Initiating a Review of
the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland:

Paper 1: Formation of, and Terms of Reference and Brief for, a Working Group to undertake this Review

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1. Purpose of this paper

The SBIF Advisory Group has undertaken to drive the review and redesign of the biological recording infrastructure in Scotland[1] in order to inform any realignment of structures and resources necessary to achieve our vision:

> High quality species and habitat data will be collected and managed through a sustainable, co-ordinated and integrated local and national framework of organisations, partnerships and initiatives. These data will be available to ensure that Scotland's biodiversity, ecosystems and people benefit.

In order to commence our Review, we need to establish a Working Group to undertake the Review on behalf of the SBIF Advisory Group and key stakeholders and to report our approach, progress and outcomes to all.

The purpose of this paper is to propose the terms of reference, brief and approach of the Working Group so that these may be shaped and endorsed by the SBIF Advisory Group, and so that the Working Group can be established in early August 2016. All comments on this paper should be provided to Ellen Wilson (SBIF Chair) or Christine Johnston (NBN Scottish Liaison Officer) at the earliest opportunity.

2. Background

In February earlier this year, the then SBIF Steering Group (now known as the SBIF Advisory Group) and NBN Trust agreed to bring together SBIF and the NBN so that we would be better aligned. At the same time, we also undertook to review our biological recording infrastructure to enable it to be more sustainable and successful in operating the data flow pathway in Scotland.

Our overall infrastructure has never been fully reviewed – however, there is now a unique opportunity to take full advantage of new technologies for recording, managing and sharing data, and to ensure the sustainability of each element in the network, so that overall we bring about many benefits for recorders and users of biodiversity data.

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[1] One of three recommendations in SBIF Paper 2016/01 of 7th February 2016 entitled 'Bringing together SBIF and the NBN'

3. Proposed formation of a Working Group

It is proposed that a small Working Group is formed to take forward the Review on behalf of the SBIF Advisory Group. This Working Group will act as a 'project team' responsible for undertaking the day to day activities involved in the Review, for informing, consulting and communicating with stakeholders, and for reporting progress and outcomes.

It is proposed that the Working Group should be formed of the following people:

- Ellen Wilson (SBIF Chair) supported by Liz Edwards (RSPB Business Analyst)
- Christine Johnston (NBN - Scottish Liaison Officer)
- Lindsay Bamforth (Fife Nature Records Centre - Information Officer)
- Rachel Stroud (NBN – Data & Liaison Officer)
- Colin McLeod (SNH – Data Manager)

4. Draft Terms of Reference

The following draft Terms of Reference for the Working Group are suggested as a starting point for the Working Group to finesse:

i. The purpose of the Working Group is to undertake a Review of the biological recording infrastructure in Scotland in order to a) identify any improvements needed for the infrastructure to be suitable, sustainable and successful, and b) to set out any transition arrangements necessary to achieve this.

ii. The Working Group will be responsible for undertaking the Review in a timely manner and for reporting progress and outcomes to the SBIF Advisory Group and other stakeholders. The Group will keep in regular contact by email and in person and its members will gather information, prepare documentation and plan and attend the workshops or other activities necessary to successfully complete the Review.

iii. The Working Group will be responsible for documenting the business case for any changes to the biodiversity infrastructure in Scotland proposed through the Review.

iv. The Working Group will be accountable to the SBIF Advisory Group who will sign-off all deliverables and completion of each stage of the Review (see suggested stages below).

v. On completing the Review the Working Group will monitor the transition to and implementation of any new arrangements as necessary, reporting progress to the SBIF Advisory Group for a period of 12-36 months (depending on the length of any transition period needed), then will be decommissioned.

vi. The Working Group will recognise BRISC as an independent body that can provide feedback to the Review on behalf of individual local recorders, recording groups and record centres.

vii. The Working Group will consult with as many representatives as possible from the following sectors:

1. Academic sector (e.g. education, universities and research institutes)
2. Commercial sector (e.g. CIEEM members, and commercial and utility companies)
3. Local Authorities and National Parks
4. Local Environmental Record Centres
5. Local Recorders and Local Recording Groups
6. Museums, Zoos and Botanic Gardens
7. National Data Centres (e.g. NBN and BRC)
8. National Schemes and Societies (e.g. BSBI)
9. NGOs (e.g. SWT, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, ARC, BCT, BBCT, Plantlife, RSPB, BTO)
10. Public bodies (e.g. Scottish Government, SNH and SEPA)

viii. The Working Group will make public the main outputs of the review (via the Scotland pages of the NBN website) but it will treat all inputs (e.g. interviews with stakeholders and financial information) as being sensitive and these will not be made publicly available.

5. Proposed approach

Until the Working Group has had time to form a detailed plan for how the Review will take place, we do not yet know how it will proceed. However the following stages are suggested as a starting point to illustrate how the Review could be undertaken:

Stage 1.	Set up the Working Group and complete planning for the Review
Stage 2.	Gather perspectives, requirements and other information from key stakeholders
Stage 3.	Hold workshops to find the options at central, national and local levels
Stage 4.	Work out what is involved in implementing any preferred option(s)
Stage 5.	Consult with any organisations which may be affected
Stage 6.	Issue final recommendations then monitor their implementation

At this early stage, the likely timeline for the Review to be completed is unknown and so the following is also suggested as a starting point:

Stage 1.	August 2016
Stage 2.	September and October 2016
Stage 3.	November and December 2016
Stage 4.	January 2017
Stage 5.	February and March 2017
Stage 6.	April 2017 onwards

If the approach of the Review follows the stages suggested above, it is suggested that the following outputs would then be signed-off by the SBIF Advisory Group:

Stage 1.	Detailed plan for the Review including the approach, success criteria and time line
Stage 2.	Report on the perspectives and requirements from key stakeholders
	Report on the business case for change needed to improve the infrastructure
Stage 3.	Report on the option(s) identified for operation at central, national and local levels
Stage 4.	Report on the transition arrangements necessary to implement any preferred option(s)
Stage 5.	Report on the consultation outcome with organisations affected
Stage 6.	Report on the final recommendations of the Review and a potential timeline for implementation

6. Draft scope and objectives

Our vision for the Review is that it determines the optimum infrastructure for biological recording in Scotland, an infrastructure that in turn will attract the necessary belief, commitment and investment by stakeholders to be sustainable and successful in fulfilling the original vision of SBIF:

> High quality species and habitat data will be collected and managed through a sustainable, co-ordinated and integrated local and national framework of organisations, partnerships and initiatives. These data will be available to ensure that Scotland's biodiversity, ecosystems and people benefit.

The Review will do this in such a way as to be cohesive across Scotland with support from all stakeholders and the willingness and energy to then make the transitions necessary to implement the new infrastructure by 2020.

The following elements are in scope for the Review:

- Identifying and understanding the sectors (listed above) and organisations involved in biological recording in Scotland and their perspectives and requirements.

- Identifying and understanding the customers for biological data and data services in Scotland and their present and future requirements and spend.

- Identifying and understanding the operating costs, income and value of service and data providers, and recording scheme operators, and the funding available to sustain them.

- Identifying and understanding the availability and accessibility of data and services provided at present in Scotland.
- Identifying and understanding how other countries in the UK and beyond fulfil, or aspire to fulfil, their requirements for a biological recording infrastructure.
- Identifying, evaluating and reporting the options at central, national and local levels in Scotland.

The following elements are out of scope of this Review:

- Consulting with organisations that do not operate in Scotland given that SBIF only has a mandate within Scotland (however stakeholders with an interest in a central infrastructure in the UK will be included).
- Fundraising or applying for grant aid on behalf of our biological recording infrastructure.
- Implementing any recommendations made by the Review.

The primary objectives of this Review are as follows:

- To build the energy and confidence of key stakeholders in the potential for an improved infrastructure that delivers the original vision of SBIF (above).
- To establish a register of all operational recording schemes and their operators so that data flows in Scotland are well-understood.
- To establish what funding and other income sources sustain the current infrastructure and what sources may continue to be available, or become available, in future.
- To hold stakeholder interviews to gain their current perspectives and to consult stakeholders on the infrastructure that they and their sector would need to meet their requirements.
- To run stakeholder workshops to identify the options for how these needs could best be fulfilled centrally, nationally and locally, and to evaluate these options in order to identify the preferred one(s).
- To identify where improved use of technology can help reduce duplication of effort and increase the efficiency of the biological recording infrastructure (so that data are made available for use and re-use).
- To identify what transition arrangements would be necessary to implement the preferred option(s).

Outcomes of this Review:

- Clarity on what systems and services should be provided centrally, nationally or locally so that these can be developed and managed in perpetuity.
- Clarity on what recording schemes and tools are in operation for recorders to contribute to with confidence so that recording schemes and recorders are supported and encouraged, and data flows work.
- Clarity on the requirements for the data and services that would meet the needs of all sectors so that operational, strategic and statutory needs are fulfilled.
- Clarity on the way in which an open data business model will work - with key stakeholders' commitment and goodwill - so that insights from added-value data are achievable for all.
- Clarity on what the transition from the existing infrastructure to the future one will entail so that key stakeholders can be supported to make the transition successfully.

7. Constraints and assumptions

The greatest constraint will be the availability of resources that can be committed to undertaking the Review. We assume that all stakeholders are willing to participate as fully as they can in the Review.

SBIF is only able to make recommendations and so a constraint may be that we have no particular authority to bring about any changes and improvements to the infrastructure. We assume that we will collectively identify and engender an infrastructure that organisations and individuals will be motivated and committed to bring about.

We also assume that the findings of the review may be of interest in other countries of the UK and so we assume that we will keep key stakeholders in England, Northern Ireland and Wales fully informed and, particularly where an organisation operates across the UK, we will seek their views and include them in the Review.

8. Stakeholders and circulation

Draft versions of this paper will be circulated to our primary stakeholder, the SBIF Advisory Group for their comment and approval. Once approved, this paper will be circulated to a wider set of stakeholders for their information:

Version	Circulated to	Purpose
Pre-approval drafts	SBIF Review Working Group (via email)	For drafting
Pre-approval drafts	SBIF Advisory Group (via email)	For comment and improvement
Version for approval	SBIF Advisory Group (via email)	For approval
Approved version	Senior stakeholders in Scotland and key stakeholders in other UK countries (via email)	For information
Approved version	All stakeholders (via the SBIF website)	For information

9. Approvals

This paper requires the approval of the SBIF Advisory Group:

Name	Role	Organisation	Approval date
Jo Porter	Academia rep	Heriot-Watt	05/09/2016 (assumed)
Claire Lacey	CIEEM rep	SWBSG	16/09/2016 by phone
Guy Harewood	Local Authorities rep	Stirling Council	05/09/2016
Jonathan Willet	BRISC rep	BRISC	05/09/2016
Nick Fraser	Museums rep	NMS	05/09/2016
Jo Judge	NBN rep	NBN Trust	05/09/2016
Ellen Wilson	NGOs rep/SBIF Chair	RSPB	05/09/2016
Craig Macadam	NGOs rep	BugLife	05/09/2016
Sandra Marks	Scottish Gov rep	Scottish Gov.	02/09/2016 by email
Iain Macgowan	SNH rep	SNH	05/09/2016
Sebastian Howell	Scottish Gov rep	Marine Scotland	03/08/2016
Scot Mathieson	SEPA rep	SEPA	05/09/2016
Graeme Wilson/Mark Pollitt	LERCs rep	TWIC/DGERC	25/09/2016 by email
David Roy	Academia/iRecord rep	BRC/CEH	05/09/2016
Gill Dowse	NGOs rep	SWT	05/09/2016
Andy Ford	National Parks rep	CNP	05/09/2016

Brief prepared by:
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Christine Johnston, NBN Scottish Liaison Officer
1 August 2016; updated on 23 August 2016