

NBN Chief Executive's Report February 2018

1. Current significant issues

a) Finances

Core NBN funding

The NBN Trust is run with a very tight budget, with the majority of funding coming from a small number of, mainly government, bodies, i.e. the Environment Agency (EA), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) in conjunction with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) through their membership fees.

We are in the process of obtaining signed Memorandum of Association (MoA) for these organisation for three years 2018/19 – 2020/21. To date we have received signed agreements from NRW, EA and SNH. We are awaiting the return of MoAs from NE, JNCC, NERC and the Natural History Museum, who also have an MoA for their membership fees.

There is an urgent need for diversification of funding streams. The Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by the board in July 2017 provided some proposals for diversification, however, there has been little progress made in turning these proposal into funding received (see section 3 below).

NBN Atlas funding

The funding for the NBN Atlas is dealt with separately to the unrestricted income. The main funders for the NBN Atlas are NE, NRW (in conjunction with the Welsh Government(WG)), SNH and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). At the time of writing we had received funding from all for this financial year, except Northern Ireland. However, the invoices have been passed for payment and the funds should have been transferred by the time of the board meeting.

From next financial year (2018/19), the funding for the 'Business as Usual' (BAU) running costs for the NBN Atlas and further development work will be dealt with separately. This is to provide more stability for the NBN Atlas BAU funding as further development of the NBN Atlas for the next financial year has not been identified, nor funders committed. A joint agreement for the BAU between NE, NRW/WG, NIEA and SNH is currently being drawn up by JNCC.

b) Atlas development

The major project being undertaken by the NBN Trust is the development of the new digital infrastructure for the sharing and use of biodiversity data, the NBN Atlas. The NBN Atlas replaced the NBN Gateway in April 2017. It is based on the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), an open source platform, developed by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) funded by the Australian Government.

The NBN Gateway was developed and managed by the JNCC on behalf of the NBN Trust. The country agencies' decision to cease funding the NBN Gateway on the 31st March 2017, resulted in the NBN Atlas being launched earlier than originally anticipated. This combined with the lack of any technical staff in the NBN Trust and the reliance on a CSIRO contractor working part time on this project has meant that the NBN Atlas has still not yet fully met the expectations of phase 1 of this project in

which all of the functionality of the NBN Gateway was to be available on the NBN Atlas. Since the appointment of a Technical and Data Support Officer in September and a Systems Developer in December great strides have been made towards rectifying that. There is enormous scope for improving how biodiversity data is shared and used through the NBN Atlas. Once we are happy that the NBN Atlas works as it should for our members and partners, we will move onto the next phase which will involve the development of further functionality, a greater array of analyses tools and bespoke portals for e.g. education.

1. Matters for approval

- a) Breach of licence Conditions Policy see paper **(TTE18-01 P02)**
- b) Employee recognition awards see paper **(TTE18-01 P03)**

2. Update on Strategic plan implementation

For full details see progress against action plan **(TTE18-01 P04)**

Two strategic actions have been postponed until 2018/19, due to the delay in recruiting a software developer and CSIRO developer not being available. These are:

- Publication of an NBN data infrastructure strategy
- Customisable user pages

The stakeholder events due to take place to inform discussions on further development are unlikely to take place in Scotland or Northern Ireland this financial year. These delays have been due to the SBIF review in Scotland and a delay in receiving funding from Northern Ireland.

The following actions have been completed:

- Regional and national sensitive species list created and an NBN Trust Sensitive Species Policy published
- System for identifying and displaying the verification status of individual records on the NBN Atlas
- Review of NBN Trust board and governance

3. Major Key Performance Indicators

- a) NBN Atlas update – see paper **(TTE18-01 P05)**

- b) Membership/sponsorship

As at the end of January 2018 the NBN had 219 members, a breakdown of the membership categories is shown below.

Category	Number of members
Affiliate	11
Organisational	102
Corporate	2
Individual	42
Honorary	14
Lifetime	13

The NBN received £96.63 in donations from Easyfundraising (www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and donation via the website between 1st April and 30th December 2017. Along with £174 from Gift Aid.

Sponsorship is received from Habitat Aid (£1,000), Wildcare (£250) and The Environment Partnership (£300).

4. Risk and Compliance Update

Risk

For full details see risk register (*TTE18-01 P06a & P06b*)

None of the identified risks have increased since the last board meeting and one, relating to board governance, has decreased.

Compliance

The NBN Trust's governing document and articles were updated as part of the Board Governance Review.

Other documents that have been reviewed recently are our internal HR policies, including Travel & Subsistence and Absence Reporting and the risk register. A Health and Safety report was presented to the FMC in January and is on the agenda.

Our internal audit and donated services accounting procedures are currently under review.

A GDPR policy is currently in development.

5. Matters for noting

- a) Displaying verification status of records on the NBN Atlas
As discussed in November 2017, the verification status of records (Accepted or Unconfirmed) is now available by default.
- b) GDPR policy in development
We have set up a small working group including representatives from JNCC, the Biological Records Centre (BRC), National Forum for Biological Recorders (NFBR), the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and Butterfly Conservation. The objective is to provide clear and consistent advice across the sector.
- c) Weather Lottery
We were approached by the Weather Lottery, a fundraising lottery comprised of hundreds of smaller society lotteries each raising money to fund their work (more information is available here <http://www.theweatherlottery.com/aboutUs.php>), who offered to set up a lottery on our behalf. The NBN Trust will receive 37% of the ticket sales, there are no costs to the NBN Trust except to purchase a £40 licence from the local authority, and there is no obligation to sell a minimum number of tickets or to participate for minimum time period.

The proposal was discussed at the Finance and Management Committee in January 2018, where it was decided to proceed with a lottery. The decision to continue with the lottery will be reviewed after a year.

d) Contracts extended

The contracts for Giselle Sterry (Membership officer, covering the Finance and Business officer role while Sarah Hyslop is on maternity leave), Purba Choudhury (Communications Officer), Ella Vogel (Project Officer) and Christine Johnston (Scottish Liaison Officer) have all been extended until 31st March 2020.

e) Trustee induction and refresher day

An induction/refresher day for new and continuing trustees is planned for March. A doodle poll has been circulated to confirm the date.

f) SBIF Review update

The stakeholder engagement stage of the SBIF review has been completed. Next step is to complete the business case document for submission to the Scottish Government. See information paper for more details.