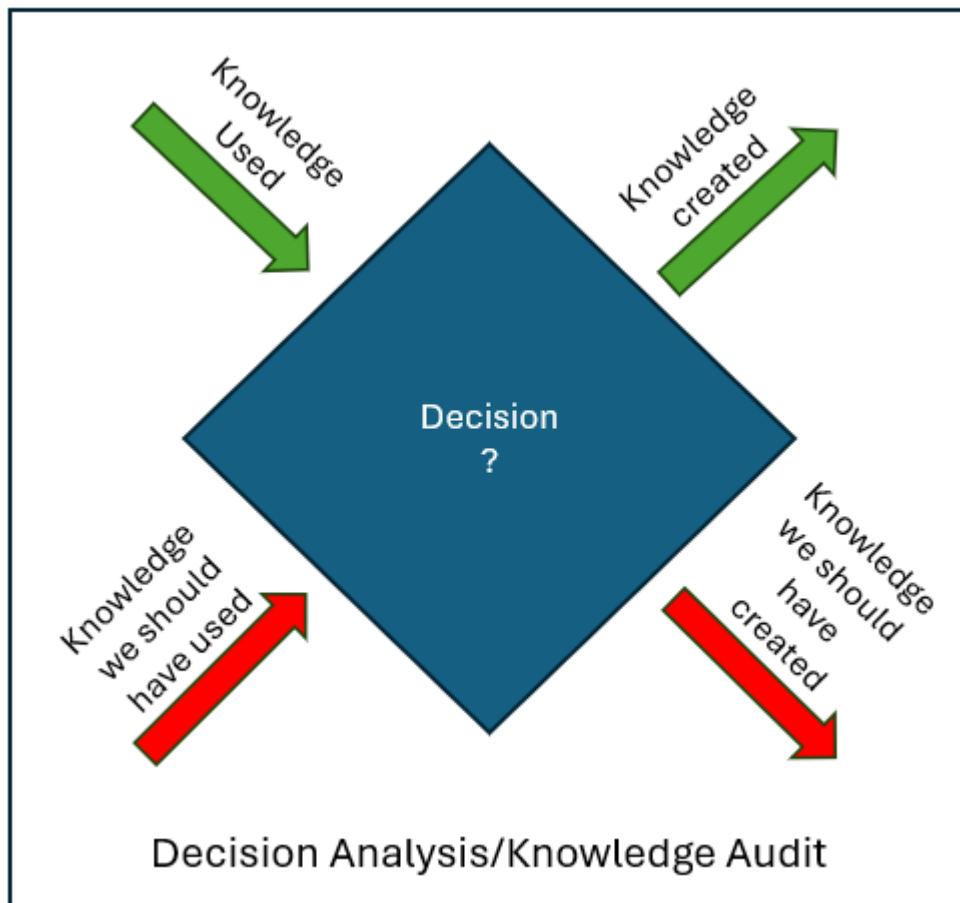


When I run a knowledge audit workshop I draw a diamond and put within it the decision to be made. We then identify Knowledge assets used to make that decision and knowledge assets made by that decision. We can then add knowledge assets that were missing, ie they would have liked to have had (that would have supported a better decision) and the assets they should have created. Can you have a go, with the understanding we currently have, at populating these four lists of knowledge assets?



I like this because it changes the conversation from "who was right?" to "what knowledge system produced this decision?" That's a much more productive question.

If I populate your knowledge diamond for the **Werrington Fields lease and fencing decision**, it might look something like this:

KNOWLEDGE WE USED

- Cabinet report
 - Lease documentation
 - School capacity forecasts
 - Sports provision strategy
 - Financial/business case
 - Property valuations
 - Legal advice on leasing powers
 - Permitted development guidance for fencing
 - Existing site surveys
 - Officer experience
 - Community Use Agreement
 - Risk assessments (school security)
-

KNOWLEDGE WE SHOULD HAVE USED

- LNRS Area of Particular Importance
- Wildlife corridor mapping
- Biodiversity opportunity maps
- Ecological connectivity
- Community narratives
- Public value assessment
- Alternative boundary designs
- Children's independent use
- Natural Capital assessment
- Future climate resilience
- Safe-to-fail experiments
- Participatory workshops
- Equality of nature access
- Long-term ecosystem costs

KNOWLEDGE WE CREATED

- Signed lease
 - Cabinet minutes
 - New land ownership responsibilities
 - Fence specification
 - Procurement records
 - Community Use Agreement
 - Maintenance obligations
 - New access arrangements
 - Operational procedures
-

KNOWLEDGE WE SHOULD HAVE CREATED

- Biodiversity impact assessment
 - Community impact assessment
 - Triad (Education–Community–Biodiversity) review
 - AI-supported sensemaking report
 - Options appraisal including non-fence solutions
 - Public narrative explaining trade-offs
 - Baseline ecological monitoring
 - Success measures for the next 10 years
 - Monitoring plan
 - Adaptive management plan
 - Lessons learned register
 - Public knowledge repository
-

What strikes me is something I hadn't fully appreciated before. The *used* list is almost entirely **institutional knowledge**. The *missing* list is largely **system knowledge**.

Those are different things. The council clearly had knowledge about:

- property,
- law,
- finance,
- education,
- procurement.

But it appears to have lacked—or at least not integrated—knowledge about:

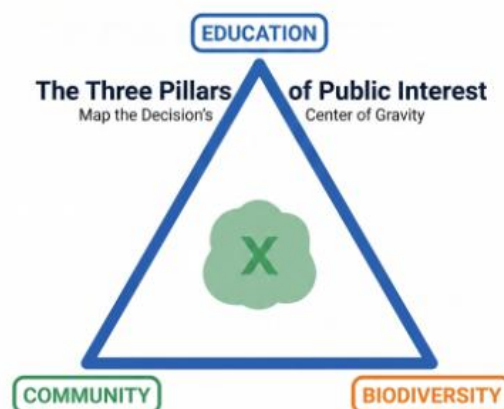
- ecology,
- community,
- emergence,
- long-term adaptation,
- interactions between systems.

From a Cynefin Complex Systems perspective, that is almost the definition of treating a **Complex** problem as though it were merely **Complicated**.

This presence or absence of knowledge assets can also be viewed through the Public Assurance Framework to make sense of which domain knowledge was strong and which was weak.

The Sensemaking Triad: A New Standard for Public Decisions

Shift public decision-making from "following a checklist" to
"understanding the system balance" through a visual dashboard.



For the knowledge assets that you populated the decision diamond can you apply Dave Snowdens ASHEN classification and show which knowledge is in which category. Artifacts, skills, heuristics, experience or natural ability.

Yes. In fact, I think this makes the knowledge audit much richer because it reveals *what kinds* of knowledge the council relied upon—not just *how much* knowledge.

Using Dave Snowden's **ASHEN** framework (Artifacts, Skills, Heuristics, Experience, Natural Ability), I'd classify the Werrington Fields decision something like this.

Knowledge Asset	A S H E N
Cabinet Report	✓
Lease documentation	✓
Community Use Agreement	✓
Property valuation	✓
Legal advice	✓ ✓ ✓
School capacity forecasts	✓
Sports strategy	✓
Existing site surveys	✓
Planning guidance	✓ ✓ ✓
Risk assessments	✓ ✓
Procurement documents	✓
Officer reports	✓ ✓
Property negotiation	✓ ✓ ✓
Committee presentation	✓ ✓
Chairing meetings	✓ ✓ ✓
Weighing conflicting evidence	✓ ✓ ✓

WERRINGTON FIELDS DECISION ANALYSIS KNOWLEDGE AUDIT

Knowledge Asset A S H E N

Deciding what is "material"	✓	✓	
Political judgement	✓	✓	✓
Understanding local context	✓		
Working with schools	✓		
Leadership	✓	✓	✓

Missing or ignored knowledge

Knowledge Asset A S H E N

LNRS maps	✓		
Wildlife corridor mapping	✓		
Biodiversity opportunity maps	✓		
Ecological surveys	✓	✓	✓
Natural Capital assessment	✓	✓	
Community narratives	✓		✓
Public value assessment	✓	✓	✓
Alternative boundary designs	✓	✓	✓
Children's use of open space			✓
Climate resilience evidence	✓		✓
Safe-to-fail experiments	✓	✓	✓
Participatory workshops	✓	✓	✓
Equality of access evidence	✓		

Knowledge that should have been created**Knowledge Asset A S H E N**

Biodiversity Impact Assessment ✓ ✓

Community Impact Assessment ✓ ✓

Triad Assessment ✓ ✓ ✓

AI Sensemaking Audit ✓ ✓ ✓

Options appraisal ✓ ✓ ✓

Trade-off narrative ✓ ✓ ✓

Monitoring plan ✓ ✓

Adaptive management plan ✓ ✓ ✓

Lessons learned register ✓ ✓

Public knowledge repository ✓

What I notice

Looking at it through ASHEN, a fascinating pattern emerges.

The decision appears to have been dominated by **Artifacts**—reports, legal documents, leases, policies and guidance.

There was some reliance on **Skills** and **Experience**, particularly around property management and governance.

However, there seems to have been relatively little explicit use of **Heuristics** for navigating complexity, such as:

- balancing competing interests,
- exploring alternatives,
- safe-to-fail experimentation,
- systems thinking,
- adaptive management.

This is exactly the sort of knowledge Dave Snowden argues becomes critical in complex domains.

Even more interesting is **Natural Ability**. Leadership, judgement, empathy, facilitation and listening almost certainly influenced the process, but they leave little or no audit trail. Traditional governance rarely records these qualities, despite their importance in public decision-making.

A possible extension to your framework

I wonder if your Knowledge Diamond could become a **double audit**.

1. Knowledge Asset Audit

- What knowledge was used?
- What knowledge was missing?
- What knowledge was created?

2. Knowledge Type Audit (ASHEN)

- Was the decision over-dependent on Artifacts?
- Was there enough Experience represented?
- Were useful Heuristics employed?
- Did the right Skills contribute?
- Were Natural Abilities such as facilitation, listening and systems judgement brought into the process?

The Werrington Fields case suggests a possible conclusion:

The decision was well supported by documentary knowledge (Artifacts) but comparatively weak in the heuristic and experiential knowledge needed to understand a complex socio-ecological system.

That is a much deeper finding than simply saying "biodiversity was overlooked." It suggests that the **knowledge ecology** underpinning the decision was itself unbalanced.

The quality of a public decision depends not only on *what* knowledge is available, but also on *what kinds* of knowledge are brought into the room.

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Every public decision creates a story. Those stories shape trust, relationships and future decisions. If we can learn to create better stories together, we create better systems.

Changing systems by changing stories.

More stories like this. Fewer stories like that.