

BSBI Scottish Officer Steering Group

Seventh Meeting

Weds 18th April, 11:45 – 16:00

Board Room , RBGE

MINUTES

1. Present:

BSBI

Richard Pankhurst (Chair)

Jim McIntosh

SNH

Ro Scott (minutes)

Claire Seymour (CSe)

Chris Sydes (CSy)

2. Apologies: Michael Braithwaite

3. Minutes of previous meeting: Agreed as correct.

APs from 11th April 2006:

AP5: Carried forward – continuing

AP7: CSy reported that John McKinnell will tidy the Site Condition Monitoring (SCM) data, removing species for which there is no evidence of recent occurrence (post-1996/7 for nationally rare spp.). **Discharged.**

AP8: On agenda

AP9: Discharged.

APs from 10th October 2006:

AP1: The lack of capacity at BRC to upload additional Vice-County Recorder (VCR) data to the NBN continues. **JM to let CSe know whether the SNH-funded VCR data is uploaded or not.**

AP2: On agenda

AP3: RS had sent a list of SNH reports to JM, but there are 400+ of them. Work is needed to pick out the botanical ones and divide them up according to VCs. Potential ways forward to be discussed at next BSBI Scottish Committee.

AP4: SNH species repository is nearly up and running and data should soon be available via the NBN gateway. (Bat data is being used as a test.)

New AP1: CSe to let BSBI know when SNH species data appears on NBN.

AP5: Discharged.

4. Scottish Officer Quarterly Report

Jim was commended on the format and content of the new report. This can go straight onto the BSBI website.

The notional value of the 2006 SCM work that had just been delivered by the BSBI was £15,000. Jim has just agreed a programme of SCM work over the next cycle with Lynne Farrell. Some 33 sites would be completed over 5 years, worth c. £94.5K.

Additional funding had been granted from the Esmee Fairbairn Trust to capture the VC96 dataset, which was larger than anticipated. Contractors have been asked to provide metadata statements with the data they have digitised. (CSe pointed out that NBN have a standard Metadata format.)

Kevin Walker starts as BSBI's new head of Research & Development in August.

AP2: JM to invite Kevin Walker to the next Steering Group meeting.

AP3: CSe to demonstrate WIMBY ('What's in my Backyard?') at next Steering Group meeting.

The data manager at the North-East Scotland Biodiversity Records Centre (NESBReC) has just left. The status of the draft BSBI data-sharing agreement with NESBRec is therefore not clear. Further progress will depend on the new appointee.

Jim demonstrated the data captured by the Esmee Fairbairn funded project on the BSBI website.

5. 2006/7 Work Programme

Jim described the main changes from last year's work programme. A volunteer newshound would be useful, to seek out items to put on the website.

Jim has resisted becoming involve in the BRISC "Wildlife Counts" project this year but has got local VCRs to organize follow-up field meetings for people who were on last year's courses.

6. Funding for second term

Support for the Head of R&D is being provided solely by the BSBI at present. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has promised £26K per year, but Natural England (NE) is still unable to commit. SNH recognises the need for BSBI to develop, in order to maintain the mobilisation of botanists for recording plants. SNH agreed that the £10K per year previously allocated to administrative support for the Director of Development post can go towards the new post of Head of Research & Development, within the existing grant timescale.

The BSBI Executive is now keen that the Scottish Officer post should continue. CSy advised BSBI to apply to SNH for as much as they need to maintain Jim's post (ideally with match funding from elsewhere, and costing-in the volunteer effort to SNH projects). SNH would support the BSBI development process and would encourage BSBI to support the post to an equal extent. SNH recognises that BSBI resources are particularly stretched in this transition period and would investigate ways to effectively

increase its contribution. This might include money from the SCM budget to fund the BSBI's contribution to this work area, thus freeing up the grant money for other activities. (Over the first Scottish Officer term the BSBI will have delivered SCM reports valued at £115,000. The total SNH grant-aid for this period was £114,000. However, the value of SCM work in the next - 3 year - term will be rather lower in value – even allowing for the shorter term¹.) Alternatively SNH could try to get a higher percentage grant for BSBI on the basis of the value for money achieved for the SCM work. CSy stated he personally believes that SNH should support the full core costs of organisations such as the BSBI because of the contribution they make to the conservation process and also to achieve engagement between SNH and its ultimate customers – those Scottish voters with a knowledge of the needs of higher plants.

AP4: CSy undertook to investigate the possibility of increasing the % of SNH's contribution to real costs for the next term of the Scottish Officer.

AP5: RS to flag up next BSBI grant as a shadow grant on the database – about £200K.

It was agreed that a dialogue should begin towards the end of 2007 with the intention of submitting an application in time for the April 2008 SNH grants deadline.

7. SCM Survey Costs

It was agreed that all reasonable SCM survey costs should be financed directly by the Scottish Officer budget. Typically for the proposed 5-8 sites p.a. this would be <£2,500.

8. Associated records project

It was agreed by SNH that this project could be undertaken as proposed, provided that the connection between the associated species and their target species is not lost. The potential additional value of this data is in using associated species as a basis for remedial action for the target species. The proposed method of financing by using the small annual - and accruing - underspends in the Scottish Officer budget was agreed. Total Project Value c£5k.

AP6: Jim to speak to John McKinnell re the necessity to get advice from SNH's Geographical Information Group to ensure that associated species data is entered in a form compatible with SNH's species repository.

9. Jim to set up as Data dissemination hub?

It was agreed that this was a good idea but that the BSBI Plant Unit should lead on it.

AP7: Jim to speak to Bob Ellis about whether it's worth doing this now or waiting until Kevin Walker is in post.

10. Rare Plant Registers (RPRs)

¹ For further details of how these figures were calculated see the SG Financial Issues paper which was e-mailed to all members of the group on 19 April 2007.

Jim had spoken to Andy Jones re RPRs in Wales. End-users, such as Local Authorities, LRCs and SNH really need the data in digital format to use in GIS. A paper copy is only useful for volunteers, to focus effort on looking for apparently lost populations and improving the precision of locations e.g. with GPS.

11. AOCB:

Csy proposed the idea of assembling a "Focus Group" of 50 botanists interested in conservation, to guide SNH policy and work. This would need to be done with BSBI and Plantlife involvement, possibly after Chris's provocative talk at the BSBI AGM in November? Agreed.

Csy gave an update on the filling of Lynne Farrell's SNH post after her retirement at the end of July. The post will continue to be E-grade, but will combine the vascular plant advisory role with non-native species work. It is being filled internally by a management move. Csy felt that BSBI could consider not having an SNH rep on the Scottish Committee, since Jim could be the liaison point. RP pointed out that this would put SNH in a different position from the other organisations represented on the Committee.

12. DONM

Tuesday 2nd October 2007 at RBGE.