Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum - 20th Advisory Group Notes
Tuesday 21st September 2021
10:00 – 12:30

Invited: Gill Dowse (SWT); Guy Harewood (Stirling Council); Wilma Harper (NBN Trust); Glenn Roberts (NESBReC); Iain Sime (NS); Rona Sinclair (NS); Ellen Wilson (RSPB); Jonathan Willet (SWT/ SBIF), Lisa Chilton (NBNT) and Scot Mathieson (SEPA).

Substitute Attendee: Andy Davis (CNPA).

Apologies: Nick Fraser (NMS), Craig Macadam (Buglife), David Roy (BRC), Andy Ford (CNPA), Debs Muscat (ALERC), Jo Porter (Heriot Watt), Elaine Anderson (CIEEM), Chris McInerny (BRISC).

AGENDA

1) Welcome and minutes and matters arising from the last meeting

Andy Davis was welcomed as the substitute for Andy Ford. The other apologies were noted.

The Agenda was re-ordered with the Better Biodiversity Data Project Development item being moved up the agenda to Item 4 and the SBIF Recommendations - RAG Table moved to Item 5.

The 20210629 SBIF Advisory Group Meeting Minutes were approved.

2) Action Points from the last meeting

AP AG19-01. JW to update the SBIF webpages with new co-chairing arrangement. DISCHARGED
AP AG19 - 02. DR and JW to organize a meeting to discuss what opportunities for action there are in Scotland with BRC. DISCHARGED
AP AG19 – 03. JP and JW to arrange a meeting to discuss Blue Carbon and SBIF. DISCHARGED
AP AG19 – 04. The Scottish LERC Update to be added as standing agenda item. DISCHARGED
AP AG19 – 05. JW to send round a Doodle Poll to arrange the DONM. DISCHARGED

3) Development Officer Update/ Highlight Report

JW said that most of his time since the last meeting had been spent supporting the NBNT and SBIF to develop a governance structure. One meeting on Blue Carbon and two on iRecord had taken place and an output of the latter was to arrange a 2-hour presentation to be held at the end of October on iRecord entitled, "Current and future use of iRecord: Updates and discussion".

4) Better Biodiversity Data Project Development

Project Leadership and Governance

LC started off by saying the NBN Trust had approved taking on the BBD Project at their Board Meeting on the 10th of September. The Board was very positive about the project, seeing it as a great opportunity for the Trust and the recording community. Two final steps need to be taken before the project can be initiated. The new budget for the project needs to be approved by NS, this is something that IS is dealing with just now. The other is that the NBN Trust Board would like to start to build a relationship with and better understanding of the recording community prior to the project beginning. There are plans to organize a couple of meetings with the LERCs and Recording Groups to take this forward.

It was noted the Lindsay Bamforth for Fife Nature was back from maternity leave and would be back 2 days a week. This would mean the four largest LERCs would all be represented at any future meetings.

<mark>AG20 – 01. LC, GD, GR and EW to meet to discuss potential dates for these meetings.</mark>

The Governance paper that the NBN Trust Produced has been streamlined in light of comments from the AG.

The project will be launched later in the Autumn.

WH – The BBD Project represents a real opportunity for synergies, that have always been there, to become obvious.

EW asked LC and WH to tell the group who the Scottish Trustees of the NBN were; David Slawson, Roddy Fairley (NatureScot) and Wilma for more information see https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/nbn-board/

Funding

IS said that there was no major change since his update at the last meeting, as LC had already said the updated BBD budget was with him. This would then need to go to the Scottish Government, with IS making a case for why the project should be funded. This will be done as soon as possible.

IS also said that the SBIF Development Officer Development Officer post has been extended until March 2021 to provide essential handover time for the new BBD staff and also to support the project initiation. GD also updated the AG with the news that the Senior Management Team at SWT had approved the extension and JW will be getting a new contract this week.

Paper 4. Post-Better Biodiversity Data Project Scenarios.

EW talked to this paper, highlighting the need for the AG to consider what could happen in the future and the need for timing of action to ensure key activities take place in good time. There was no comment on it.

5) SBIF Recommendations - RAG Table. (Paper 5).

EW talked to this paper and highlighted that it was something to begin the discussion about the SBIF Recommendations; their need, or otherwise, for updating and rewording and seeing how SBIF beyond the BBD Project can progress.

GH asked who would be seeing the table? EW replied that it was for the AG eyes only.

WH asked about what UKBIF, since it currently didn't exist. JW replied that it may need to be created to deal with UK-level data issues if, for example, the NBN Trust was not able to deal with them.

IS commented the revised delivery target of the recommendations of 2030 tied well into the new iteration of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, which will end in 2030.

JW talked to the Recommendations at the end of the BBD Project and highlighted some opportunities for projects that could take place in parallel with the BBD.

EW noted that three key points could be taken from the general discussion on the Recommendations that then followed.

1. Map out the BBD outputs, understanding how they will contribute to the SBIF Recommendations (GD said that this has been done in part for the funding submission for the BBD to NatureScot).
2. Highlight where future projects are required to deliver the Recommendations, either during the deliver of the BBD or stemming from the BBD's completion.
3. Prioritise and reword the Recommendations if necessary.
4. Draft a project delivery plan of the Recommendations.

GD asked IS how defined do the projects need to be to access funding?

IS said a defined project would be required but in the first instance prioritizing what needs to be done first is mots important.

SM commented that many of the SBIF AG are on the SBS groups and could advocate on behalf of the SBIF Recommendations at suitable points on the process.

JW asked if the SBIF Vision needed looked at too? EW agreed this should be done along with looking at the Recommendations.

GD mentioned CivTEC https://www.civtechalliance.org/civtech in relation to it promoting FAIR Principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse of digital assets) see https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/ CivTEC could have opportunities for SBIF.

GR said there should be mention of open data. EW reassured him that it was still a key part of SBIF, but just hadn't been mentioned in this paper.

AG20 – 02. LC, GD, JW and EW to convene to discuss updating the SBIF Recommendations and Vision and identify parallel and series projects to the BBD to deliver them and creating a project delivery plan to nest any such projects in to.

6) Scottish LERC Highlights

See Paper 2. GR said that Sydney Gault had now retired in Orkney. He commented that the hosts of NESBReC (Aberdeenshire Council) have been asked him how the BBD will impact them, what changes will it make to their situation. GR felt he was unable to give them a clear answer. At some stage a clear answer will be required.

He commented that Natalie Harmsworth from TWIC felt that ALERC should be involved a bit more in the BBD Project. EW agreed and said this would be a good thing.

AG20 – 03. JW to organize a meeting with GD, GR, EW and ALERC to get them up to speed on the BBD project.

JW commented that Debs Muscat (and ALERC Director) had been in touch regarding this and along with her apologies to this meeting wrote, "I have started to read through the papers and if there is anything that I think ALERC needs to raise then I will forward the information to you. I have been quiet as it is not appropriate to interfere in your process. However, when you have staff in place and are developing infrastructure, I am sure that there will be ways that we can offer support and help to you directly or the LERCS."

7) Marine Data Review update (Paper 3)

There is quite a lot of work that has happened since the June update. The analysis of the stakeholder questionnaire has been written up and will be presented to the next project advisory group (PAG) on the 5th of October. The questionnaire followed the structure of the SBIF Review but in a simplified form. Four main stakeholder groups were identified and contacted: public sector, commercial, third sector and academic institutions. Data Flows for key marine biodiversity receptors have been mapped out in ways differently from the SBIF Review.

AG20 – 04. JW. Marine Data Project visualisation of data flows is something for SBIF to look at.

The project mapped out where the data is coming from (data collectors/providers) and where it goes (databases/portals/archive centers etc). The databases and portals for marine data are mainly at a UK and

International level beyond Scotland, therefore collaboration at a UK scale to improve the flow and accessibility of Scottish biodiversity data is crucial. Accessing the data flows takes place at different levels. Data flows specifically are something to be discussed at the PAG in a paper being presented to it. There have been stimulating discussions and conversations with folk, keeping engaged with Medin etc. The main takeaway is that there are a huge number of valuable data resources, to get as much data from each sector entering the data flow network at the earliest point possible (i.e. collated into core databases such as Marine Recorder) and streamlining the data flows so that data is moving in one direction without duplication and backflows is a big technical, resource and organisational appetite challenge. Trying to connect up the data warehouses for each receptor with the existing portals and data archive centers. Also, to look at how the data can be used to the greatest effect.

Two strands of the project – data 'user' needs around availability and accessibility of data resources investigated via stakeholder questionnaire and data 'supplier' needs around data infrastructure and management tools investigated via 1-2-1 conversations during the data flow mapping work. Lots of enthusiasm around the whole project. There is a huge opportunity with mobilising and collating Industry Data into the wider monitoring data picture. The Project is due to run until December, the draft report is being started now.

There will be a presentation on the Project at the MAST Conference and the NBN Conference.

Questions.

GD. How complicated are the data flows?

RS. Lots of work is being done for each biodiversity receptor, in particular benthic which is more complex. Benthic data is collected by SNCBs and government primarily (exception is e.g. Seasearch), whereas cetacean and bird data is largely collected by the NGOs and/or partnership projects. Therefore, the approach to receptor data flow mapping exercise differed for benthic and perhaps has some easier wins in terms of mobilizing data openly and using one core system for data management. Work with industry data currently focused on benthic data resources due to this and also re-development of Marine Recorder by JNCC.

JW. Is there enough work taking place on data flows?

RS. Yes, on data flows but not enough work on all the issues that affect them. The blockages are being focused on not the whole structure of the data flow. RS showed a slide to illustrate this, it wasn't too complicated.

JW. Are there any transferable findings between marine and terrestrial data?

RS. Yes, Key databases, different organisations and some similar protocols.

RS stated that the project was allocated 0.5 FTE over a year to deliver it.

8) Proposal for a winter 2021/22 SBIF Forum Meeting (Paper 6)

The proposal was supported with GR saying that the end of February would be the best time to hold such a meeting. The meeting would be a more detailed look at the BBD Project to the wider SBIF Forum members, not a launch event per se.

IS commented that the SG, NS and NBN Trust would need to liaise for the initial project launch PR.

SM asked if the event would be interactive with breakout rooms? If so it would need to be more than an hour long.

EW replied that this would be considered.

AG20 – 05. JW to organize a meeting to consider the winter Forum Meeting. LC, GD and EW to attend.

9) Date of next meeting

It was agreed a meeting before Christmas was the best time.

AP 20 – 06. JW to send a Doodle Poll of the week beginning the 13th December (but not on the 14th) for the best day/ time to have the AG meeting.

10) Any other business

Andy Davis talked about the access to data collected under licence. They are having a conversation with NS about access to this date for their Nature Index work.

He also mentioned that he had attended the RESAS meeting looking at data management and access to data specifically for agriculture. He mentioned SBIF to the event organisers.

WH said that before the launch event there needed to be a discussion so that all the key players in the BBD knew what their responsibilities were. This is a key issue. NEW ACTION POINT?

GR asked when the BBD National Coordinator would be in place by? LC said it would be in the New Year most likely.

LC had some items to add:

1) she had joined the Recorder 6 Steering Group and is getting a better idea of where they are with the updating of R6 project. There is a line of communication with that group and the SBIF AG.

2) RSPB is getting ready to start on a new State of Nature Report.

3) DEFRA's Natural Capital and Ecosystems Assessment Programme is looking at SBIF Recommendations, the GeoSpatial Commission Review and the JNCC ad-hoc data Report. LC sits on this group and will report back.

JW mentioned that the [Programme of Government 21-22](#) has several links with potential SBIF projects (see below) AND pretty big funding pots. Also, the National Planning Framework 4 will be out for consultation in Autumn this year and it has a huge implicit demand for data products to allow it to deliver its aims.

- p65. Nature Restoration Fund and Local Authority Nature Networks.
- p68. Natural Environment Bill (access to industry data to be legislated for if required).
- p72. Green jobs fund.
- P79. Digital Economy.
- p80. Establish a green datacentre cluster management organisation.
- p81. CivTech.
- p84. Infrastructure Levy and Digital Transformation of the Planning System.
- p85. Islands Programme
- p86. Land Use Partnerships.
- P87. by 2025 we will shift half of all funding for farming and crofting from unconditional to conditional support, with targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain.