

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum

12th Advisory Group meeting, 18 March 2019, 14:00-16:00

Barnacle meeting room, RSPB Scotland, Edinburgh

Minutes

Present: Ellen Wilson (EW) (RSPB) [Chair]; Gill Dowse (GD) (SWT); Andy Ford (AF) (CNPA); Nick Fraser (NMS); Jo Judge (JJ) (NBN Secretariat); Claire Lacey (CL) (CIEEM); Ed Mackey (EM) (SNH); Glenn Roberts (NESBReC); David Roy (DR) (BRC); Rachel Tierney (RT) (SBIF / SWT); Christine Johnston (CJ) (NBN Secretariat) [Minutes]

Apologies received: Guy Harewood (Stirling Council); Scot Mathieson (SEPA); Jonathan Willet (BRISC)

In attendance: Mark Eaton (RSPB); Sarah Henshall (CNPA)

1. Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting (28 Jan 2019) – Christine Johnston

Approval of the minutes

The minutes [*SBIF Advisory Group minutes DRAFT 28 Jan 2019*] were passed without correction and approved for publication on the Scotland pages of the NBN website.

Actions and matters arising

Actions discharged:

AP AG11-1 EM to discuss Scottish Government position re the Advisory Grp at their next meeting

EM reported that SNH has made approaches to the Biodiversity Team of Scottish Government but without response as yet; Scottish Government capacity seems stretched both in staff numbers and other urgent matters.

AP AG11-6 All to advise EW of any potential sources of future funding [for SBIF Dev Officer]

EW reported that SNH has renewed funding for the SBIF Development Officer post for a further year, part-time, and thanked SNH for their continued support.

AP AG11-7 RT and CJ to collaborate on the planning of the Holyrood event

AP AG09-2 All to advise RT of Press Officer names for inclusion in the Communications Plan

All actions **carried forward** are covered in the minutes below.

2. Scottish Biodiversity Indicator for Scottish Government – Mark Eaton

Mark, Principal Conservation Scientist at RSPB, is leading a consortium of organisations that have been contracted by the Scottish Government to develop a new indicator on biodiversity in Scotland by the end of this year. The intention is for the indicator to replace the current terrestrial birds indicator.

The consortium is currently reviewing existing literature, although there is little precedence for such an indicator. They are also reviewing species and environmental data availability for Scotland and will be holding a workshop in Scotland on 23 April to learn more about data availability and options for analysis from key stakeholders. It is expected that recommendations for improving data sources and availability will also be an output of the work.

A number of observations were made:

- That the existing State of Nature and official Government indicators were slightly out of synch with each other.

- It would be good to see data dis-aggregated and re-aggregated in different ways, including spatially, in order to provide a clear description of the issues to be addressed. It was thought that dis-aggregation would be possible by taxon, functions, marine / terrestrial, but spatially may not be possible.
- Use of data recorded by eDNA analysis is probably out of scope for the moment.

Mark was thanked for taking the time to provide an update about a key project that will use shared biodiversity data and examine data gaps and availability.

3. Update on advocacy on the Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure

Recent meetings and events – Rachel Tierney

These have included:

- Meeting with Colin Edwards, Forestry Commission Scotland, who continues to be supportive of the SBIF Review
- Continued publication of blogs written by Advisory Group members
- Update to the NBN Trustees in February (a follow up letter from the Trustees had been circulated with the papers for the meeting)
- Meeting with Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre and the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) to discuss options for when Glasgow's manager retires later this year (there is a risk the Glasgow centre will close)

Other recent advocacy by Advisory Group members

- GR reported he, along with Emma Williams and Ron MacDonald, had met with Gillian Martin MSP on 01 March. Gillian was briefed on NESBReC and the Review, and on the importance of data for big projects such as the Aberdeen by-pass and controlling INNS.

Future meetings – Rachel Tierney

Planning is underway for:

- Update to the SWT Board
- Meeting and briefing the ECCLR committee – the meeting planned for 19 March (tomorrow) has unfortunately been cancelled and a new date yet to be established.
- A meeting with LINK next week to discuss support for the Review.
- Attending several events for recorders; currently booked are: NESBReC and SWSEIC recorders' days (both 30 March); Tayside Biodiversity Partnership recorders' day (23 March)

4. NBN Trust update, including update on NBN Atlas developments – Jo Judge

The NBN Trust is keen to continue supporting SBIF through the advocacy and implementation planning stages (see letter from the NBN Trustees that was circulated with the papers for the meeting) and this continued strategic support will be provided by JJ.

Unfortunately, SNH has discontinued funding the NBN Scottish Liaison Officer post so administrative support for SBIF will cease from the end of this financial year. SNH continues to support the NBN Trust at UK level.

The NBN Trust has just secured a Resilience Grant from HLF which will enable work to commence on identifying other income streams to improve the sustainability of both the NBN Trust and the NBN Atlas. The grant will also enable a Project Manager and another Systems Developer to be employed,

initially for 18 months, to expand the NBN Atlas team capacity. This will enable JJ to provide more strategic support to SBIF.

5. Workplan for 2019/2020

Thanks were expressed to SWT and SNH for continued support for the Development Officer, which will enable the work of SBIF to be taken forward. Ideas and suggestions on what happens next with SBIF were sought.

To add to the discussion about what happens next at our last meeting, AF commented that in the agri-environment sector monitoring and recording outputs can be used to demonstrate favourable actions (and payment is associated with output). It was commented that better management of data, for example through modules such as MERIT and BioCollect, will lead to improved outputs.

SBIF's Objectives for 2019/2020 – Ellen Wilson

Suggestions for objectives were sought and ideas were noted on a flipchart. Three main areas were identified:

1. Attract investment
2. Prepare an implementation road map
3. Maintain engagement about the Review

Sector Benefit Road maps – Rachel Tierney

Preparation of the benefit road maps is on hold for the moment until priorities are identified.

AF asked whether 'engagement with people' is considered a sector? RT has developed a diagram (circulated after the meeting) that will be used to plan the road maps – in that diagram this sector is covered by the term 'community empowerment'.

Actions carried forward:

AP AG11-4 RT to circulate a briefing doc on requirements for the preparation of the road maps

AP AG11-5 RT to set up 1:1 meetings with Advisory Group members to start work on the benefit road maps

Planning for an event at Holyrood – Rachel Tierney

RT reported that SBIF will be attending LINK's species champion event at Holyrood on 05 June 2019. A more suitable time for our event is now towards the end of 2019. Catering costs have already been collated for 50 and 100 attendees but will be reviewed nearer the time before circulation. Costs vary depending on food and drink options that are chosen but would be in the range of £950-£1350 for 50 attendees / £1900-£2700 for 100 attendees.

AF suggested an alternative option could be to have a presence / stall in the lobby at Holyrood – he found this to be an effective way to engage with MSPs.

AP AG12-1 RT to continue exploring options for and alternatives to an event at Holyrood

Action carried forward:

AP AG10-2 CL to investigate potential sponsors for alcohol at the [Holyrood] event

General

Other actions carried forward:

AP AG11-8 RT to provide relevant updates and advanced information to Advisory Group members

AP AG09-4 *All to advise EW of their SBIF-related activities (for inclusion in quarterly Highlight Reports) [next report will be published in the middle of March 2019]*

6. Membership of this group

The group is still missing representatives from Marine Scotland, the Scottish Government and the University sector. People who may be interested (or could provide contacts) include: Rob Brooker (JHI); a representative from one of the NERC data centres (freshwater); Roderick Paige (University of Edinburgh and GBIF Science Committee); a British Ecological Society representative with connections to the NBN. Contact is to be made with the new, expanded, Scottish Government Biodiversity Team and the Digital Directorate.

AP AG12-2 *EM to make contact with SG Biodiversity Team*

Actions carried forward:

AP AG10-4 *CL to advise the name of a possible contact at Marine Scotland*

AP AG11-2 *DR to supply details of a contact for the NERC data centre (freshwater)*

AP AG11-3 *RT to approach contacts about joining the Advisory Group*

7. Any other business

NBN Scottish Liaison Officer post

With the discontinuation of funding for this post CJ will no longer be providing secretariat support to SBIF. A list of tasks that will not now be covered will be discussed with RT. EW proposed a vote of thanks to CJ for her work on the Forum over the last 6 years. CJ has been offered and has accepted a new role within the NBN Trust as NBN Atlas Project Officer, with a specific responsibility for spatial data, but also for continued liaison with NBN Atlas stakeholders in Scotland.

8. Date of next Advisory Group meeting

TBA – to aim for June and ideally quarterly meetings

Joining by teleconference will be possible - details will be circulated in just before the meeting starts. Please send a deputy if you are unable to attend.