Wales NBN Strategy Refresh Workshop

Aberystwyth University, 13th October 2014

Introduction

The National Biodiversity Network is refreshing its strategic direction in 2014. Drivers for this refresh include the recent changes in NBN Trust staff, technological advances for biological recording and data curation and the ever changing landscape of biodiversity activity in the UK. The current strategy, published in 2010, is now four years old so a refresh is timely. Preliminary work began on this strategy refresh over 18 months ago through two Extraordinary General Meetings (in Feb 2013 and Feb 2014) at which a draft skeleton structure for a new strategy was prepared.

The NBN Trust sought input from Network members and associates, from data providers and potential collaborators and NBN Gateway users throughout the UK via a Strategy Refresh Questionnaire. A summary of the 225 responses to this questionnaire can be found here.

The NBN Trust organised a series of workshops throughout the United Kingdom (in Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) to gather a more country focussed perspective of the current state of the NBN, how people would like the NBN to work within each country, and what the different partners of the NBN, including the NBN Trust, could do to achieve the strategic aims.

The objective of this engagement was to ensure as many people were listened to during the course of the Strategy refresh (from the largest to the smallest recording schemes, from government agencies and non-government organisations to environmental planners and local authorities, and from universities and research institutes to ecological consultants). This work was to ensure the collaborative nature of the Network was truly reflected in the Strategy, that all voices were heard and that all participants had the opportunity to influence the development of the new 10 year Strategy.

Wales Workshop

The following document summarises the outcomes of the first Strategy Refresh Workshop held on the 13th October 2014 in Aberystwyth. This workshop was attended by representatives from the four Local Record Centres in Wales, BTO Wales, Natural Resources Wales, the Welsh Government, Field Studies Council, NBN Trust, individual recorders and the Welsh Wildlife Trust. The workshop was facilitated by an external facilitator to allow all attendees, including the NBN Trust to be engaged with, and involved in, the discussions throughout the day.

Objectives for the workshops
• To provide feedback on the results from the strategy refresh questionnaire
• To highlight and discuss major issues and ensure all voices are heard
• To brainstorm ways forward for the NBN
• To detail the timeframe and process for the final stages of the refresh

This workshop also provided a forum for people to meet and network and to continue strengthening the collaborative nature of the National Biodiversity Network.

Delegates were:

Helen Wilkinson	Natural Resources Wales
Janet Imlach	Biodiversity Information Service for Powys & Brecon Beacons National Park
Colin Chapman	Welsh Government
Adam Rowe	SEWBReC
Roy Tapping	Cofnod
Colin Russell	West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre
Barnaby Letheren	Natural Resources Wales
Richard Burkmar	Field Studies Council
Rachel Taylor	British Trust for Ornithology
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
John Sawyer	NBN Trust
Rachel Stroud	NBN Trust
Steve Chambers	Welsh Government
John Bratton	Independent Recorder
Sarah Keast Facilitator	Sarah Keast Associates

Workshop Structure

The format of the day was structured around the five proposed Strategic Aims for the NBN. These are;

a. Capturing, diversifying and enhancing wildlife data

e UK. It includes the development and maintenance of
l verification of raw biological data through survey and

b. Making wildlife information available to those who need it

ta to create wildlife information for use by educators,
. It includes increasing the interoperability of data

c. Captivating and engaging people about wildlife

it is, why it is special, what it does for us. This is
ecording and being involve d.

d. Providing the best wildlife information management

ge and dissemination infrastructure is the best
rd centres etc).

e. Supporting the Network to support wildlife

the on-going development of the NBN, its
NBN Trust.

These aims were discussed as a collective group with a particular focus on what is currently working well and what issues and challenges exist. Priority issues raised were then developed into objectives which formed the basis of afternoon discussions. Workshop attendees worked to determine what needed to be done, how it would be done (including options) and who would do the work.

The outcomes of these discussions will be used to inform the final NBN Strategy, making the Strategic Aims realistic and achievable and developing ownership of the NBN Strategy across the Network, as well as identifying areas where the NBN can have a more country focussed approach.

Workshop Outcomes

Feedback to the NBN Trust over the last five months is that the current level of ownership, and feeling of involvement and engagement with the NBN is extremely varied, and this was reflected at the Strategy Workshop. Themes which arose from the workshop discussions included

- **Membership –** What is membership? What does being 'a member' mean?
- **Conflicting business models** – The NBN ambition to make data freely available is currently conflicting with the business models of many of the partners within the Community. This needs to be resolved in order for the NBN model to work efficiently
- **Terminology** – Confusion around terminology (NBN, NBN Gateway and NBN Trust). This is causing tension throughout the Network
- **NBN remit** – There is a requirement for clarification as to the remit of the 'NBN'. This links to terminology as currently people are seeing the 'NBN' as the 'NBN Trust' rather than the wider partnership.
- **Roles and Responsibilities-** There is a requirement for agreed clarification as to the roles and responsibilities of the partners of the NBN. It was suggested that the table presented on page 28 could provide a good structure in clarifying these roles and responsibilities.
- **Collaboration** – To create a greater sense of partnership, increased collaborative working would be beneficial. This could be via joint bids, ensuring partners are involved in projects such as State of Nature and increased involvement in Welsh data initiatives (LRC Data Access Tool, Welsh Government Data Portal, Data Research Hub)
- **Communication** - There is a role in sharing stories and celebrating success with one another across the NBN to increase the sense of Network and move perspectives away from thinking just about the NBN Gateway.

Identification of current issues in Wales

a. Capturing, diversifying and enhancing wildlife data

of
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The current issues that need to be overcome to realise the full potential of this strategic aim were discussed. They can be separated into two areas
- data
- relationships

These included the problems resulting from the large gaps in the current data holdings, which includes the lack of negative record collection. Currently it is not possible to see from the Gateway if an area with no record symbolises no species present, or just no data. The gaps in our data holdings are preventing us

knowing what we don't know, which is hampering our ability to work efficiently. Other issues included the need for one portal for submission as data flows are currently too complicated.

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Many partners are engaged with the concept of the NBN, and the NBN model, but do not share data, or promote the model when working with certain audiences. There have been mistakes in the past such as the previous State of Nature report not using LRC data which has not helped to build strong relationships. It was discussed that there is a role for the NBN partnership to support these initiatives, and make sure that all available information, resources and contacts are used. Local authorities should be making much more use of Local Record Centre data sets and is a 'local issue' of LRCs operating at grassroutes.

Three key objectives arose from these discussion:
- How do we plug gaps in our data holdings?
- How can we simplify and clarify the data capture processes?
- How can we enhance and add value to existing data holdings by sharing and combining other data layer?

Potential solutions, and ways of working for the above objectives are highlighted below.

How do we plug gaps in our data holdings?
- Promotion of planning applications supporting data which is being shared with LRCs to upload to the NBN Gateway
- Upload of remote sensed Phase 1 habitat data to the NBN Gateway with commenting options for 'wiki' approach to validation
- Build closer relationships with National and Local Schemes and Societies relating to underrepresented taxon groups. Emphasise use and outcomes of the data as motivation to sharing
- Promote taxon and geographic areas which are poorly recorded to enthuse people to help plug the gaps

Simplification of data capture processes
- Promotion of data interchange format so any tools which are developed provide interoperable data
- Ability to edit own records through iRecord
- Engage social media to promote standards and to secure records

Enhancing and adding value by sharing and combining other data layers (e.g. habitat, geology, soil etc)
- Automated prompts for linked species. E.g. when recording a butterfly record, there is an automated prompt to record the local, or host plant or co-occurring species
- Include co-occurrence factors in Record Cleaner Rulesets
- Expand Record Cleaner Rulesets
- Analyse Record Cleaner Rulesets for identifying under recorded taxa
- Linking data collectors and taxon experts with technical specialists and developers
- Create, promote and support standards
- Production and consumption of WMS/WFS so species records can be overlaid on habitat. Geology and climate etc
- Visualisations eg heat maps or migrating species
- Combining NBN and LRC species data (LRC Wales Data Access Tool)

Data licensing
       o   Failure to come back when requesting higher resolution data systems complexity

Aim 2
b. Making wildlife information available to those who need it

Discussions around this aim included the need the make data more visible and available to ensure that those who need to use the data, know it is available and can access it. It was highlighted that State of Environment Report (such as the State of Nature Report) is a very positive use of data, and it is important that all available data are used. It was raised that gaps in our data holdings are affecting the ability to efficiently carry out State of Environment, and State of Natural Resource reporting. It is hoped that the Wales Environment Information Hub will go some way to helping identify and plug data gaps and make wildlife information available to those within Wales.

Two key objectives arose from these discussions:
- Making data visible and available
- Make data available and useful for State of Environment reporting and Welsh Environment Information Hub

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How can we make data more visible?
-                              held by NBN partner organisations, which is currently not shared on the NBN Gateway. This catalogue would include the status of the data (digitised, in paper records, survey type etc), contact information, and could be used to identify who has what data. From this, it would be possible to promote the value of data, identify the resources required to mobilise these data, and allow people to see what data are available and then support the mobilisation of these data. This catalogue could be fed and promoted by the Welsh Environment Information Forum as well as the Wales Environment Research Hub.

- A review of the tools used to assess the level of access given to   to inform people why they can only download data at certain resolutions, and also to enable data providers to decide the download and visible resolution of sensitive records.

- Data providers may not want their data on NBN but will interact with other data providers, for example LRCs.

How can we make data more available?
- Any data that is collected with public funding, is public data and therefore should be shared with the NBN, even if sharing the data is not the main aim of the project.
- Improve to upload process for putting data on the NBN Gateway including simplifying the metadata, streamlining the interface with Recorder6 and increasing support and training in preparing data for upload to the NBN Gateway.
- NBN is an advocate for data sharing and could be helping to support the funding required for data management.

- There needs to be more two way flow of data both in and out of the NBN Gateway.
- Increasing local verification of records would help create a shared sense of partnership.

Things for NBN to do with data
- Wales Environment Data Hub - the NBN should become the biological data partner in this initiative
- Better indicators (more taxa etc) = good indicators (sustainable, believable)
- Responsive cross-data modelling

c. Captivating and engaging people about wildlife

Discussions were had around the need to influence others, especially high level funders to fully recognise the value of biological data in captivating and engaging people about wildlife. It was raised that perhaps this Strategic Objective should be "Captivating and engaging people about [recording] wildlife" or "Captivating and engaging people about [wildlife data]" to give a narrower focus and more reference to data. The NBN needs to be able to express the added value of the NBN to gain more buy in and support and there needs to be greater integration between the partners.

Two key objectives arose from these discussions:
- Create and promote engagement which adds value of being NBN
- What could NBN do which is unique to NBN in captivating and engaging people?

It was important to clarify what the role of the NBN is, and what is not the role of the NBN within this Strategic Objective. The roles of National Schemes and Societies, Conservation NGOs and LRCs were discussed, though it is important to note that this is not an extensive list of the roles of the partners within the NBN.

It was identified that;
- National Schemes and Societies have a strong role to play within the NBN in **verification and identification of records**, creation of **Atlases**, support for difficult species and **engaging with their experts**.
- Conservation NGOs have an important role to play in **public engagement** about nature and on the ground conservation in **protecting habitats**.
- Local Record Centres are able to provide regional network engagement on a wide variety of areas including **promoting local people**, **telling regional and local stories** about wildlife recording and species, **promoting local species** wildlife, **engaging with local data users** and working closely with **local authorities**.

What could NBN do which is unique to NBN in captivating and engaging people?
There needs to be a stronger federated brand promoting the Network (third party promotion) rather than the "NBN" which often gets misconstrued that this is the NBN Trust.

Support
On the other hand, the NBN could be collectively working towards creating and promoting data standards (metadata, attributes, exchange), promoting obscure, unusual and under recorded species and developing training support by NBN members in ID, Recording, Standards, Verification.

<u>Communication</u>
There needs to be more celebration of the people involved in data collection and the diversity of data providers and users, including sharing stories about the use of the data to promote the value of data sharing and data collaboration. Additional stories should include promoting the power that merged data creates (overlaid data sets demonstrating British ecology and autoecology), demonstrating gaps in data holdings and advising how to plug gaps. Using the data holdings in the NBN Gateway to show what has happened to species through examining data over time and look at changing species distributions. A key theme was the role in delivering devolved messages at country level (Wales, Scotland, England, Northern Ireland)

<u>NBN Gateway</u>
It was suggested that a new NBN Gateway interface would help in captivating people about wildlife, recording and wildlife data giving quicker access to key information, including status', photos and better signposting to the partners of the NBN. The NBN should be sharing more habitat data which can be used for promotion of ecosystem services and natural capital via the NBN Gateway and also demonstrating our place in the world via linking with GBIF and other international partners.

d. Providing the best wildlife information management

There was very little discussion around this Strategic Aim throughout the day and it was not the focus of detailed solution discussions. It was identified that there is a requirement for streaming "fit for purpose" data from central databases to the NBN gateway, which whilst this may create duplication of records, will make data flows and data sharing more efficient. The attendees at the workshop wanted to know what the unique number of records are on the Gateway and it was suggested that this would be a good metric to include in the forthcoming NBN Gateway Dashboard. As technology develops there is a requirement for an Indica toolbox for app development which needs to support standard recording including who, what, where, when.

e. Supporting the Network to support wildlife

Discussions were held around membership, what does membership mean and what is the benefit of being a member. It was raised that is is important the the NBN is seen as more than the data and the Gateway and there needs to be less focus on this, and more on the partnership and sharing good practice. The NBN should be focusing on helping partners to function and connect with one another.

There were many discussions around the conflicting business models between the NBN Gateway and the LRCs which include problems around the funding models of the LRCs, resourcing of LRCs and be ability to share data freely between partners. Until the issue of the conflicting business models is resolved, there will be issues with having complete data holdings on the NBN Gateway. It was identified that perhaps if LRCs provided data at 10km resolution on the NBN Gateway this would act as an advert to users, to increase the flow of data requests coming to the LRC. The value of data is in the information that can be applied to this

data to create knowledge. A discussion was started around what is the true value of location information and knowledge over national information and knowledge and this needs to be explored further.

Other issues included
- NBN currently feels very anglo-centric
- NBN historical database is not saleable as voluntary collection
- Currently only private sector funding is in planning

Three objectives were identified from these discussions:
- Develop and grow a NBN in Wales and UK
- Generate ownership of NBN (in Wales)
- Develop sustainable business model for NBN from national to local levels

How to generate increased ownership?
- Conference in Wales once every four years with Wales specific conference topics
- Wales focused NBN Data & Liaison Officers
- Waes NBN Champions within the community
- Country specific/country linked data feeds to and from the NBN Gateway
- Joint Branding - the NBN Gateway has become an identity which is now very removed from the NBN Community. Perhaps change the NBN name
- More Joint Bids
- More Regional Interaction
- Identify what being a member of the NBN currently means to people, and what people would like being a member of the NBN to mean
- Need to understand and act on issues in Wales

Develop sustainable business model for NBN from national to local levels
- Need to be able to understand the needs to users, and act on this, to be able to promote the benefits of having data on the NBN Gateway, and being part of the NBN
- Channeling planning work through the Planning Portal would sustain an income for LRCs, with Local Authorities having access to data. Partners would include LRCs, NRW, WG, LA, NBN, NSS and would be an integrated tool to ensure all planning applications incorporated biodiversity data for a small universal charge, which would be distributed to the data providers.
- More Joint Bids
    - Data management needs to be integrated in all business and projects and data sharing needs to be integrated and not restricted
    - End to End process of projects needs to be considered, to ensure that data is not only relevant for the lifetime of a given project
- Mobilising public sector records
    - Consultants want all data in one place for the lifetime of their project. If this data can then come into LRCs and be promoted more widely, more consultants would have access to more data.
- Valuing biodiversity within farmland agri-environment schemes
    - part of the application should be the use of information
- Education
    - we all have a corporate social responsibility which could provide a funding stream for using biodiversity data in education

Appendix
Attach: Agenda