

National Biodiversity Network Trust

Board of Trustees

MINUTES: 5 July 2017

11am – 3.00pm

Darwin Centre 8th floor, Natural History Museum, London



Present:

Professor Michael Hassell (Chair)
Jo Judge
Andrew Wood (until lunchtime)
John Davy Bowker
Tim Hill
Richard Pywell
Tom Webb
Paul Rose
Helen Wilkinson
Roddy Fairley
Mark Diamond
Andy Clements (until lunchtime)
Jen Ashworth (until lunchtime)

In attendance:

Sarah Hyslop (*Minutes*)
Mandy Rudd (Representing ALERC)
Matt Frost (MBA rep)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Ian Owens and Alan Stewart

2. Welcome and Introductions

The Board welcomed Jen Ashworth back to the meeting after being off on maternity leave.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

It was noted that there was an incorrect spelling of the name Krestovnikoff which will be amended on the February minutes.

Actions from 6 July 2016 Meeting

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

CARRIED FORWARD to November Board when a discussion will also take place around this item in line with AP3 below.

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

CARRIED FORWARD to November 2017 Board

AP1: To take the revised MTFs to the February Board and have this agreed by the end of this FY. **ACTION: JJ DISCHARGED; on agenda**

AP6: To set further dates for November 2017, February and July 2018 **ACTION: SH CARRIED FORWARD; date set for November 2017 (8th) to set dates for 2018 once Board governance review has taken place**

Actions from 22nd February 2017 Meeting

AP1: To speak to Carl at the Open Data Institute regarding the Developer recruitment **DISCHARGED; JJ met with Carl at the ODI with no outcome to this matter**

AP2: To contact the Public Records Office regarding data held at JNCC which has not been transferred to the Atlas from the Gateway. **CARRIED FORWARD**

AP3: To inform the working group that a 'submit a sighting' function will be reinstated and unverified data will be made available on the NBN Atlas **DISCHARGED; this is in discussion**

AP4: To detail the staged approach from now until 2020 with the risks and how these will be managed. To circulate this to the Board in the next few weeks. **DISCHARGED; on agenda**

AP5: To firm up the commercial and non-commercial use information and provide some examples of what constitutes both. **DISCHARGED; this information is now on the NBN Atlas help pages**

AP6: To firm up the information on misuse and breach of licence and share this as required. **DISCHARGED; this will now be linked to the small claims court where we can develop forms, procedures and templates based on their information**

AP7: To secure Atlas funding from the agencies for the next three financial years as soon as possible. **DISCHARGED; ongoing maintenance costs received from NE for 17-18 and in discussions with SNH and NRW**

AP8: To contact all existing members to let them know the outcome of the membership review and what their new member category is called i.e. changed from bronze to organizational. **DISCHARGED**

4. Chairman's remarks

The Chairman shared with the Board that the first meeting of the Board governance review group has now taken place and the participants are; Jo Judge, Andrew Wood, Mandy Rudd, Helen Wilkinson and Roddy Fairley

5. Items of business from the Chief Executive

Chief Executive Report July 2017 (TTE17-02 Paper 1)

Please refer to the paper for the full detail.

Highlights

- The NBN Atlas received highly commended in the CIEEM NBGO impact awards. The Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area won overall and the Field Studies Council also received an award.

- A new Technical and Data Partner Support Officer has been recruited and her name is Sophia Ratcliffe. Sophia starts on Monday and she will be working part time until October when she will be working 30 hours per week. Sophia is based in Spain and will be employed as a consultant with regular review points.
- We have received £17K from the Isle of Man for an Atlas and this will cover the front-end development. They will also contribute towards the ongoing maintenance costs.

Strategic Aim 1

1. Transfer of data from the Gateway

The main reason for no transfer of data or delays in transfer from the Gateway to the Atlas was due to either data providers needing to update datasets or needing to have further discussions with their recorders.

2. Uploading data to the Atlas

There will be a 12-18 months interim phase for accepting the NBN exchange format then we will need to move towards just the Darwin Core and Darwin Core Archive. There is currently a transition script which transfers and maps the NBN exchange to the DWC on the Atlas.

Strategic Aim 2

3. Interim Capture Resolution Data

This has had to be delayed until the Autumn, as potential users (primarily LERCs) would like longer to consider whether this is the most appropriate way forward. If the answer is no, then the NBN Trust will not be in a position to commission the work from CEH. This may impact on funding currently provided to the NBN Trust by EA as there will be extra costs incurred by EA if they are no longer able to get the data they require via the NBN.

Strategic Aim 3

The relevant papers in this section will be taken as they appear on the agenda.

Strategic Aim 4

4. Data Management Infrastructure

The NBN Atlas launch went well and positive feedback has been received. There were three main issues on launch:

- a) Species search returning all results, not just species
- b) Site was running very slowly (after investigation this was found to be due to an issue with downloads)
- c) Taxonomy and UKSI were returning spurious results

All of these issues had now been dealt with.

In order to inform discussions on further functionality, stakeholder workshops will be held, the aim is to invite a wide range of participants, including steering group members.

It is unknown as to whether a separate NBN Atlas England platform will be required.

Current stats are as follows;

Registered users; 1K, visits 9K, averaging 500 users a week since its launch. In comparison to the Gateway, there were 3K users in the last 3 months.

Data partners cannot currently get access to download their own reports from the Atlas but we are looking to develop this functionality.

The Board gave thanks to the team and everyone involved for the smooth transition and launch of the NBN Atlas.

Licence summary

CC0; Can do anything with the data – no restrictions

CC-BY; No restrictions to use of data however data partners must be cited

OGL; As CC-BY. This licence is mainly used by government agencies, but can be used by anyone

CC-BY NC; As CC-BY, but data can only be used for non-commercial purposes

The majority of data on the NBN Atlas is currently under CC-BY NC but this is no surprise. Once we have a good commercial use policy in place with fixed charges for breaches of misuse then this should improve.

Interest has been expressed in “organizational” Atlas portals, e.g. Caring for Gods Acre, Merseyside BioBank and Merseyside LRC. Some other LRC’s would also like their own pages. This shows marketable product coming from the Atlas.

Strategic Aim 5

Business Plan (TTE17-01 P02) and NBN Strategic Action Plan (TTE17-02 P03)

These two documents have both been through FMC and some amends have been made based on their comments.

The Board are asked to comment and agree on the priorities.

There are some key items that need to be carried out on the Atlas such as verification, online recording and record cleaner rules. The wider network will need to be involved in order to take some of the priorities forward.

To note that the business plan risks do not match to the current separate risk register. For example, funding in the main risk register relates to overall funding of the Trust and not just the Atlas which has been secured for this year. To bear in mind however that uncertainty to future years funding could impact on this FY.

AP1: To detail whether the NBN Trust is lead and key organisations involved for this FY within the business plan (to match the information detailed on page 10) **ACTION: JJ**

This will need to be reviewed each year and any actions that haven’t been completed should be rolled over to the next year.

The Board gave thanks to the CEO for a well drafted and thought out business plan which shows a good balance of key priorities and bears in mind what is actually feasible.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (TTE17-02 P04)

Funds have been included for business as usual activity only.

To look for alternative funding streams so we are not so reliant on government funding which may be uncertain going forward.

AP2: To ensure that we have adequate insurance to cover us for any liabilities with the consultancy mentioned in the MTFS. **ACTION: JJ**

AP3: To have greater detail in the MTFs with regards to grants and which ones we may go for / include timescales / risks and likelihood.

ACTION: JJ

AP4: To develop criteria for what advertising we will accept and from whom.

ACTION: JJ and team

AP5: To give contacts details for resilient fund consultant and Digital Spring who can broker advertising on NGO websites

ACTION: AC

Staff salaries proposal (TTE17-02 P05)

Board governance review update (TTE17-02 P06)

The following point from the paper lays out the situation well;

‘Furthermore, the Charity Commission in their document “The independence of Charities from the State - RR7” (full document attached) state that “In carrying out his or her responsibilities, a trustee must act solely in the interests of the charity. A trustee is not a delegate of the body that appoints him or her. It is no part of a trustee’s function to represent or promote the interests of a third party, whether that third party is the body that has appointed him or her, a funding body, or a body of which the trustee is a member or employer or in which he or she has some other interest. It follows that a funding body cannot properly insist upon appointing a trustee to protect its interest as a condition of providing funding.’

The key points are detailed below;

- Current Board is too big, should be no more than 12
- Trustee places should be open to the Network and beyond
- Chairman’s thoughts are that we should look to keep 6 or 7 current Trustees for continuity and to ease the transition.
- We will need to update the Articles / Rules and obtain nominations before the AGM in November
- To build the link between the Board and FMC and other groups and delegations – to consider how these fit together, who sits on them i.e. can co-opted people sit on these groups.

- We should look to move to a diverse and fully skilled based Board
- To build in regular reviews of the Trustees length of service, capacity and contributions.
- The new Business Plan and MTFS are key and crucial to having a clear path forward
- The new Trustees will go through a selection process via interview from a wide pool of applicants to ensure we end up with those with the skills we are looking for.
- To build in terms of office and Board member objectives
- MD has offered to resign at the November Board. AW will also reach his 10 year maximum service at the November AGM – to consider this and to build into the new terms of office a 3 – 4 year maximum length of service with option to break and return.
- To bear in mind the current Trustee handbook and Trustee job description.
- The areas of competencies should be reviewed and reduced and look to have 8/9 maximum.

AP6: To arrange a follow up meeting of the Board review group for the end of July and look to have third meeting sometime in August.

ACTION: Board review group

Risk Register (TTE17-02 P07)

Please refer to the paper for the full detail.

The Board governance and strategy are new items. With the business plan now in place this should bring the rating arrow down.

Anything scored 9 or below should come off the register.

Lunch

The SBIF Review: briefing for the NBN Trustees – Ellen Wilson RSPB and SBIF Chair (TTE17-02 Papers 10, 11, 12)

Ellen Wilson attended to update the Board on the SBIF review findings and next steps.

Please refer to the papers for the detail. The SBIF questionnaire results and slides will be shared. The Board are asked to digest the results and end any comments through to Ellen; ellen.wilson@rspb.org.uk
Ellen will return to the November Board to provide a further update then.

AP7: To let Ellen Wilson know if you would like to be included in the Doodle poll for the SBIF working groups.

ACTION: Board

6. Finance and Management Issues

Finance Report for Period 4 (TTE17-02 Paper P08)

To refer to the paper for the full detail.

- The actual YTD variance is £40,496. Main reasons for variances are due to the Atlas income and expenditure. These figures will be removed from the table to get a better idea of usual budget variances.
- Given the year end adjustments and accruals the actual carry forward to 17-18 is £95,230 which is £8K up on our forecasting during the year.

Honorary membership nominations (TTE17-02 P09)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7. Information Items

Internal Audit Schedule and ToR for SNH (TTE17-02 P13)

SNH will be starting their internal audit of the staff purchasing cards and the internal audit committee arrangements next week and into August.

As no other agencies are able to assist in the internal auditing of the Trust we will look to obtain this service externally and to try and seek this free of charge via a donated service under raising their green profile.

Communications (TTE17-02 P14)

NBN Conference

Bookings will open at the end of July.

Georgina Mace cannot now attend to give the key note address. Trustees are asked to consider and suggest a replacement.

To consider changing the conference title due to connotations with a song!

NBN Awards

It was suggested that 'recorder' may not be the right word to use to attract marine nominations – more contribution to biodiversity data collection

NBN Annual Report

This could be a good place to highlight and sell our services

Captivating and Engaging Working Group Update paper (TTE17-02 P15)

Jo shared a comment with the Board regarding Atlas issues such a verification, open data and access controls. It was noted that these are similar to responses seen in the SBIF findings.

Jo will respond to advise that the Board noted the feedback and share and appreciate their concerns. The top three priorities in the business plan do reflect this and are being taken forward for action.

AP8: To consider if the NBN need a complaints procedure. This should include involvement from the wider Network and not just down to the Trust. **ACTION: JJ and team**

The Board agreed with the first three listed priorities within the paper as being key. This paper required further thought by the Board and as such Trustees are asked to send their comments to Mandy Henshall who can then communicate this back to the group.

AP9: To send any further comments and thoughts on the Captivating and Engaging Working Group Update paper (TTE17-02 P15) through to Mandy Henshall. **ACTION: Board**

Report on the updates to BioD Services – transfer of shares and update to Articles (TTE17-02 P16)

Please refer to the paper for detail.

8. Mark papers as confidential

The following papers will be marked as confidential

TTE17-02 P04

TTE17-02 P05
TTE17-02 P08
TTE17-02 P09

7. Date of next meeting

8th November 2017

Signed:

Chair _____

Date: _____

Action Points

Actions from 6 July 2016 Meeting

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

CARRIED FORWARD to November Board when a discussion will also take place around this item in line with AP3 below.

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

CARRIED FORWARD to November 2017 Board

Actions from 9th November 2016 Meeting

AP6: To set further dates for February and July 2018

CARRIED FORWARD; date set for November 2017 (8th) to set dates for 2018 once Board governance review has taken place **ACTION: SH**

Actions from 22nd February 2017 Meeting

AP2: To contact the Public Records Office regarding data held at JNCC which has not been transferred to the Atlas from the Gateway. **ACTION: JJ**

CARRIED FORWARD

Actions from 5th July 2017 Meeting

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