

NBN Chief Executive's Report - November 2015

By John Sawyer

E: j.sawyer@nbn.org.uk

Twitter: @_JohnSawyer

T: 07717 870003

Highlights and summary

The last four months has seen the us publish the NBN's five year strategy, finalise the action plan and develop eight working groups to implement this, and start rebuilding the UK's biodiversity data infrastructure through the pilot Atlas of Living Scotland initiative (www.als.scot). Ongoing work has continued with the Consultants Portal (www.consultantsportal.uk) and organising the NBN conference. New work has involved the preparation of a draft GBIF strategy to re-engage over data sharing globally and the development of the NBN awards scheme (in conjunction with BRC and NFBR).

This is a diverse programme of work by a small team and the priority now is to share the workload for strategy implementation across the Network members (amongst those that have indicated an interest in leading aspects of the proposed actions).

1. Record, collect, and mobilise

- a) Data Verification and Online Recording Working Groups – TORs prepared, groups about to be convened.
- b) Consultants Portal – 117 consultants now registered and 19,806 records loaded.
- c) Data Partner “Improving access to data” questionnaire – 50% of Data Partners have now responded with varying degrees of commitment to data sharing.
- d) Data Capture summit – summit held and working group and strategy in development.
- e) Database of recording schemes and projects – database established with 238+ projects and schemes.

2. Making use of data

- a) Working group planned – no action taken.
- b) GBIF strategy – draft strategy out for consultation.
- c) Ordnance Survey – business case prepared and rejected.
- d) Approach made from NBN to Secretary of State for the Environment regarding support for the new DEFRA Open Environment 25 year strategy
- e) JNCC have added new license options to NBN Gateway (48 datasets already switched to Creative Commons or Open Government licenses)

3. Captivate and engage

- a) New communications officer appointed – Purba Choudhury started in Sept 2015.
- b) New NBN website – due for launch at the NBN conference
- c) Working group planned – no action taken.
- d) Media and social media - increased engagement
- e) Research on recorder motivation – starting in October 2015

4. Data management infrastructure

- a) Atlas of Living Scotland – project management and user group support ongoing
- b) Atlas of Living Wales and others – meetings held with Welsh Government and Northern Ireland agencies and Defra.
- c) UK Species Inventory working group – Natural History Museum committed to development of a TOR and coordination of this group.

5. Network development

- a) Conference – 35 speakers, four symposia, 150+ registered (see separate report)
- b) NBN Awards – 53 nominations.
- c) NBN Secretariat business plan – implementation ongoing
- d) Performance management system – in development
- e) Membership scheme review – in progress as current system is failing the Network.
- f) Collaborative working in Scotland - proposals for board to discuss

1. NBN Strategy and Action Plan: 2015-2020

Board actions:

- a) Note NBN strategy is published and distributed to members and key stakeholders.
- b) Note the NBN Action Plan is about to be published.
- c) Note that eight working groups are proposed and we seek board champions to attend and chair sessions.

Overview

The NBN Secretariat has proposed eight working groups be established (see separate report). These will be developed and implemented as time and resources permit.

Next steps: Publish Action Plan, organise first meetings of working groups, develop TOR for other working groups.

2. Atlas of Living Scotland and beyond

Board actions:

- a) Note Atlas of Living Scotland now live at www.als.scot
- b) Note commitment in principle from NBN Data Partners in Scotland.
- c) Note engagement across UK to develop support for platform for entire UK.
- d) Note pursuit of cheap hosting plans with Microsoft, DataCentred and Amazon Web Services.
- e) Note that further progress with this programme of work will be impossible without project management support.

Overview

The Atlas of Living Scotland is now live - see separate report. A user group and stakeholder partnership have been established. Engagement with NBN Data Partners in Scotland has led to 90% support in principle for sharing data via the Atlas platform (7 million + species observations). The NBN Secretariat has met with Northern Ireland, Wales and England to discuss the development of a platform for UK. Esmee Fairbairn funding bid failed, HLF bid still in preparation with a focus on engagement.

Next steps: Seek funding and support to develop across the UK including for a UK project manager.

3. Consultants Portal (see <http://www.consultantsportal.uk>)

Board actions:

- a) Note the separate report by Ella Vogel and Rachel Stroud
- b) Note the significant progress (117 registered and 19,800 observations shared)
- c) Note the publicity and engagement (see British Wildlife article)
- d) Note the funding runs out in December 2015

Overview

See separate report prepared by Ella Vogel and Rachel Stroud.

Next steps: Secure funding support continuation of this excellent work. Promote in InPractice (CIEEM newsletter).

4. Improving access to data

Board actions:

- a) Note the results of the Data Partner “Improving access to data” questionnaire.
- b) Note only 50% of Data Partners have responded.
- c) Note the responses provide a great starting point for future conversations about data sharing and openness within the NBN.

Overview

The NBN Secretariat has asked NBN Data Partners about their commitment to new data sharing policies (regarding GBIF, pollinators, non-natives and data older than 15 years) – see separate report. The results make for interesting reading and provide a great launching pad for discussions and workshops about data sharing.

Next steps: Seek responses from NBN Data Partners that have not replied. Present results at NBN conference, publish results and pursue new licensing and data sharing.

5. Data mobilisation summit

Board actions:

- a) Note a Crowd-sourced Data mobilisation summit was organised by Rachel Stroud and the Secretariat team and attended by 58 people.
- b) Note that a draft action plan is now being prepared.

Overview: A successful summit was held at Manchester Museum in September 2015. 58 people attended and 11 speakers made presentations about all aspect of data mobilisation.

Next steps: Finalise action plan, start adding datasets to crowd-sourcing platforms and promoting to build a UK team.

6. Strategy for data sharing via GBIF.org

Board actions:

- d) Note Rachel Stroud’s work with JNCC and GBIF in developing a draft strategy for GBIF.org
- e) Note the process that will be followed over the coming months to re-set the NBN node and its data commitment to GBIF.org.

Overview

Rachel Stroud has worked with JNCC and GBIF to prepare a draft strategy for GBIF.org (see attached report).

Next steps: Process feedback from NBN members and Data Partners. Implement strategy from December to January 2016.

7. NBN Conference and awards 2015

Board actions:

- a) Note the separate report by Mandy Henshall and final draft conference programme.
- b) Note sponsorship secured for 9 students, for the conference and for the awards
- c) Note 53 award nominations received and awards committee met on 21 Oct 2015.
- d) Note we still seek a prize for the marine awards – ideas welcome.

Overview

The NBN Conference is in the final stages of preparation – see separate report. 150+ people have registered and 35 speakers will be attending (see promotional brochure).

Next steps: Continue to promote conference. Secure marine award. Run awards event at conference. Promote winners via media.

8. Collaborative working in Scotland

Board actions:

- a) Note the draft report prepared in Scotland by SBIF, BRISC and NBN Secretariat.
- b) Board position sought on this proposal for a preferred solution.

Overview

Inefficiency in the approach towards biological recording, data curation and data sharing and use has led to duplication and a lack of clarity about who is doing what in Scotland. See separate report.

Next steps: Depending on NBN Board response, consult widely in Scotland over preferred approach to the Scotland strategy.

9. NBN Secretariat Business Plan, admin and support

Board actions:

1. Note proposal to develop alternative approaches to the NBN membership scheme
2. Note Risk Register update.
3. Note the development of a performance management system and process.

Introduction

The NBN Secretariat propose to develop a range of alternative membership schemes as alternatives to the current system that is failing the organization and its members. The Risk register has been updated with only one change (see number 1 regarding Finances). A new performance management system and process is being developed for the NBN Secretariat team. This process will provide a systematic way of ensuring that everyone within the Secretariat works together to contribute to the achievement of the NBN's strategy.