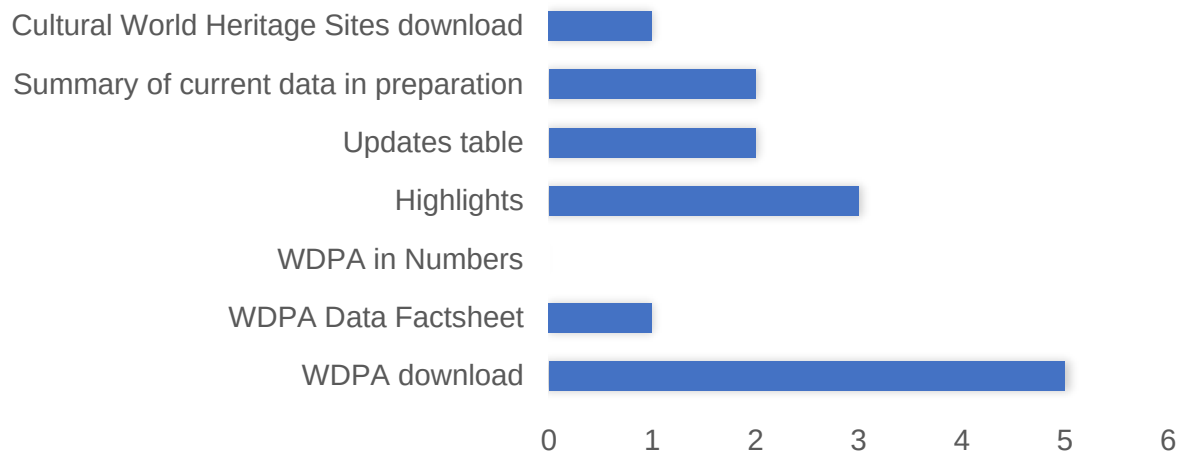


Figure 7. Useful features within the WDPA monthly release according to technical/data users.

Critical habitat

The majority of technical/data users responding to the survey had not used the Global Map of Marine Critical Habitat. Of the two users that had used this map, one noted that it would be useful to receive regular updates, but the other did not know whether receiving regular updates would be useful.

Staff and internal systems

Half of the respondents indicated that >100 staff have access to data provided through the Proteus Partnership, whilst the other half indicated that 11-50 have access. Five respondents have an internal GIS system or Web Map Service for providing staff with access to biodiversity data. One respondent indicated that their company does not have an internal GIS system, whilst another had not used their internal system recently, but had used IBAT instead. Those with internal GIS systems, all incorporate data on protected areas, and some incorporate data on Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), marine/coastal habitats and threatened species. Three users access biodiversity data from other sources, for example open national databases, the USGS dataset on mangroves and data from the World Resources Institute.

Embedding biodiversity data into biodiversity management systems

Biodiversity in formal HSE/sustainability requirements

As part of a formal risk assessment and management process, the majority of respondents make a specific reference to threatened species, KBAs and protected areas in project development decision making, but much less so in assurance (Figure 8). A specific reference to protected areas is usually a requirement in policy commitments and environmental management systems, as well as project development decision making.

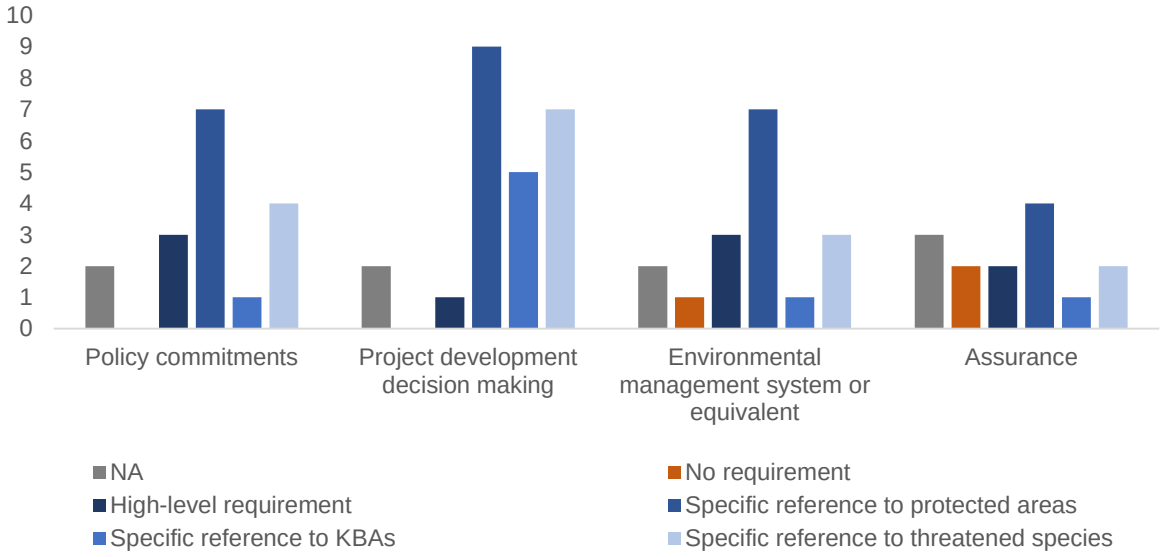


Figure 8. Extent to which biodiversity data is considered within HSE/sustainability requirements as part of a formal risk assessment and management process.

Biodiversity commitments

Grouping respondents by company, the survey reveals that four Proteus Partners have a 'no-go' commitment for World Heritage sites. Some examples of internal commitments or requirements regarding biodiversity include:

- "All projects are required to identify sensitivities, understand the risks and manage impacts - covering sensitive areas/habitats, protected areas and threatened species"
- "Do not explore or extract resources within or adjacent to the boundaries of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Areas Categories I to IV unless you have approval and you implement a plan that meet regulatory requirements, takes into account stakeholder expectations and contribute to the value for which the protected area is listed."

- "Projects in critical habitat need to have a BAP, quantify residual impact, and plan to compensate for residual impact. projects outside critical habitat need to apply the first 3 steps of the mitigation hierarchy"

Training and awareness raising

Training and awareness raising in the use of biodiversity data to inform decision making has mostly been undertaken with email briefings, webinars and separate training sessions (Figure 9). Respondents suggest that further training through webinars on protected areas and other areas of biodiversity importance is needed. The comments by policy/corporate users suggest the need for a timeline in this question and clarification as to whether answers should reflect what has been completed in-house or training provided through the Proteus Partnership.

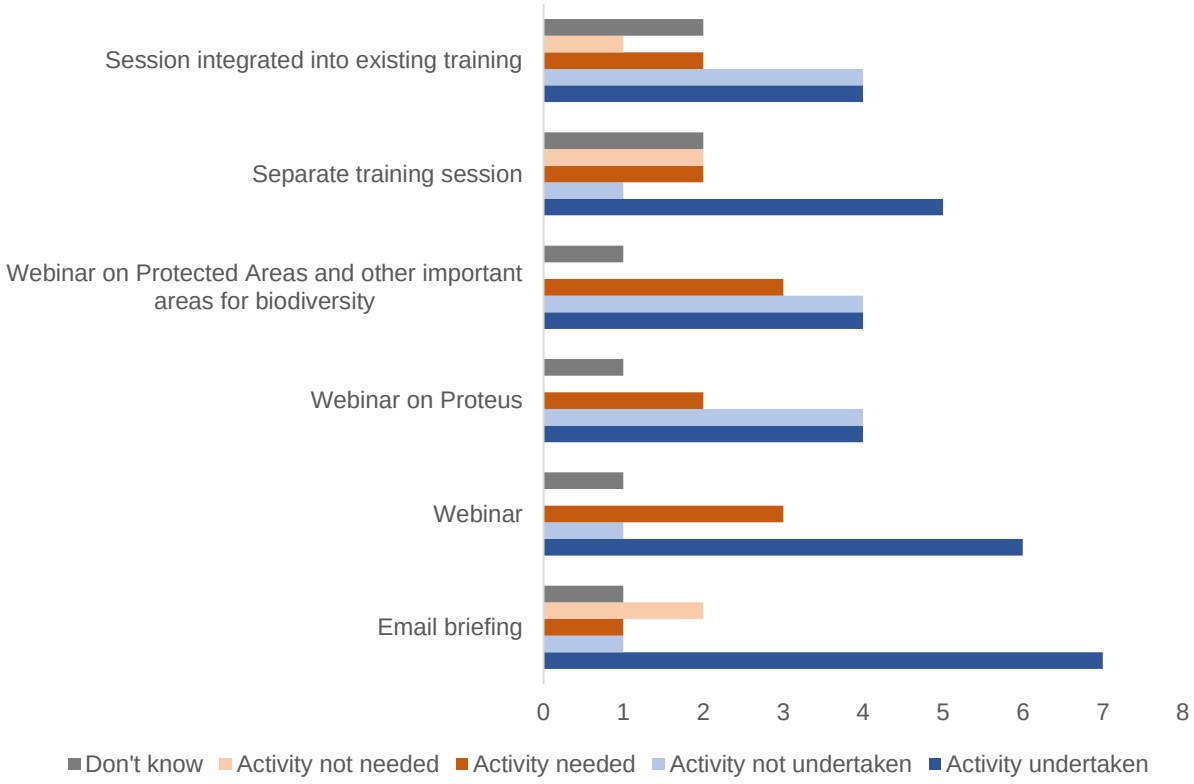


Figure 9. Training and awareness raising activities in the use of biodiversity data to inform decision making.