

SBIF Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland

Highlight Report



SPONSORS	SBIF Advisory Group
CIRCULATION LIST	SBIF Advisory Group (and disseminated via SBIF web page and Twitter)
DATE	15/03/2021
AUTHOR	Ellen Wilson and Jonathan Willet
FREQUENCY	Quarterly
OVERALL RAG STATUS	Green

Latest Update

This highlight report covers the period since December 2020. The past three months have been focussed on undertaking pre-project work to lay the foundations for a rapid start to the Better Biodiversity Data (BBD) Project. The proposal has been positively received by NatureScot and the Scottish Government but there is still not official confirmation of the funding, although this seems imminent.

In preparation for this project there have been a number of events and meetings organised; there was a joint meeting on the 5th February between Scottish LERCs and Recording Groups and the Welsh LERCs to demonstrate Aderyn (public and client data interface) and Orca (COFNODs database and client management system), on the 12th March there was an initial meeting to gather the requirements of the database and portal required in Scotland and in early February a questionnaire has been circulated round CIEEM Members to ascertain their use of biological data and their data requirements. Draft job descriptions of all five project posts have been produced.





There have been two substantial reviews on drafts of the Cabinet Office's Biodiversity Data Review. The final report is due at the end of March. The review has found the need for an SBIF-style infrastructure consultation, review and report to take place, but does not say this clearly. This review has caught the eye of senior civil servants, so action on its findings seem likely. SBIFs comments on the Position Statement of NPF4, strongly emphasised the need for high quality and accessible biodiversity data to deliver its aspirations.

The new CEO of NBN has been announced and SBIF has arranged to have a meeting with Lisa Chilton soon after she starts work. The aim is to appraise her of SBIF's role and to discuss how SBIF and the NBN can work together moving forward.

Details of the Review and all highlight reports and approved papers are shared publicly (see <https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/in-scotland/the-sbif-review/>). Follow [@sb_info_forum](#) on Twitter for informal news on **#SBIFReview**.

Stages and Milestones

STAGE/MILESTONE	DUE/DONE	STATUS	NOTES/RISKS/ISSUES	
STAGE 4: Issue recommendations and plan their implementation (initially June/July 2018 to March 2019 – now 2021)				
	Scottish Government response to the Recommendations	19 December 2020	<i>Complete</i>	Programme proposal submitted to SG
	Paper 6 (Implementation Plan) approved	2021	In progress	If funding is secured, implementation options will entail consultation with affected parties
STAGE 5: Support implementation of recommendations and monitor progress (2021? onwards)				
	Monitor implementation against key milestones	2021-2023?		Milestones and monitoring to be described in Paper 6
	Paper 7 (progress report) approved	2021-2023?		Subject to implementation options being approved and progressed
	Paper 7 (progress report) updated	2021-2023?		Subject to implementation options being approved and progressed
	Paper 8 (outcomes) approved	2023?		A review of outcomes will follow once implementation is complete

 Paper 8 (outcomes) updated	2023-2033?	Outcomes will be tracked for ten years beyond implementation
 on track  SBIF Working Group attention needed  SBIF Advisory Group intervention needed		

Activities

COMPLETED THIS QUARTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with Scottish Enterprise exploring consortium options for LERCs in Scotland. <i>No further action possibly until the consortium agreement discussions begin.</i> Meeting held on 14th January. • Convened the SBIF Advisory Group on the 4th February 2021. • Convened a second ‘Celtic alliance’ meeting between the LERCs in Scotland and Wales to discuss Aderyn (data access portal) and Orca (database and content management system) on the 5th of February. • Submitted an SBIF update to the BRISC newsletter. 9th February. • Launched a consultation of CIEEM members on their use of biological data and LERCs. 12th February 2021. • Responded to the National Planning Framework 4: Position Statement on the 13th February. • Provided two detailed reviews of drafts of the eftec and eCountability Cabinet Office/Geospatial Commission biodiversity data review. 22nd January and 19th February. • Continued engagement with the Cabinet Office/Geospatial Commission to support the England biodiversity data review. Meeting held on the 8th March. • Held a meeting with Alan Bell, Landscape and Ecology Manager, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to discuss their current and future data requirements and links with LERCs. 11th March. • Met with three Scottish LERCs to fully ascertain requirements for a Scottish biological database and portal. 12th March. • Finalised draft job descriptions and project background paper for BBD’s five project posts. • Ongoing twice a month liaison with NS over Marine Data Review Scoping Report. Now finalised and the project will run from April to December 2021. • Liaison with NatureScot following submitting of two-year funding proposal. • Exploring with NatureScot an extension to the SBIF Development Officer post one day a week until the 30th September 2021. • Scheduled next SBIF Advisory Group meeting: 2pm, 17th June.
NOT DONE THIS QUARTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential funding streams for the above project. <i>Awaiting feedback from NatureScot/Scot Gov</i> • Work with NatureScot and LERCs to consider approach to aligning NS service needs and LERC service provision. <i>No further progress on this matter due to the funding situation.</i> • Liaise with NatureScot to inform the development of relevant projects in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. <i>No further contact from NatureScot on this matter.</i>

TO DO NEXT QUARTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the post is funded until September, then a new work programme will be developed in April. It will concentrate on continuing SBIF communications and doing as much preparatory work for the project as possible.• EW has organised a meeting, of the SBIF working group, with the new NBN CEO, Lisa Chilton on the 23rd April to appraise her of the SBIF Infrastructure Review and Project and ask how SBIF and the NBN can work together moving forward.
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SBIF Overview

Our vision for the Review is that it determines the optimum infrastructure for biological recording in Scotland, an infrastructure that in turn will attract the necessary belief, commitment and investment by stakeholders to be sustainable and successful in fulfilling the original vision of SBIF:

High quality species and habitat data will be collected and managed through a sustainable, co-ordinated and integrated local and national framework of organisations, partnerships and initiatives. These data will be available to ensure that Scotland's biodiversity, ecosystems and people benefit.

The Review will do this in such a way as to be cohesive across Scotland with support from all stakeholders and the willingness and energy to then make the transitions necessary to implement the new infrastructure by 2020.

Our objectives are:

- To build the energy and confidence of key stakeholders in the potential for an improved infrastructure that delivers the original vision of SBIF (above).
- To establish a register of all operational recording schemes and their operators so that data flows in Scotland are well-understood.
- To establish what funding and other income sources sustain the current infrastructure and what sources may continue to be available, or become available, in future.
- To hold stakeholder interviews to gain their current perspectives and to consult stakeholders on the infrastructure that they and their sector would need to meet their requirements.
- To run stakeholder workshops to identify the options for how these needs could best be fulfilled centrally, nationally and locally, and to evaluate these options in order to identify the preferred one(s).
- To identify where improved use of technology can help reduce duplication of effort and increase the efficiency of the biological recording infrastructure (so that data are made available for use and re-use).
- To identify what transition arrangements would be necessary to implement the preferred option(s).

Completed Stages and Milestones

STAGE/MILESTONE	DUE/DONE	STATUS	NOTES/RISKS/ISSUES
STAGE 1: Set up the Working Group and complete planning for the Review (August 2016)			
Paper 1 (Brief for the Review) approved	05 September 2016	Complete	
Paper 2 (high level plan for Stage 2) approved	05 September 2016	Complete	
Working Group meetings established	16 September 2016	Complete	
Logistics confirmed for Stage 2	28 February 2017	Complete	
STAGE 2: Gather perspectives, requirements and other information from key stakeholders (September 2016 to July 2017)			
Paper 2 (high level plan for Stage 2) approved	30 November 2016	Complete	
Questionnaire design completed	28 February 2017	Complete	
Interviews with Stage 2 consultees completed	10 March 2017	Complete	
Background data gathering completed	15 May 2017	Complete	
Logistics confirmed for Stage 3	21 June 2017	Complete	
Analysis of questionnaire + interviews completed	20 August 2017	Complete	
Paper 3 (high level business case) completed	4 December 2017	Complete	
STAGE 3: Hold workshops to find and evaluate options at central, national and local levels (July 2017 to March 2018)			
Paper 2 (high level plan for Stage 3) approved	21 June 2017	Complete	

	Workshops with Stage 3 consultees completed	15 December 2017	Complete	
	Paper 3 (detailed business case) approved	15 September 2018	Complete	
STAGE 4: Issue recommendations and plan their implementation (June/July 2018 to March 2019)				
	Paper 4 (Review Recommendations) approved	15 September 2018	Complete	Published on 14 November 2018
	Paper 5 (Advocacy Plan) approved	28 January 2019	Complete	Now maintained as live plan
	Review lessons learned from doing the Review	17 March 2020	Complete	Completed at SBIF Advisory Group meeting
	Scottish Government response to the Recommendations	19 December 2020	Complete	Programme proposal submitted to SG

Key Documents

The documents below will be available via <https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/in-scotland/review/> once each one is approved by the SBIF Advisory Group as the Review progresses:

DOCUMENT	TITLE	STATUS
Paper 1 Brief	Initiating a Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (formation of, and Terms of Reference and Brief for, a Working Group to undertake this Review)	APPROVED (at 05/09/2016 SBIFAG meeting)
Paper 2 Plan	Detailed plan for the Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (success criteria, activity plans, and timeline)	APPROVED (for Stage 2)
Paper 3(a) High level Business Case	The High-Level Business Case for a Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (reporting on the perspectives and requirements of each Sector and the need for change)	DRAFT COMPLETED for early workshops but focus now transferred to the Detailed Business Case
Paper 3(b) Detailed Business Case	The Detailed Business Case for Changes to the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (reporting on the options evaluated and our preferred option)	APPROVED (by email); including final recommendations
Paper 4 Final Report and Recommendations	Recommendations from the Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (recommendations and implementation roadmap)	COMPLETE Published on 14 November 2018
Paper 5 Advocacy Plan	Advocacy Plan for our preferred option for a Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (reporting on the advocacy arrangements needed and the potential decision-making process within Scottish Government)	APPROVED on 28 th January 2019
Paper 6 Implementation Plan	Implementation Plan for our preferred option for a Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (reporting on the transition arrangements needed and potential roadmap for their implementation)	SUBMITTED to NatureScot on the 18 th of December 2020. AWAITING approval of funding..
Paper 7 Progress Reporting	Progress reporting for the Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (implementation of our recommendations)	Not started
Paper 8 Outcomes	Outcomes and benefits from our Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland (successes and lessons learned)	Not started

Key Diagrams and Leaflets

The diagrams and leaflets below are available via <https://nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/in-scotland/the-sbif-review/> and are listed here for ease of reference:

- **SBIF Value Model** (the ‘windmill’) illustrating the components of our biological recording infrastructure that provide value for various communities (decision-makers, biological recorders, data users and service providers).
- **SBIF Leaflet**: Introducing the SBIF Review of the Biological Recording Infrastructure in Scotland.
- **SBIF Review Workshop Outputs** documenting the key messages from each workshop.
- **SBIF Review Literature Review Outputs** documenting the key findings with an archive of collated sources.
- **SBIF Review Interview Findings** documenting the results of key stakeholder interviews.
- **SBIF Review Questionnaire Findings** documenting the results of the questionnaire.
- **SBIF Review Benefit Dependency Network Diagram** mapping benefit dependencies.
- **SBIF Review Final Report** documenting the business case and recommendations of the Review.
- **SBIF Review Investment Programme Proposal** documenting a costed five year implementation programme.