

# Northumbria Research Link

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**A reply to 'A meta-database of Holocene sediment cores for England – missing data' (Tooley 2015)**

Andrew J. Suggitt and co-author team.

We welcome the response of Michael J. Tooley (Tooley 2015) to our article describing a new meta-database of Holocene sediment cores for England. In our article we describe the online publication of this meta-database, arising from systematic meta-search. We define its scope and the meta-data it contains, before providing the data themselves (in the Electronic Supplementary Material online). We note that Prof. Tooley describes the idea of such a database as important and valuable, and we welcome the constructive approach he adopts throughout his article.

Tooley highlights that the meta-database can be enhanced by the inclusion of a number of studies of the Coastal Lowlands, highlighting gaps in the Lancashire and Hartlepool Bay areas in particular. While it is undoubtedly true that these studies were omitted, they tend to document boreholes which have shown Holocene sediments, rather than boreholes subject to the analysis of least one palaeoecological proxy, as per our inclusion criterion. For example, based on the information Prof. Tooley provides, we estimate that 17 such analyses from Lancashire would have satisfied this criterion.

It is certainly clear that these omissions are genuine, and we would agree that they add to the pool of sites already described in the meta-database. Because of the constraints of systematic search however, it could also be the case that omissions exist outside these areas, and in the original text we highlighted that: "the resulting meta-database is by no means exhaustive and we would expect further additions to be made in due course". We therefore welcome this addition and would similarly do so for others highlighted to the author team.

We would however contest the suggestion that 'much' of the published data have been overlooked from improper searching. Prof. Tooley implores a greater level of focus at the county level; we would only encourage consideration of the attendant effects of his proposed strategy on search volume (the modern counties of England would generate an 84 fold increase to our list of 16 terms, plus 'retired' county names such as Westmorland) to understand why such detailed searching was impossible. As we suggest above (and in the original text), the meta-database can (and hopefully will) be extended, given the requisite time, opportunity and funding.