

# Recorder 6



## **Recorder 6 e-Newsletter: issue 1, November 2020**

Dear Recorder 6 users

The NBN Trust has kindly agreed to administer this email list on behalf of the Recorder 6 Steering Group – so we can now bring you news on what’s happening with Recorder 6, direct to your inbox.

Apologies for the long-form email, but as this is the first in what is intended to be an occasional series of e-newsletters, I thought Recorder 6 users would appreciate a full update on what’s been happening.

### **Recorder 6 maintenance**

Mike Weideli, working in conjunction with the Recorder 6 Consortium, is carrying out basic maintenance of Recorder 6 and making dictionary updates available, in line with updates to the UK Species Inventory (UKSI). Mike is doing this work on a voluntary basis – as an ‘in kind’ contribution to the Recorder 6 community – in order to maximise the amount of licence fee funding that is available for progressing development of a successor system. Thanks Mike!

Recent events have prompted us to review business continuity arrangements. With the steps already taken to ensure the [Recorder 6 github repository](#) includes all essential elements with appropriate usage permissions, and additional measures Mike has put in place locally, we are confident we have suitable arrangements in place to mitigate foreseeable risks.

### **Recorder 6 dictionary updates: available now**

Users can access the latest dictionary updates by paying the Recorder 6 licence fee, which works on a ‘financial year’ basis, i.e. if you pay the licence fee now that gives you the ability to install the available updates through until 31 March 2021. You can find information on how to purchase a licence here: <https://nbn.org.uk/tools-and-resources/recorder6/>

The new method of updating the dictionary introduced following dictionary upgrade 000004K (R6 Version 6.29) is proving very popular. It is both easier to understand and can be run from within Recorder 6 without the need to involve IT departments.

Dictionary Upgrade **000004V** is now available, visit the NBN Forum for information on how to access and run it: <https://forums.nbn.org.uk/viewtopic.php?id=7623>

The Natural History Museum (NHM) has recently introduced new systems which enable them to make changes to the UKSI much more easily and this is reflected in the number of taxa being added and updated. A new 'Master Check List' has been introduced which is in effect a current UK species list. This will be kept up to date in line with the UKSI. The List of Additional Names is no longer being updated and new taxa which would have gone into this are now going into the Master Check List.

1,800 new species have been added in Dictionary Upgrade 0000004S. This includes significant additions to Acari (1,240), insects (392), fungi/lichen (43), and birds (34). A further 3,500 species have been updated, including Acari (1,790), insects (1,060), fungi/lichen (107), crustacean (73), molluscs (32) and spiders (13).

Mike is working very closely with Chris Raper at the NHM to ensure Recorder 6 users can benefit from dictionary updates which are fully-aligned to the latest UKSI updates. Upgrade 0000004V brings the English names used in Recorder 6 into line with the preferred English names in the UKSI.

### **New Recorder 6 release candidate: available for testing**

As well as basic maintenance, Mike is undertaking some Recorder 6 development work. A new [Recorder 6 Release Candidate v6.31 Update](#) is currently available for testing. Support from the Recorder 6 community with testing new releases would be very welcome – Mike is particularly looking for volunteers whose local IT set-up means they have some level of administrative privileges and the freedom to manage the software installation themselves. Version 6.31 incorporates many of the addins into the core programs. This should help users who need IT support to install addins. The dictionary updater has also been changed so there is no need to process each upgrade file separately.

If you have ideas for Recorder 6 feature requests, please continue to share them on the NBN Forum: <https://forums.nbn.org.uk/viewforum.php?id=15>

Mike is willing to consider taking on minor development tasks alongside basic maintenance. Significant new features will be considered, but with limited funding available from the Recorder 6 licence fee it's likely these would need to be funded directly by interested users – and the Recorder 6 Steering Group, working alongside the Recorder 6 Consortium, will have a role in checking that any major development work is taking things in a direction which is generally beneficial for users.

### **New copies of Recorder 6**

Recorder 6 continues to be available for purchase from Sally Rankin for £30. For contact details see: <http://www.recorder6.info/page42.html>

It is an issue that the Recorder 6 documentation and user guides are out of date. Unfortunately we don't have sufficient resources available to us to address this.

If there are any experienced Recorder 6 users out there who would be willing to produce a fresh 'quick start' user guide for new users, please get in touch with the Recorder 6 Steering Group ([recorder6@nbn.org.uk](mailto:recorder6@nbn.org.uk)). We are open to suggestions as to what form this could take, e.g. a document or Youtube video.

Similarly, anything that experienced Recorder 6 users can do to support new users locally is very welcome – as having an active and engaged user base is fundamental to what we're trying to do here.

### **Recorder 6 licensing arrangements**

Thank you to everyone who has supported the new Recorder 6 maintenance arrangements by purchasing a licence (here: <https://nbn.org.uk/tools-and-resources/recorder6/>).

The licensing system services two purposes: (1) it tells us who is using Recorder 6 and enables us to communicate with you on an 'opt in' basis; and (2) it is a mechanism for pooling funding – so that as a community of Recorder 6 users, represented by the Recorder 6 Steering Group, we can take steps towards addressing our ongoing and future data management needs.

In future, when we've got a clearer understanding of the investment that's needed in addressing our future data management needs (and where that might come from), we may need to review the level of licence payments. But for 2021-2022 we will keep the licence fee at its current level.

The NBN Trust (NBNT) has been extremely helpful in supporting us all with administrative arrangements for handling payments and communications. We are in the process of renewing the Recorder 6 Steering Group's Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with NBNT on a longer-term basis – and are very grateful for all the 'in kind' support that NBNT is offering as part of this.

The Recorder 6 licence fee brought in a little over £10,000 in the first year, 2019-20; with a similar amount expected this year.

### **Steps towards a Recorder 6 successor system**

The Recorder 6 Steering Group has had discussions with the Recorder 6 Consortium (Mike Weideli and John van Breda) regarding options for developing a successor system. Current thinking is we want a system that ...

- replicates the existing Recorder 6 data model
- is built on open source components without any dependence on proprietary software
- continues to use SQL Server or SQL Server Express for the database
- can be easily installed for use via a web browser

The Recorder 6 Steering Group is developing a brief for a small 'proof of concept' study which would help us develop these ideas further and provide information which will help us scope and estimate costs for future development work.

We are mindful that Recorder 6 does not function in isolation – it was developed to facilitate data exchange across the NBN and exists within an increasingly complex biological data management ecosystem, with various linkages and dependencies on other systems. The Recorder 6 Steering Group is therefore also pursuing conversations with other key stakeholders in the biological data management sphere, to look for opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

You will hear more from us about plans for a successor system in due course.

### **How you can help!**

- Pay for the annual Recorder 6 licence fee ([here](#)) and benefit from access to regular dictionary updates, etc
- Share issues with the Recorder 6 user community via the [NBN Forum](#). Hopefully someone will be able to help; and this information helps us prioritise future development
- Support other users if you are able to, whether that's locally to you or on the [NBN Forum](#) – if you log in you can subscribe to the various forum topics to see what people are saying
- If you are an experienced user with a reasonable amount of autonomy in your IT set up, get involved in testing new candidate releases and features, e.g. the [Release Candidate V6.31 Update](#)

Thanks again to all the licence fee payers for your support.

*The Recorder 6 Steering Group*

The Recorder 6 Steering Group is made up of representatives from across the user community:

Clare Blencowe (Chair)	Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre
Ian Carle	Herts Environmental Records Centre
Harry Clarke	Volunteer vice-county coordinator for Butterfly Conservation
Damian McFerran	Centre for Environmental Data and Recording
Janet Simkin	British Lichen Society
David Slade	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre
Philippa Tomlinson	Manx Biological Recording Partnership
Philip Whelpdale	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Tania Walisch	Natural History Museum Luxembourg
Mark Pollitt	South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre
Andy Foy	Greenspace Information for Greater London