



# SBIS Board Meeting Minutes

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Ashbocking

2 November 2016

Sarah Barker (IBC) (SB)	Ben Heather (SBIS) (BH)
Gen Broad (SBIS) (GB)	Sue Hooton (SCC) (SH)
Molly Carter (Ipswich Museum/IBC) (MC)	Helen Jacobs (Essex & Suffolk Water) (HJ)
Dorothy Casey (Suffolk Wildlife Trust) (DC)	Jacqui Miller (RSPB) (JM)
Adrian Chalkley (Suffolk Naturalists' Society) (AC)	Andrew Murray-Wood (SCC) (AM-W)
Alison Collins (Natural England) (ACo)	Damien Parker (St Edmundsbury BC) (DP)
Nick Collinson (SCC) (NC)	Desi Reed (Waveney DC/SCDC) (DR)
Peter Garrett (Babergh and MSDC)	Martin Sanford (SBIS) (MS)
Chris Strachan (EA) (CS)	
	Jill Christley (SCC) - Minutes

## 1. Introductions

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting (21 April 2015, Attachment A)

Amendment to minutes:

Item 6, last paragraph should read 'JA, SB, NC, DP and DR agreed that data collected by councils could be passed on to SBIS'.

Following this amendment, the minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising

- SH to promote via LinkedIn group. **SH Action.**
- Item 7 SBIS rebranding and website developments **ALL Action – update websites to ensure links websites go to SBIS.**
- ALL other actions complete.

## 3. Memorandum of Agreement (Attachment B)

The draft Memorandum of Agreement was discussed.

Ownership of data was discussed in some detail. Various organisations and individuals supply data, and in some cases relates to sensitive or vulnerable species, making ownership, and sharing of the data complex. Therefore it is important to have a document setting out what data may be shared and with whom.

**HJ Action:** To consult Essex and Suffolk Water legal team before signing.

**DP Action:** To ask District Councils for approval.

**NC Action:** To ask SCC FOI team to check 'Ownership of Data' paragraph.

The question of what would happen to the data if SBIS was wound up was discussed. There is a statutory duty on the funding partners to maintain the data, and this is hosted by the County Council.

**ALL Action:** Give feedback and comments on the Memorandum of Agreement by the end of November.

#### **4. Budget (Attachment C)**

MS had asked Anglian Water whether they wanted a representative on the board, and they had declined.

MS gave an overview of the budget, and explained that expenditure was in line with forecast apart from County Wildlife Sites recording. (See Item 6, below). Income from consultancy enquiries was expected to be around £36k in 2016/17, which represented an increase; a small part of this was due to the recent increase in prices for work over and above the standard £100 fee.

DP asked whether budgets were likely to be frozen for the following year. MS confirmed that they would. The rate for chargeable work would stay the same, as it has only recently been increased. Current prices are comparable to that charged by other LERCs.

Funding for 2017/18 was discussed. Various District Councils are expected to merge in the future. However, NC explained that the demand on SBIS would not be any different post-merger, therefore cost savings were unlikely. The current level of funding was expected to be sufficient for 2017/18.

#### **5. Biodiversity Checking Service (Attachment D)**

The Biodiversity Checking Service (BCS) is an innovative pilot project running in Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts until the end of March 2017. The aim is to streamline the planning process for applicants with low-impact developments by avoiding delays, providing certainty about biodiversity requirements and ensuring a lawful decision based on high quality information. This is achieved by checking that the biodiversity surveys and assessments are appropriate and mitigation measures are deliverable pre-submission for an application to the Local Planning Authority. A new webpage [www.suffolkbis.org.uk/bcs](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/bcs) provides all the details. The pilot has transferred to SBIS as SH is leaving SCC. Step-by-step guidance explains when it is appropriate to use this cost effective service, what type of information is required, who needs to complete the low-impact biodiversity template report, how to apply, what fees are payable and the possible outcomes. A successful application generates a Certificate which is then submitted with the Planning Application documents, thus ensuring a smooth application process. The success of this service will be reviewed by Local Planning Authorities and SBIS at the end of the pilot in March 2017.

#### **6. County Wildlife Sites (CWS) re-survey**

MS explained that funding for CWS re surveys had not yet been spent because very few sites had been surveyed. The project was still expected to take around five years. MS is looking for more volunteers, and appealed to members to let him know of any skilled botanical recorders who would be interested in assisting.

Designation and possible de-registration of sites was discussed. It is possible that some sites no longer qualify as CWS sites, and others may now qualify. There are procedures for both CWS designation and review.

**MS and DC Action** - discuss co-ordination of surveys and report back at next meeting.

#### **7. Website Development**

BH reported that all pages have now been transferred to the new website. He is working on the Priority Species Gateway, which should be ready in time for the Biodiversity Checking Service launch.

Usage of the website has remained constant with roughly double that of the old website.

The site was developed with mobile phones in mind, and this has resulted in a significant increase in usage this way.

There are now almost 200 registered users.

A new update will be released soon.

BH had met the Tree Officer at IBC, and will be developing a new form based on the one used before.

#### **8. Recording bursaries**

Bursaries for selected courses are available, targeted at amateur naturalists, and dependent on the number of records submitted by the candidate. The scheme has been running for less than a year, in which 10 people have been funded. Four of these have submitted the required number of records to qualify for the bursary. The other candidates have not yet passed the deadline for submission of required records. The cost of bursaries so far is £2000. MS asked everyone to promote, to encourage new recorders. MS is pleased with progress so far, and hopes to extend the offer to other venues in the future.

**MS and BH Action** – provide paragraph that can be put into internal communications.

**AC Action** – contact John Grant re extra promotions in EADT.

#### **9. AOB**

- a. Biodiversity Project Fund. HJ asked whether the contribution from Essex and Suffolk Water to Biodiversity was still needed. GB explained that funds were still needed. A report will be available at financial year-end. The board thanked HJ and Essex and Suffolk Water for their support
- b. Local Wildlife Sites Biodiversity Indicator. This measures the proportion of local wildlife and geodiversity sites that are in positive conservation management (PCM) and is the only Government indicator for biodiversity now. See [www.suffolkbis.org.uk/suffolk-sites/cws](http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/suffolk-sites/cws). As the Section 44 authority, Suffolk County Council needs to report to Government (Defra) on the national biodiversity and geodiversity indicator - Single Data List SDL160 (formerly known as National Indicator NI197) this includes both County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and County Geodiversity Sites (CGS), which include Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). Reporting covers the period April to March each year with submission to Defra in the autumn. This year Natural England were delayed in releasing the spatial data layers and a new deadline has been agreed now that it has arrived (though without the new Countryside Stewardship agreement details. **Action SH & BH** to finalise and submit to Defra by 20 Dec.
- c. Wildlife Photographer of the Year MC invited members to the exhibition which will be running from November to January in the Arts School, High Street, Ipswich. It is free to enter.
- d. SH will be leaving Suffolk County Council at the end of November. NC thanked Sue for all her hard work, particularly on the Biodiversity Checking Service, County Wildlife Sites and Roadside Nature Reserves, where Sue had made a huge impact.

#### **10. Date of next meeting**

To be arranged.

**END**