

SBRC Steering Group Meeting Minutes

Ipswich Museum, High St., Ipswich IP1 3QH

29th September 2014

Present: Martin Sanford (SBRC) (MS), Desi Reed (WDC/SCDC) (DR), Jacqui Miller (RSPB) (JM), Jayne Austin (Ipswich Museum / IBC) (JA), Nick Collinson (SCC) (NC), Adrian Chalkley (SNS / County Recorder) (AC), Dorothy Casey (SWT) (DC), Damien Parker (SEBC/FHDC) (DP), Ben Heather (SBRC) (BH), Gen Broad (SBP) (GB)

Apologies: Alison Collins (NE), Nick Ward (Babergh/MSDC), Chris Strachan (EA)

1. Introductions

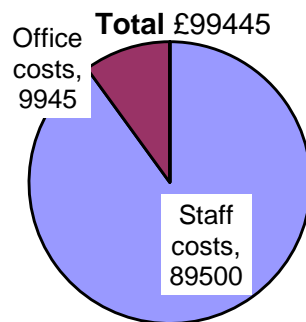
2. Election of Chair

NC was elected for the meeting.

3. Minutes of last meeting ([10th March 2014](#)) agreed with no changes.

4. Budget

- a. MS presented graphs indicating expenditure 2013/14 was approx. £96 k, the 2014/15 expenditure is predicted to be approx. £99 k:



Expenditure 2014/15 Based on 6m Apr-Sept

- b. Consultancy work has increased dramatically. £20 k was projected for 2014/15, it is now predicted to be approx. £34 k. This reflects very well on the service BH provides.
- c. Income has increased from £106 k in 2013/2014 to a projected £112 k in 2014/15. Most stakeholders have paid (except for Natural England who are expected to pay in October and Jan 2015). Income should increase by about £6 k this year despite reducing DC contributions to 7k each.
- Most requests are for Protected Species surveys. The increase may be due to increased visibility on the internet and a new easy-to-find domain name.

SBRC does not charge for community requests and neighbourhood plans. SWT has mapped and assessed the Lavenham and Gt Bealings areas for communities.

- d. SBRC bought a new printer recently for about £1 k.

5. 2020 Vision Discussion Paper

i) Quality of data

A high standard is always needed. Higher quality has become easier due to on-line changes such as websites which provide grid references.

MS is concerned that the volume of data collected today is less than it was 20 years ago.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species are often widespread, but declining – more scientific methods are needed to assess these.

County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) are difficult to survey as many are in private ownership. County recorders often go to favourite sites which are not necessarily where records are needed. CWSs may not be the best sites to survey, it depends on the group e.g. Chris Hitch (lichen recorder) records on walls and churchyards where most lichens are found.

Developers should now all be sending their data to SBRC to conform with the NERC Act 2006. There should be no issue with confidentiality as most planning applications are on-line and so in the public domain. It was agreed that it should be mandatory for developers to share species records.

Action: GB and JM should bring this issue to the Planning Group and look at the idea of planning authorities putting a condition on applications to send all species data to SBRC. This can be linked to the validation checklist.

The geographical gaps in data vary for different groups. Good methodology is essential; records of absence are not encouraged. Atlases will probably ensure the 'black holes' are covered as has happened for the Dragonfly one in preparation.

Bat records are *ad hoc* with no overall monitoring. The Norfolk project collected 30,000 records over two years, increasing knowledge of bats in Norfolk, but at a cost of £60 k. SBRC is looking at a possible pilot project in 2015 using a car-based monitor. However, this wouldn't capture all species i.e. the brown long-eared bat is very quiet.

SBRC currently has about 10,000 records collected over 20 years.

NC: a financial resource for bat recording would be useful. Suffolk Bat Group (SBG) is interested in a new static detector (cost £650).

SBRC must be absolutely sure the data is reliable.

Local Authorities receive the last 20 years of data. It should be possible to re-survey roost data for bats – SBG is looking at this.

JM: developers use the Record Centre reports as Stage 1 and may only do a desk study as Stage 2. Difficulties may arise with using consultants without local knowledge.

It was agreed that we should generate more publicity for what needs doing.

Possible ideas:

- **Set up a web page showing which consultancies are best at sending in records**
- **Provide incentive for Local Authorities to send in their records by offering a discount**

Actions:

- **BH to set up web pages to show where records are more than 20 years old for each taxonomic group**
- **SBRC to organise a Recorders Conference (perhaps titled 'Mind the Gap')**
- **Advertise that funding is available for atlases e.g. on SNS, SBRC and SBP websites, SBRC must be involved at an early stage of publications.**

SBRC has 2.24 million records on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN); latest update (including all records of priority species) was in July 2014.

Records entered by the public through i-Record come back to SBRC.

However, recording on-line is going through a predictable '*cycle of disillusionment*' at present, probably due to the lack of feedback. We must tackle this issue, using the new technologies available.

ii) Training

Apprenticeships may be useful, although AC commented that he has never received many records after training people. A lot of commitment is needed to do the necessary several days of hard work with a microscope for freshwater invertebrates. FSC has been trying to improve the situation. There is an MSc in Biological Recording based at Manchester University.

The Planning Group has proposed developing on-line training for planners. This would follow the format of the training sessions with about 7 common scenarios involving CWSs, SSSIs, great crested newts etc. 'Moodle' may be used – an open-source learning platform

<https://moodle.org/>

Possible ideas:

- **SBRC to use Flatford Mill as a centre to work on training.**
- **Produce a hard copy /on-line leaflet as a follow-up to training**
- **AC could produce a factsheet on a few species which are completely unmistakable and for which records would be accepted.**
- **The on-line planning scenarios could build into a library of case studies**

Action: GB to approach the IT department of a college to see if they'd be interested in developing the on-line planning scenarios.

iii) Services

County Wildlife Sites condition assessments are needed. We have a 'traffic light' system at present. SWT could do the assessments if funding is available. This could be combined with training. DC: CWSs provide critical natural capital.

DP suggested that LAs could provide funds for assessing open space etc. Match funding could be provided by the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Section 106 funding. St Edmundsbury would be willing to be a 'guinea pig' for a pilot project.

Action: MS to organise a County Wildlife Sites Panel meeting end Oct/early Nov.

The service is running well with a seamless transition between data sets. DR confirmed the system is working well at Waveney. BH said that access to the map layers varies between districts.

Possible ideas:

- **SBRC could provide on-line training on how to use the data supplied by SBRC. Perhaps people should only be able to use the map layer once they have completed the training? DR commented that face to face training is very useful.**

Actions:

- **SBRC to start CPD training (2 yrly) asap jointly with Simone Bullion and James Meyer from SWT.**
- **Recorders conference should emphasise how important collecting records is in the context of planning and development.**

Range of services

- Re ANGSt(Accessible Natural Green Space Standard) – SBRC could analyse sites with the help of LAs using their local knowledge.
- This provides opportunities when mitigation is required. Waveney is working on Open Space and Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy, Suffolk Coastal has GI in place.

Actions:

- **MS to organise focus groups to work on specific aspects of SBRC work**

6. Website Developments

BH gave a demo of the new SBRC draft website pages for i-Record. At present SBRC has little control over the data collected. It is important to collect the records through SBRC so they own the data, but allows the records to still go to i-Record. BH and MS have worked with web developers on the site.

The SBRC pages show how records are used. This is important in providing feedback to the member of the public who enters records.

AC collects freshwater invertebrate records for Suffolk from i-Record, so there may be a danger of duplicating records.

Action: MS to ensure the issue of duplicate records is discussed at the Recorders Conference

i-Spot is for identification, i-Record is for entering records.

JA would like to see Ipswich Museum using their collections to improve natural history learning. MS agreed this would be possible.

Action: MS and JA to consider how Ipswich Museum can use their collections to improve learning.

7. Training was covered in Item 5.

8. Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP)

GB gave a brief presentation and provided a written report summarising some of SBP's work over the past 6 months. Highlights include the Gateway to Priority Species and Habitats on the website, involvement in Ecoschools, the Suffolk planning and biodiversity seminar organised for 25th November, the SBP, SNS, SWT and Touching the Tide event at Carlton Marshes in July and the Summer 2014 newsletter.

9. AOB

MS advised that the new Vascular Plant Red list for England has been produced. This has changed the designations of some species as the Red List was previously for the UK. The Suffolk Rare Plant Register is being updated to reflect the new statuses. The target for the new UK Flora Atlas is 2020.

Dates of next meetings: March 2015 and September 2015

MS will circulate a Doodle Poll to set the dates for both of these meetings.