

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum - 22nd Advisory Group Meeting Notes
Thursday 24th March 2022
10:00 – 12:00

Attending: Gill Dowse (SWT), Guy Harewood (Stirling Council), Wilma Harper (NBN Trust), Iain Sime (NS), Ellen Wilson (RSPB); Jonathan Willet (SWT/ SBIF), Lisa Chilton (NBNT): Scot Mathieson (SEPA), , Debs Muscat (ALERC), Nick Fraser (NMS), Glenn Roberts (NESBReC), Elaine Anderson (CIEEM), Rona Sinclair (NS)

Apologies: Craig Macadam (Buglife), Sarah Hensall (CNPA), Jo Porter (Heriot Watt), Chris McInerny (BRISC) and David Roy (BRC).

AGENDA

1) Welcome and minutes and matters arising from the last meeting [EW]

20220113 SBIF Advisory Group Meeting MINUTES were approved.

2) Action Points from the last meeting [EW]

AG20 – 04. JW. Marine Data Project visualisation of data flows is something for SBIF to look at. **Ongoing, but now an action for the SBIF WG.** Superseded in terms of AG actions

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

AG21 – 01. Re: The TWIC Update WH/ TWIC to contact Scottish Forestry to find out if the trial Woodland Planning Screening Project could be rolled out across Scotland (possible data product for BBD and LERCs to deliver).

Discharged. WH emailed Colin Edwards in Scottish Forestry in February who said he would try to promote the Woodland Screening Project. However, he moved to Forestry and Land Scotland at the end of that month and did not know who his successor would be.

AG21 – 02. SBIF WG to meet with RS to discuss the draft Marine Data Review. **Discharged.**

AG21 – 03. JP to send Insite contacts to RS. **Discharged** at the meeting via Teams. Tarquin Dorrington: Tarquin@howellmarine.co.uk and Kathryn Collins: Kathryn@howellmarine.co.uk are new contacts for INSITE programme of work.

AG21 – 04. JW asked DM to send him the Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) Report. **Discharged.**

AG21 – 05. SM asked IS, how do we engage with the new SBS? IS replied he will get back to us about that. **IS has enquired about this and will send information on how to get involved to the WG after this meeting.**

AG 21 – 06. JW to send a Doodle Poll either the 17th or 24th March 2022. **Discharged.**

3) Marine Data Review update [RS]

See Paper 1. RS presented the Scottish Marine Biodiversity Data Review Project Update.

RS said that the consultation on the final draft of the Review will be completed by the middle of April.

SM asked if there was the possibility of having a structure like the GB INNS Secretariat, which overarches the countries work on INNS as the species and habitats of the marine environment don't recognise country boundaries. RS replied that through the consultations and engagement with the Project Advisory Group there are links at both the Scottish and UK-level as well as Recommendations that need addressed at both these scales.

IS said the update was very well presented and impressive.

NF mentioned the DiSSCo UK <https://www.dissco.eu/> initiative. The Distributed System of Scientific Collections is a new world-class Research Infrastructure (RI) for Natural Science Collections. The DiSSCo RI aims to create a new business model for one European collection that digitally unifies all European natural science assets under common access, curation, policies and practices that ensure that all the data is easily Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR principles). DiSSCo represents the largest ever formal agreement between natural history museums, botanic gardens and collection-holding universities in the world.

NMS and NHM will be working closely with the NBN Atlas on this, particularly on marine stranding data collected by SMASS <https://strandings.org/>. Interesting things are happening, there is maybe a new species of beaked whale that has been identified. A key link that needs to be maintained is between museums with voucher specimens and identification expertise and casual records.

RS asked what does NM see as the action required?

EW said that yes this could be addressed through the BBD, possibly.

NF the key contact within NMS on Marine mammals is Andrew Kitchener <https://www.nms.ac.uk/collections-research/collections-departments/natural-sciences/meet-the-team/dr-andrew-kitchener/>

JW mentioned that this was all part of having a data flow diagram mapped out and available so that everyone knew where they sat in the flow of data from collection, validation, verification, mobilisation and finally accessing the data.

JW prompted RS to talk about the current momentum of the actions within the Recommendations. Rs replied that around 66% of the actions are “in the pipeline” so have projects or actions underway dealing with them. The remainder require new projects or actions to address them. JW used the analogy of the (Marine Data) ball was rolling but the Review would speed it up.

AG22 - 01. Are there other similar reviews to the Marine Data Review that have taken place or are planned in England, Wales, NI and Eire? Yes, see below;

UK level: A marine indicator data flow mapping project led by JNCC (funded by Defra). This project is looking to identify dataflow issues and agree recommendations to improve the efficiency of the flow of data into UK Marine Strategy indicator assessments. This has been done so far for selected benthic, seal and cetacean indicators. The project is focussed on data from the UK public (gov/SNCB) sector, rather than across all sectors, however there is an aspiration to broaden the scope to include data from other sectors in further work. The indicator mapping work is at a *very* fine detail, comparative to the SBIF-marine review but we’ve worked together throughout to ensure consistency in the data flows presented. *This work is due to be published shortly (Q1 22-23 I think).*

- **UK level:** The JNCC undertook a [review to understand the current biodiversity data usage across the four UK Country Nature Conservation Bodies](#) (CNCBs), which included investigation of marine data usage. The report identifies and discusses the main limitations of the current marine and terrestrial data workflows and suggests future improvements.
- **Scotland: Marine Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland’s industry ‘developer data archiving’ project** (initiated Q4 2021/2022) to explore and define a formal process for handling the data, evidence and information that is provided or requested as part of the Scottish offshore wind and marine renewables consenting process. The aim is to develop guidance that will help manage the flow of information from applicants through to delivery of useful, compatible and open data mobilised into UK MEDIN Data Archive Centres (or the most appropriate repositories). *This is the steering group meeting that I had to leave for today. Project due to finish mid to late summer.*
- **UK level: A [Review of Access to Industry Marine Environmental Data](#),** funded by the Marine Management Organisation, Marine Scotland, The Crown Estate and MEDIN, was published in 2015 (ABPmer, 2015). The report identified the types of data collected by marine industries and the mechanisms by which industry data are made publicly available. The work also identified, where data are not made publicly available, the barriers that are preventing the provision of these datasets. Through marine NCEA programme of work, being scoped and led by Defra (part funded through OWEAP), there are various projects looking to build on this; relating to the future of

seabed mapping and unlocking existing data, developing monitoring techniques that can be integrated into future MPA monitoring, and understanding data system issues. *The latter project in particular is looking to identify current issues with marine data systems, looking at how we can link data, understanding how existing industry system have overcome sharing challenges and how marine data can be improved. I have regular meetings with colleagues at Defra on these projects to help ensure join up and not re-invent the wheel re: other work (including the SBIF-marine review) in progress and in relation to data standards (which MEDIN take a significant lead on).*

RS - Related to the above, I have 6 weekly meetings with Defra and Marine Scotland planned to discuss project progress on industry data related matters. We plan to bring in NI and Wales to these meetings to increase all of our awareness and join-up on projects that are underway across the UK. Currently my knowledge of marine data flow review work in NI/Wales is very limited.

WH was interested in the Social Science and human behaviour mentioned as barriers to sharing data. There was an article shared on the NBN website that is germane to this subject looking at public sector data <https://nbn.org.uk/news/sharing-public-sector-data-postnote/>

GD mentioned that the issue that NF mentioned could link in with the CIVTEC 6 Challenge 12 <https://blogs.gov.scot/digital/2021/11/24/civtech-6-challenge-12-update/>

4) Better Biodiversity Data Project Update [IS, LC]

IS said that we are very close to getting final approval from the Scottish Government.

LS said the NBN Trust was raring to go once the funding was formally announced. They are very keen to get the first BBD post advertised (the National Coordinator) and the recruitment process underway.

5) Scottish LERC Highlights [GR]

GR presented the LERC and Recording Group Update

WH said that although the ID workshops are free, donations are requested. People have been willing to donate. Raising revenue for the LERCs is a very important ongoing task. On another note WH attended an excellent talk on Glowworms organised by SWSEIC. Chris Catherine an Ecological Consultant was presenting at it and he talked about how the records he collects through his work are mobilised and made available.

AG 22 – 02. SM asked if WH could circulate the link to the [SWSEIC Glowworm talk](#) to the SBIF AG. Discharged.

IS addressed the LERCs to say that the funding application that have been submitted to NS are awaiting approval and are at the top of the pile. Ongoing budget discussions mean that they haven't been approved yet. The funding approved will likely be similar to that of last years' grants.

6) Development Officer Update/ Highlight Report [JW] See Paper 4. Highlight Report.

The main focus of work has been on reviewing the SBIF Recommendations, input into the Marine Data Review and finalising the winding up of the SBIF Development Officer post. All of the actions are on track and the post will cease at 5pm on the 31st of March.

There will be a role in the BBD project that will have some time to provide a secretariat for the SBIF WG meetings but beyond that, there is no further capacity to undertake work on behalf of SBIF, which will have an impact on the WG's ability to take forward further actions or develop projects.

RS asked what I had been in contact with the Natural England Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment Citizen Science Team about (I had two brief meetings with them)? It was mainly a discussion about the SBIF Recommendations, as the Cabinet Office Geospatial Review Mapping the Species Data Pathway Report had been based on SBIFs work, and they were keen to find out more about the thinking behind that and also the proposals for the BBD Project. I

directed them to LC for matters relating to the BBD Project. Natural England have funding to deliver the Citizen Science/ data gathering part of the NCEA and they are scoping the requirements for delivering that.

LC mentioned that she was already in contact with the NCEA project, through another Steering Group she was on.

RS asked if the NCEA was just looking at Terrestrial Data. JW replied, to the best of my knowledge it was just terrestrial data the NCEA was looking at due to the current separation between terrestrial and marine datasets as highlighted in the Marine Data Review.

All the attendees thanked Jonathan for all his efforts over the last 15 months.

EW praised his enthusiasm and ability to get meetings into EW's diary.

GD thanked Jonathan for all his hard work.

7) SBIF Recommendations - Discussion. [All] See Paper 2. SBIF Redrafted Recommendations.

Comments on the Recommendations from EW and GD.

- Theme 1 – No Change.
- Theme 2-5 – Minor changes.
- R1 – Simplified text.
- R2 – No change.
- R3 – Text less prescriptive, focusing on services and outcomes.
- R4 – Simplified text.
- R5 – No change.
- R6 to R9 - Text less prescriptive, focusing on services and outcomes.
- R10 – Changes to text but the outcomes the same.
- R11 – No change.
- R12 and 13 - Change from NBN Regional Hub to Regional Hub
- R14 and 15 – Simplified text.
- R16 – Minor changes.
- R17 and 18 - Text less prescriptive, focusing on services and outcomes.
- R19 – Simplified text.
- R20 - Wording changed to align with Programme for Government.
- R21 – Text to be finalised.
- R22 – Minor changes.
- R23 - Text less prescriptive, focusing on services and outcomes.
- R24 – End date changed.

Comments after break at Recommendation 10.

SM commented that the changes all sound very sensible and all make good sense. He is likely to have nothing to add.

GR all the changes look good to me, it is helpful seeing the original text and comparing that with the new text. He would like to circulate the draft to the other LERCs and RGs.

AG22 – 03. GR to share the draft SBIF recommendations with the LERCs and RGs.

IS asked what does the establishment of Regional Hubs mean? GD answered that it means LERCs. If there is no LERC in an area, then the National Hub could step in to provide Regional Hub coverage.

JW highlighted in Recommendation 9 the creation of a Biological Recording Strategy for Scotland, something that currently does not exist to inform or target biological at all levels. EW commented that such a strategy could create outputs greater than the sum of the current disparate biological recording efforts.

IS said that the SBS was looking for strategies to incorporate into the new plan being developed.

AG22 – 04. IS to put forward a Biological Recording Strategy for Scotland, to the SBS Working Group.

EW and GD highlighted that Recommendation 21 still needed work.

SM said he would share his contact for Positive Effects for Biodiversity (Biodiversity Net Gain).

AG22 – 05. SM to share contact for Positive Effects for Biodiversity. The papers for the Positive Effects for Biodiversity WG come out from Kathryn Hossack, a Senior Planner: Kathryn.Hossack@gov.scot

IS said Scot Gov are working on this along with colleagues in NatureScot.

AG22 – 06. IS to share his contacts on Positive Effects for Biodiversity.

GR has an issue with the wording of Recommendation 14 and would like it changed in relation to the language used around the revised Recommendation text.

DM hosting is open to interpretation, so the text needs to be tighter and more specific. Independent LERCs do not currently fit into the current text.

EW said she thought there were no independent LERCs.

WH said TWIC was one as it is a charity and had its own HR etc.

EW said it had used RSPB support in the past.

WH agreed but said this had been informal in nature.

AG22 – 07. LC, GD and EW to revise the text of Recommendation 14.

GR highlighted that training for Regional Hubs was not mentioned in Recommendation 19, GD altered the document's text at the meeting to include this.

JW highlighted the Recommendations 22 and 23 were very much looking at the value for money and he thought it key that this was highlighted through the Benefit Cost Ratio if at all possible.

EW said this had been done using RSPB economists and the SNH Economist at the time of publishing the last Recommendations. There is no capacity to do this currently.

JW asked if any organisations on the AG might be able to help with this?

8) Date of next meeting [All]

June 2022?

AG22 – 08. GW and EW to identify a meeting date for AG 23 and send round a Doodle Poll.

9) Any other business [All]

None.

10) Summary of Action Points

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AG22 - 01. Are there other similar reviews to the Marine Data Review that have taken place or are planned in England, Wales, NI and Eire? Discharged immediately after the meeting.

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The meeting ended at 12:05