

**National Biodiversity Network Trust**



**Board of Trustees**

**MINUTES: 3 November 2015 11am – 3.00pm**

Darwin Centre 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Natural History Museum, London

**Present:**

Professor Michael Hassell (Chair)  
Paul Rose  
Teresa Frost  
Helen Wilkinson  
Roddy Fairley  
Tom Webb  
Andy Clements  
Andrew Wood  
John Davy-Bowker

**In attendance:**

John Sawyer (*Chief Executive*)  
Giselle Sterry (*Minutes*)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Tim Hill, Richard Pywell, Ian Owens, Jen Ashworth, Mark Diamond and Alan Stewart

**2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

2.1 Minutes of the last meeting

**Action Points**

AP5 from 12 November 2014 Meeting

The Trustees role and responsibilities may need to be re-looked at in the future.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

AGREED TO REVIEW THIS ONCE MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN REVIEWED. IF ANY TRUSTEE WANTS TO SUGGEST CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS PLEASE FEED THESE BACK TO MH

**AP4:** from 4 March 2015 Meeting

An options appraisal, business and financial plan to be developed and presented to FMC.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED.** This related to the Atlas platform and project has since moved on.

**Action Points from 1 July 2015**

**AP1:** A launch of the Strategy at the House of Lords to be investigated.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED – costs and timings prohibitive.**

**AP2:** A session for Board Members be arranged to discuss the uses of the data certificates

**ACTION: CARRIED FORWARD – still to be arranged**

**AP3:** Board members to provide comments on the Action Plan to the Secretariat by 30 July 2015.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

**AP4:** JS to contact TW regarding support of the conservation hacker group

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

**AP5:** Board members to provide comments on the Business Case to JS by 30 July 2015.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

**AP6:** The Board are asked to promote the conference and sponsorship opportunities and advise the NBN Secretariat of opportunities.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

**AP7:** MH to feedback to JS the Board decision.

**ACTION: DISCHARGED**

### **Corrections**

Noted that Tom Webb was not in attendance and provided his apologies.

The minutes were signed off as a true record of the meeting.

### **3. Chairman's remarks**

The Chairman advised that he recently attended the NBN Awards shortlisting meeting on 21 October 2015 and was impressed by the high standard of nominations and the work being done by staff and volunteers.

### **4. Items of business from the Chief Executive**

#### **1.1. Chief Executive Report November 2015 (TTE15-03 Paper 1)**

Please refer to the paper for the full detail.

- JS advised that the team were now at full capacity with 6 team members in place including the CEO
- A lot has been achieved in the past few months and are subject to the separate reports presented to Board
- JS thanked the Board members for their action on social media including tweets, providing articles and general promotion of NBN activities
- The Strategy 2015 – 2020 has been distributed and hard work will now start to implement it

#### **Action Plan Implementation Strategy (TTE15-03 Paper 03)**

Please refer to the paper for full details. JS advised that eight working groups are being developed. Scoping reports have been produced for three of the groups and it is anticipated that the first workshops will be organised in the next few weeks. It is intended that about 12 members will be identified from those who have expressed an interest to be involved in each workshop who will be asked to commit a set amount of time and effort to achieve the actions.

In addition there are two other work areas – the Atlas and the Consultants Portal. With all of these work streams the mission critical items are picked up. It was noted that the BTO and CEH have offered their support.

AC requested that the action points could be collated so that the mission critical elements were identified under the relevant working group. There was also a need to balance the priorities against funding that is available.

AW requested that the 'mission critical' elements be prioritised to those that for example need to be done now as against those due in a year or two. There needs to be a prioritisation of these items.

JDB suggested use of a colour coding type system

JS noted that some items are running in parallel in the different working groups. There were also some elements being undertaken by the Secretariat which do not fall into an area of the working group.

**AP1:** Working Group Actions to be formatted in a table form to illustrate priorities and mission critical items. This can be incorporated in to the final Action Plan which has yet to be published.

**ACTION: JS/RS**

JS asked that a member of the Board act as Chair of each working group. The time commitment was likely to be 2 full day meetings and 2 days of work in a 12 month period.

The following were identified

Working Group 3 – Biological Recording online - Roddy Fairley

Working Group 4 – Improving Biological Data Flows - Tim Hill

Working Group 5 – Increasing use of our data - Michael Hassell

Working Group 6 – Captivating and engaging people - Andy Clements

Working Group 1 - Quality control and verification likely to happen in next few weeks. Ian Owens to be asked to Chair.

The following working groups currently have no Trustee

Working Group 2 – Mobilising historic data

Working Group 7 – Network Support and Development

Working Group 8 – Strategy for the UK Species Inventory

### **Atlas of Living Scotland (TTE15-03 Paper 04)**

JS reported that over 11 million records from 87 data partners have been committed to the Atlas of Living Scotland (AoLS) and another 40 have committed to another 7.3 million records in principle. The AoLS now has the largest biodiversity image library with over 25,000 species.

A stakeholder meeting was held in July and discussions are being held over the final designs of the site currently in beta version.

The spatial portal has recently gone live and James Hutton at the Met Office has agreed to provide spatial layers along with British Geological Survey.

Further developments include the recording of sightings, linking to the data partner pages, displaying of stats for data partners. It is also hoped to embed EUNIS data eg dunes and woodlands.

JS advised that he has met with the Natural Resources to Wales and a further meeting to discuss funding is to take place on 11 November 2015. It is anticipated that funding offered will need to be spent by 31 March 2016.

JS also met with Ian Boyd from Defra and has received verbal commitment to an English Atlas subject to final submission of a business case.

JS advised that a business case was submitted to Northern Ireland Environment Agency who have also expressed support for the Atlas.

JS noted the following to allow the Atlas projects to progress –

- Risk if the current membership of the NBN do not fully support the move to the Atlas platform
- Further clarification and comfort needs to be provided to members in relation to sensitive species records
- Enhanced access request procedure is agreed
- That cost sharing across the countries is agreed
- Commitments from the data partners on the licences used
- That there is project management support across the network
- Capacity is available to maintain open source software

JS advised that he has held discussions with Microsoft who may be able to provide charity rates for website hosting as currently playing commercial rates with Amazon Web Services.

TF highlighted that there was a possible risk of LRC's find another method to share data as concerned about their funding streams and the general lack of finance to cover the loading of data.

#### **Consultants Portal (TTE15-03 Paper 05)**

Please refer to paper. Significant progress has been made with 127 users registered and over 20,000 records loaded. FMC have agreed to extend Ella's contract until 31 March 2016 to keep momentum of the project. JS advised that NBN are still seeking sponsorship for the Consultants Portal project management.

A short discussion was held about ability to charge consultants for the service and this will need further development of the ideas. The issue of whether LERC's can see the data was raised and if not options available to access the records.

**AP2:** JS to follow up with RS on LERC's access records uploaded via the Consultants Portal.

**Action: JS/RS**

#### **Improving access to Data Questionnaire (TTE15-03 Paper 06)**

Please refer to paper. To date 90 responses have been received and there are 40 still to respond. It is anticipated that the findings will be presented at the Conference. FMC have suggested that the report be used as a basis of a workshop to turn the responses of 'maybe' into 'yes'.

A data capture summit was held in September organised by Rachel Stroud and feedback had been very positive.

It was noted that there is commitment to GBIF, the Atlas and releasing data over 15 years old. JS advised that Scottish partners are managing invasive species layers and alleviating any concerns about the use of non-natives data.

HW advised that Welsh Government have formed an agreement with landowners en-mass to allow data to be openly used.

**AP3:** JS to follow up with HW on bulk permission agreements.

**Action:** JS/HW

#### **GBIF Strategy (TTE15-03 Paper 07)**

A new strategy regarding licencing has been developed. It is intended that all data currently held by GBIF that was loaded through the Gateway will be removed and then reloaded with the appropriate licence agreement. This is to meet the changes proposed by GBIF.

PR raised concern that NBN not being consulted generally by GBIF. A meeting is being arranged with Cathy Willis at GBIF on 30 November 2016.

#### **NBN Conference and Awards (TTE15-03 Paper 011)**

Please refer to paper. The Awards committee including MH met and have managed to choose the winners from a high standard of entrants. BBC Wildlife Magazine are to interview the winner of the Gilbert White Youth Award.

AC reported that Peter Antonio from Swarovski had told him he was excited that they were linking up with NBN for the Awards.

JS noted that a risk had been taken to move the Conference away from London and to two days but to date 160 people had registered with approximately 140 attending each day.

The Board offered their thanks to the Secretariat for the organisation of the Conference.

#### **Collaborative Working in Scotland (TTE15-03 Paper 08)**

Please refer to paper. A discussion took place about the proposals on different methods of working collaboratively in Scotland. It was agreed that the proposals set out in the paper not be progressed at this time.

#### **Membership Review (TTE15-03 Paper 10)**

Please refer to paper. JS advised that with GS a review of the membership options is taking place. Generally it was felt that organisations were not valuing the membership, the options to join were not fit for purpose and were restrictive in attracting different categories of membership and sponsorship. FMC have already confirmed their support of a review to be led by AW with support from MH.

It was noted that a driver for the change is also the current funding model and the risks to NBN should those funding streams reduce.

**AP4:** JS to work with GS on development of membership review paper.

**Action:** JS/GS

**AP5:** AW to lead working group for membership review.

**Action:** AW

**Access to Ordnance Survey Data Sets (TTE15-03 Paper 09)**

Please refer to paper. The Third Sector licence was refused although OS did identify other options available. An article has been written to be included in enews regarding the availability of licences. The OS officer for Scotland has indicated that they are willing to work with the Atlas project.

PR noted that it is likely OS will need the support of NBN in developing the habitat layers which may then allow our membership greater access.

HW advised that there is a public sector Schedule 5 licence which may be appropriate to use.

**5. Finance and Management Issues****Finance Report (TTE15-03 Paper 02)**

AW confirmed that the finances of NBN were in a good position with a comfortable surplus for spending on any small projects.

**Pension Report (TTE15-03 Paper 013)**

Please refer to paper. JS thanked GS for her hard work in preparing the report and taking the initiative to attend pension briefings. FMC have accepted the report and a new pension provider, The People's Pension, has been chosen. The set-up is to be completed by Tom Geraghty Associates.

**Communication Report (TTE15-03 Paper 012)**

MH expressed his thanks on behalf of the Board to the Secretariat for the increased activity on social media.

JS reported that text for the new NBN website is being reviewed / written and looking at new items to include such as a blog.

**Risk Register (TTE 15-03 Paper 14)**

The Risk register has been revised to reflect the increase to the financial risk element which has now been rated 'High'.

Risk 3 People cannot use the system - The register needs to be reviewed to identify cyber risks surrounding the Atlas projects and the Gateway.

Risk 5 Diverging Views – the register needs to be reviewed to identify that the questionnaire should mitigate the risks as membership views are more positive over sharing data.

**AP6:** JS / GS to review the risk register.

**Action:** JS

**6. AOB**

MH thanked Teresa Frost for her hard work and support over the past couple of years as a Trustee and wished her luck in her new role at the BTO.

**Mark papers as confidential**

Collaborative Working in Scotland

Membership Review

Pension Report

**7. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 February 2016 and Wednesday 06 July 2016

Signed:

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Action Points**

AP2 from 1 July 2015 Meeting

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**Action Points from 3 November 2015**

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