

## Consultants Portal - progress update and future plans

### October 2015, Ella Vogel and Rachel Stroud

Board to Note

1. Significant progress made since July 2015
2. Funding is due to cease for the Consultants Portal Project Manager on 4 December 2015

An update on the three streams of work that are the focus for progressing the Consultants Portal

#### Objective 1 (Improve and Develop)

- Continued feedback has been received from consultants and steering group members and this has been prioritised and implemented by John van Breda. The main improvements implemented since the last update include:
  - Spreadsheet upload tool developed, with downloadable spreadsheet templates.
  - Map file download facility
  - Simplified the process of creating and joining a consultancy
  - A 'recent sightings' view on the home page
- Mid development of assigning licenses to each record. This is progressing in conjunction with iRecord and the BRC.
- Mid development of creating self-populating metadata so that transfer to the NBN Gateway is seamless.
- In contact with Build UK to work towards creating a GIS layer upload facility. Once this is possible on the Consultants Portal, Build UK will direct every consultant that they work with to share all records collected through their Build UK contract work via the Consultants Portal (1/3 of all construction in the UK). Build UK have tested this method with Local Environmental Records Centres and find it an easy way to transfer records between consultants and a sharing platform.

#### Objective 2 (Engage and Use)

- Current number of registered users: 117
- Current number of records shared via the Consultants Portal: 19,800. Between 1,000 and 4,500 new records have been added each week over the last 7 weeks.
- Consultants Portal article gone to print in British Wildlife Magazine, flyer advertising the Consultants Portal distributed with September's edition of CIEEM's 'In Practice' magazine and article for the December edition of 'In Practice' has been sent to the publishers. These articles focus on the importance of data sharing, and promote how the Consultants Portal can be a useful data management tool for Consultants, alongside being a tool for sharing records via the NBN Gateway.
- Consultants Portal update given at the ALERC Conference, and the Biodiversity User Group meeting and speed talk about the Consultants Portal will be delivered at the NBN Conference.

**Objective 3 (Train and support)**

- A detailed user guide document has been created which will be available to download from the Consultants Portal site. A one page summary diagram of this user guide is being commissioned, so that users can quickly access the main functions of the Portal via an eye-catching design. This can be sent to users and promoted via Twitter and Facebook.
- 5 CIEEM Scotland workshops planned for Mid-November 2015
- A further three training sessions planned at individual consultancies across the UK. Plans have begun to hold training workshops via CIEEM in the South West
- LERC training workshop planned for early November 2015 in North West England. LERC's will then be able to confidently direct consultancies towards using the Consultants Portal as a repository for their records.
- Discussion surrounding speaking at a Consultants Conference to be held in Spring 2016 by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, and contributing regularly to their Consultant newsletter.
- Regular updates in the NBN's eNews