

National Biodiversity Network Trust

Board of Trustees

MINUTES: 9th November 11am – 3.00pm



Darwin Centre 8th floor, Natural History Museum, London

Present:

Professor Michael Hassell (Chair)
Andy Clements
Jo Judge
Tom Webb
Andrew Wood
Mark Diamond
Matt Frost (Representing MBA)

In attendance:

Giselle Sterry (*Minutes*)
Mandy Rudd (Representing ALERC)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Paul Rose, Ian Owens, John Davy Bowker, Helen Wilkinson, Roddy Fairley John Davy-Bowker, Richard Pywell, Tim Hill, Alan Stewart and Sarah Hyslop.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Welcome to Matt Frost standing in for Jen Ashworth.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

3 Nov 2015

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

Action: DISCHARGED – HW emailed JJ in July

24 Feb 2016

AP4; To circulate the recorder motivation report to the Board **ACTION: SH**

Action: DISCHARGED

AP7; Investigate the withdrawal of the OS survey access for LERC's

Action: CARRIED FORWARD JJ

6 July 2016

AP1; To draft an open data policy **ACTION: JJ and team**

Action: CARRIED FORWARD

AP2; Draft a project plan for the transitional phase of the Atlas development and detail finances, timescales, actions, resources. **ACTION JJ and team**

Action: CARRIED FORWARD

AP3; To have an item at the November to discuss open data and how this benefits the data providers

Action: CARRIED FORWARD to February 2017 Board

AP4; To start conversations with agency contacts on the transfer of funds for Gateway / Atlas from JNCC to the NBN. **ACTION JJ and team**

Action: CARRIED FORWARD

AP5; To discuss with BTO possibility of assisting with hosting. **ACTION JJ/CSIRO**

Action: DISCHARGED

AP6; To give approval and any comments such as possible benefits of membership to AW/GS as soon as possible so that the scheme can be worked upon prior to wider consultation. **ACTION Board**

Action: DISCHARGED

AP7; To inform the Charity Commission of the error with the NBN accounts and seek their advice. **ACTION SH**

Action: DISCHARGED

AP8; To give suggestions on who we can invite to the Nottingham in Parliament day and advise if you would like to be involved in this event. **ACTION Board**

Action: DISCHARGED

4. Chairman's remarks

The CEO report deals with most of the current matters to be discussed.

5. Items of business from the Chief Executive

Chief Executive Report November 2016 (TTE16-03 Paper 1)

Please refer to the paper for the full detail.

CEO Objectives

MH concerned not strong enough to manage risks. AW comfortable if Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) puts into place a balanced budget for 2018-2019. Should chase up the funding for the Atlas. The Board trust JJ to make the right decision. To fix the MTFS now to meet longer term security.

AC expressed concern about reviewing the NBN Strategy and Action Plan as the NBN Board would be disappointed if we reached a place where the strategy needs ripping up and starting again as the Board are very supportive of the Strategy. AW explained that this objective was a chance for JJ to re-assess and bring any actions to board if necessary.

To include 'identified' funding streams rather than 'potential' within the MTFS and to have a draft taken to the February 2017 Board meeting with this to be agreed and in place by 31st March 2017.

AP1: To take the revised MTFS to the February Board and have this agreed by the end of this FY. **ACTION: JJ**

Strategic Aim 1

I. BTO dataset has been successful on the trial platform.
Noted lack of interest in GPS despite effort by NBN Secretariat. Engagement difficult – affecting delivering strategy.

II. To increase engagement of the working groups but if we are not getting responses, how do the Board feel about accepting NBN Secretariat recommendations? Circulated to the Board and working group.

Feedback received from Andy Musgrove, Tom Hunt and Martin Harvey. JJ confirmed those who have responded are broadly in support of NBN S's recommendations.

AP2: To check if MBA have offered support with the working groups and to let Matt Frost know. **ACTION: JJ**

JJ to report back by February on where we are so that we can move forward.

Strategic Aim 2

Relates to issues around open access. Broadly supported however there are concerns such as ensuring mechanisms for supplying approved organisations with capture resolution data.

JJ has spoken with David Roy regarding whether the NBN Sec should help with the transfer of data to NE/EA or if this is not part of their remit and would undermine having the Atlas in place. The Board advice is required here.

- NE – only support open data and funding may not be available if there were access controls in place.
- NRW – more amenable to help. Ideally would want a 'one stop shop' for biodiversity records. They will need to manage access to sensitive records (according to an agreed list or lists of species that are considered sensitive under EIR) and end-users may want to view these alongside non-sensitive records. Having a single location to share all species records also helps data providers with dissemination and in adopting an efficient collect once, process once, publish once and use many times approach to data management. There can be a policy of any species that is not sensitive would be open by 2020 and those agreed as sensitive would have authenticated access. HW can share the NRW policy if that would be useful.
- SNH – currently working for them so no view on this.
- EA – MD concern that resolution won't be good enough. EA would like open data to continue.

There would be a cost to NBN Secretariat for alternative / interim databases – these costs are currently unknown.

Estimated that £40K for development required for access controls and increased hosting costs.

The Board notes that all publicly available data would be transferred over to the Atlas at the same or better resolution. Currently data provided at capture resolution then blurred for public display on the NBN Gateway. The data transferred to the NBN Atlas will be blurred before uploading except for protected / sensitive species which will be blurred within the Atlas.

There is still work to be done surrounding the mechanisms for accessing capture resolution data for Sensitive species.

MR – NSS don't want to put on at full resolution yet. Need to accept that this will take several years but in the short term will enable them to share data.

Board agreed to remain firm on no access controls. This does however take away the method of transfer data. Do we want to provide a means to transfer data to agencies?

Agencies could gain from a transitional arrangement and NBN Secretariat could facilitate. This could be offered for free if data can be made available from them at capture resolution.

The risk to this is that it means running a parallel system to the NBN Atlas for a fixed time unless CEH /BRC continue to manage the current Gateway. JJ to look into idea of two year transitional arrangement for transferring data subject to costs.

Creative Commons License

The NBN Atlas currently has 3 licenses that match GBIF plus government license. Legal advice has been received from lawyers on breach of licenses. A fixed charge could be added to the terms and we can state that we reserve the right to claim for damages. This would be up to the data owners to police. The charge should be more than getting the report from the LRC. To think about how we can resource this area within the NBN Secretariat.

Thought needs to be given with defining 'commercial use' Attribution should be included if this isn't already. Having the fixed charge detailed in the terms could be a good deterrent and would be good to pursue as will help with data provider concerns.

It was suggested that members could potentially pay more to use the data commercially but this could be difficult as who would receive this money? This also goes against the open data aim.

AP3: To develop the fixed charge for breach of licenses and report back to the Feb Board. **ACTION: JJ**

BTO and others have a peer review of open data in consultation with partners. AM and JJ to liaise on this and include JNCC and agencies.

GBIF

Data reduced as no transfer process and introduction of licenses for GBIF data. NBN Secretariat working with JNCC to upload starting from this week.

In addition low response from data partners to license options. 120 data sets to GBIF plus Atlas uploads which have link to GBIF.

Strategic Aim 3

To come back to

Strategic Aim 4

To note separate paper; Atlas Development Update (*TTE16-03 Paper 2*)

JJ confirmed reasons for the change from Atlas of Living (country) to NBN Atlas with country name following and change of URL for these.

Apparent that Gateway is unreliable with increased downtime. Need to have core Atlas running by April 2017. Phase one will have functionality of the Gateway with no loss of functionality.

During 2017-18 there will be added extras such as increased functionality and specific functionality for each country platform.

Discussed at Atlas steering group and all are happy with this approach.

Mid Jan there will be a soft launch with the core Atlas with user testing taking place. This will be more thorough than the NBN Atlas Scotland.

In the future will be other users e.g. citizen scientists, education institutions as used by Atlas of Living Australia.

Do we have a plan B if this isn't up and running by March 2017? The Gateway would have to be extended if this was the case but CEH/JNCC are supportive of getting the Atlas platforms up and running by March.

Concern about impact on web services on websites. It could be possible to use volunteers to see what others are using and take this into account.

A comms plan will be launched for the move to the Atlas platforms and there could be delays with data licensing for example, but these are being followed up with data partners. We will know by the February Board what has been achieved.

Scotland

250 feedbacks received – a lot achieved. Aware UK Atlas is a priority now.

Wales

Steering Group meeting took place last week and all funding has now been received. Those involved want to see a version by March 2017. CSIRO confident they can meet with soft launch Feb 2017.

England

NE keen but budget not yet committed, Government Digital Services approval required. JJ meeting with Andy Webb 10.11.16 to discuss. Money may not be received in this financial year. £69K has been set aside for this – TBC

Condition to funding is likely to be open data.

Northern Ireland

JJ has met with them and NIEA have funding set aside which has been agreed in principle.

Spatial References

Ask Board to be aware – see the CEO report for the full detail here.

The steering groups have agreed to proceed. Will add in OS at a later date.

Sensitive Species

Will be blurred to an agreed resolution, which will vary between species and possibly between countries. For access at higher resolution a higher access system will need to be developed. Methods for this are being discussed in steering groups as a high priority.

CSIRO working on enhancements which will make this easier and this will need to be developed early in 2017. The costs for this should be split between the country agencies.

Strategic Aim 5

JJ advised that RS is leaving and EV will take on aspects of her role. The Board were asked to agree for the recruitment of an internal developer which will eliminate some of the risks and reduce costs. FMC supported this suggested in Oct. RSPB offered to host a developer at Sandy and JNCC and BTO also offered hosting of this post.

The aim is to be independent of external developers. As open access platform can link to open source developers. There is a risk of higher staff turnover within the new post.

To review the budget and detail what effect this will have. There will still be input from CSIRO in 2017 so this can be reduced.

AP4: To share the job spec/ description and budget for the new developer post with the Board. **ACTION: JJ**

The Board gave thanks to RS for her input and dedication while in post with the NBN and wished her success in the future.

Contract Extensions

Board agreed to delegate these decisions to CEO in future. [REDACTED]

Board gave thanks to GS for the work done on the Nottingham In parliament Day event in October which was a huge successes.

Risk Register (TTE16-03 Paper 3)

Please see the paper for the full detail.

More information is required on the mitigation so that Board can see improvements however the risks have been well managed to date. Commentary would help e.g. risk getting better. Concern that the current register is too detailed for Board level. More difference is required between columns 4 and 9.

Main areas for discussion are; Atlas funding and open access. At the Feb Board to report on 'red' risks and highlight mitigation etc.

AP5: To review the risk register and take this for discussion at the February Board.

ACTION: JJ

Lunch

The SBIF Review: briefing for the NBN Trustees – Ellen Wilson RSPB and SBIF Chair (TTE16-03 Paper 8)

Ellen Wilson gave presentation to the Board on the SBIF review which included methodology and who is involved. Copies of the slides are available should the Board wish to have a copy.

Final recommendations will be made in 2017 Q3/Q4

This is building on the NBN and SBIF want the NBN to support this review.

EW asked if she could return to the February Board to provide an update on the review.

The idea of code of conduct by partner's organisations was suggested to EW to consider as part of the review to aid co-operative working.

6. Finance and Management Issues

Finance Report for Period 1 and 2 (TTE16-03 Papers 4 and 5)

These are broadly okay. £45K down on the year due to Atlas variances. Anticipating spend to be the same as projected therefore a smaller carry forward to 17-18. Atlas position will resolve itself.

Audit Position and update following letter sent to Charity Commission (TTE16-03 Paper 6)

A discrepancy was discovered by a staff member at our previous accountants. Another accountant carried out the review for 2015-2016 and this resulted in the donated services figures changing for 2014-2015. The Charity Commission agreed that we should resubmit the new accounts for 14-15 and the Trustees were praised for the prompt action taken on this matter. AW has now signed off revised accounts for 14-15 and 15-16. There should be a competitive tender from possible accountants for the review for next year.

Draft Budget for 2017-2018 (TTE16-03 Paper 7)

Carried forward reserves are down – deficit budget for 17-18. The ideal position for 17-18 would be a balanced budget. Reserves will be too low for 18-19 – need to meet three months running costs. The reserves need to be built to a safe level. The budget allows for currently committed expenditure plus the extra expenditure of the new proposed developer post plus the extension of the two temporary posts. To think about whether it is possible to

explore similar roles for other countries if match funding / sponsored roles can be found in England, Ireland or Wales.

There is a need for the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The budget relies on potential funders not actual income secured. Still dependent on funding from statutory agencies who are also under pressure. This will continue but need to be more resilient and find funding from elsewhere. Investment may be required for marketing which should in turn bring the income in.

Ian Boyd is supportive in principle – JJ to speak to him and highlight value of what NBN does.

Hosting – currently looking for sponsors. We need to promote the value of open data on gov.uk and liaise with Mark Stevenson at EA about data sets.

NBN should be recognised as an 'authoritative' source so we could look to have a link from gov.uk to NBN Atlas. There is also an opportunity to promote SBIF findings to government to highlight partnership working. We need to clearly re-instate the business case of NBN to show that we are saving partners money. FMC will review the business case

7. Information Items

Membership Review Update

The full consultation has gone out. AW speaking at the conference. Confident that new scheme will be in place by April 2017. Report to the Board and promote further.

HR Staff policies (TTE16-03 Paper 9)

JJ reviewing HR policies as part of her objectives

Staff Salary benchmarking and performance review (TTE16-03 Paper 10)

Comments from HW via email; Good to be clear about why we need this - job evaluation can be costly, disruptive and time consuming - agree that we need to make sure that NBN salaries and total reward packages are comparative and fair. As a small charity perhaps (as suggested) a quick comparison with similar organisations with similarly 'weighted' roles would be enough. Or at least should highlight any anomalies.

Communications Report (TTE16-03 Paper 11)

Board pleased that conference on target for number of attendees.

8. AOB

JJ seeking Board advice on dealing with vexatious public comments anti NBN
Think about general code of conduct across the network

Comments from HW via email;

HW would like to offer a presentation/update on the new legislation in Wales at a future Trustee meeting or NBN conference. They have 2 new exciting new Acts in Wales that are of relevance to the NBN and some of you will already be aware of these.

- the Environment (Wales) Act and
- the wellbeing of future generations Act.

NRW launched the first State of natural Resources (Wales) Report (SoNaRR) at the Welsh Assembly last month as the first step in implementing the Environment Act (link [1]). The next phase will be Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy that is informed by the SoNaRR report and will set out the policy steer for the next cycle. This policy is due to be released in December. HW will send a link to this when it is released. The next step for NRW is to produce area statements that are the evidence base to help communities and others decide on priorities in a local (or wider) area.

9. Mark papers as confidential

The following papers will be marked as confidential

TTE16-03 Paper 1 - redact section with reference to contracts and personal details.

TTE16-03 Paper 3

TTE16-03 Paper 4 and 5

TTE16-03 Paper 6

TTE16-03 Paper 7

TTE16-03 Paper 10

7. Date of next meeting

15th February 2017

5th July 2017

AP6: To set further dates for November 2017, February and July 2018

ACTION: SH

Signed:

Chair _____

Date: _____

Action Points24 February 2016 Meeting

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