

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum

Sector Discussion Report: data collection, management & sharing

Smith Museum Stirling

10 – 1pm. Friday 18th May 2012

Points agreed from the discussion.

The meeting was very productive with over 20 people attending. A remarkable consensus was achieved about what SBIF needed to deliver. The idea of linking local data hubs and local volunteering hubs was very strongly supported and would help deliver national and organisational targets relating to biological data collection.

The key points have been listed below

National issues.

- If there are good quality keys available for taxa then they should be made available online.
- Verifiers for all or most taxa should be available in Scotland or UK, this needs to be checked and the gaps identified. (instant action).
- Structures in place that allow people to progress as recorders from absolute beginners to taxonomic specialists.
- Need to develop specialists but also to deliver on general habitat and species data needs.
- Need to identify and mobilise key data sets on paper or in notebooks (instant action)
- Target specific groups who are out and about and who could record but don't, e.g. Golfers. Give them a habitat specific, short list of key species and offer training in ID. (instant action)

Regional

- Regional Hubs covering all of Scotland need to be developed for managing biological data and co-ordinating volunteering effort and development.
- A need to designate species across the taxa to be recorded, that are unmistakable and under-recorded species so that anyone can do it to raise awareness of the breadth of our taxa. See HBRG's TRY. (instant action)
- A need to identify sites/areas that are currently under-recorded and highlight them to recorders/ organisations.

- Processes need to be put in place to mobilise biological data gathered as part of the planning process. The Chief Planner to inform Local Planning Authorities that this data needs to be supplied to Regional Hubs. (instant action).

Organisations.

- By liaising with the regional volunteering/ data hubs they can feed in their priorities for recording and liaise with interested recorders to get this done. This will greatly help these organisations deliver their internal data objectives/ statutory requirements.

Summary

The status quo regarding managing and developing volunteers and collecting biological data is not delivering for either the volunteers or the organisations wanting their data. A cooperative and comprehensive approach through regional hubs covering all of Scotland will deliver much more value than the cost of funding them, particularly if the volunteer's time is factored in.

Graeme Wilson and Jonathan Willet. May 2012.