SBIS board meeting

22nd June 2026 – Microsoft Teams online meeting hosted by SBIS

MINUTES

Present:

James Meyer, East Suffolk Council, Chair
Emma Aldous, SBIS
Hannah Alred, SBIS
James Carr, Environment Agency
Tim De-Keyzer, Suffolk County Council
Nick Dickson, Suffolk County Council
Rupert Masefield, Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Andrew Murray-Wood, Suffolk County Council
Damien Parker, West Suffolk Council
Richard Parmee, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils
Luke Pidgeon, Ipswich Borough Council
Gary Quilter, West Suffolk Council
Martin Sanford, SBIS

Apologies:

Anna Roe, Helen Jacobs, Jacqui Miller, Chris Strachan

The meeting commenced at 2 pm

Related documents:

• Documents 0-8 Pre meeting information • SBIS Budget 2025_26 YTD.xlsx, SBIS Budget 2026_27 Draft.xlsx • Slides 1-4

ITEM	ACTION
1. Welcome, apologies, and minutes of last meeting (Attachment: A SBIS Board Meeting minutes Nov 2025) James welcomed the board. Apologies were received as above. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record. Regarding the outstanding action to find a Natural England representative for the board, Jack Haynes (LNRS) was suggested as a suitable contact.	**JM**
2. Declarations of interest No specific conflicts of interest were declared. Tim noted that the board is an advisory body rather than formally constituted	
3. Strategy: Introduction to SBIS now and future Emma provided an overview of SBIS's history and ambitions. With SBIS entering its 50th year, the primary objective is to build resilience and independence in light of the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the dissolution of SCC.	
4. Five-Year Strategic Development Plan and strategic risks Martin presented the SWOT analysis and Five-Year Strategic Development Plan, designed to help SBIS navigate upcoming changes including LGR and his own impending retirement. **Strengths & Weaknesses**: SBIS has a vast database and excellent trust with data suppliers. However, the lack of a legal identity prevents SBIS from holding assets, owning data, or directly employing staff. The Recorder 6 software is also aging and will need replacing over the next decade. **Income Strategy**: Current funding is an approximate 50/50 split between local authority SLAs and commercial consultancy. The board noted that local authority budgets are likely to decline. The plan aims to shift this ratio to 60/40 in favour of commercial and grant income over the next five years.	
5. Independent legal status and data ownership The board discussed the potential of establishing SBIS as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to secure its data and assets. Nick and Tim cautioned that pursuing CIO status too quickly might increase risk during the LGR process by prematurely separating SBIS from the benefits and protections of SCC hosting. It was stated that the intention was to remain hosted with SCC while pursuing CIO status The board agreed not to seek formal, heavy legal advice on data ownership at this stage, as it could create unnecessary administrative overhead. Instead, it was agreed to draft a lighter-touch Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding data ownership while SCC remains the host. The board did not make a formal decision on pursuing CIO status and deferred a vote until the next meeting.	**MS**

6. Guardians of the Wild Emma presented the Guardians of the Wild project proposal – a five-year initiative with a funding ask of over £1,000,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and roughly £500,000 in volunteer and in-kind contributions. **Aims**: Assess 1,333 Ancient Woodland Inventory parcels, update 977 County Wildlife Site (CWS) citations, locate unknown landowners, and train 40 – 60 accredited volunteers. Additional elements include a landowner grant scheme, enhance DNA sampling of Native Black Poplars working with Suffolk Tree Warden Network, and archaeological recording. James Carr expressed strong support on behalf of the EA, highlighting the critical importance of Suffolk's woodland network. Rupert expressed interest in SWT involvement and would discuss the potential project further with the SBIS team. The board endorsed the project in principle. Due to SBIS's current lack of legal status, it was agreed that SCC would act as the lead applicant. The board authorised the team to submit an Expression of Interest to the NLHF and approach NEAF / East Suffolk for match funding.	**SBIS/SWT** **EA/ND**
7. Staffing Hannah outlined proposed staffing changes to manage the transition following Martin's retirement (expected April 2028 or sooner). **Data Search Officer**: Andy Mercer will be moved from an agency contract to an in-house SCC contract, producing long-term cost savings. **Data Manager** (New Post): Proposed new role to handle the technical non-managerial aspects of Martin's job, including managing Recorder 6 and liaising with county recorders. Aiming to recruit by January/ February 2027 to allow an overlap for handover. **Team changes**: Hannah has bee identified as a potential candidate for a newly formed role incorporating her current remit with Martin's managerial responsibilities (handling HR, budgets, and SLAs), while Emma's role will be redefined to reflect the change in her workload, becoming Digital Services and Operations Lead. Tim and Nick supported the transition plan but noted that this constitutes a formal team restructure. **ACTION:** Hannah and Martin to work with SCC HR to complete job evaluations for the revised roles. A revised budget detailing the cost implications will be presented to the board.	**MS/HA**
8. SBIS Updates **Suffolk Archives:** Martin reported that an MoU is being drafted to cover the physical archives transferred to The Hold, ensuring SBIS's physical assets are protected through LGR. **Suffolk Verges Mapping:** Hannah shared a new public interactive map collating verge management data from SCC, East Suffolk, and Babergh/Mid Suffolk. Discussions are ongoing to add West Suffolk and Ipswich data. **Commercial Performance:** Hannah reported strong commercial growth. Income has increased by 140% since 2017, reaching £93,000 last year (7.6% above budget). The team delivered 842,000 records across 632 searches, maintaining an average turnaround of 2.5 – 3.5 working days. **Website & ALERC**: Due to time constraints and technical issues, Emma's updates on website changes and the ALERC accreditation process were rolled over to the next meeting.	**MS**
9. AOB No other business was raised.	
10. Date of next meeting The next meeting will be arranged via Doodle poll. While normally scheduled in six months, the board agreed to convene sooner if necessary to review the staffing budget or LGR developments.	**MS**

The meeting closed at 3:15 pm.