



## SBRC Board Meeting Minutes

Constantine House, 5 Constantine Road, Ipswich IP1 2DH

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015

### Present:

Gen Broad (SBP) (GB)	Helen Jacobs (Essex & Suffolk Water) (HJ)
Adrian Chalkley (Suffolk Naturalists' Society / County Recorder) (AC)	Rachel MacFarlane (Ipswich Museum / IBC) (RM)
Alison Collins (Natural England) (AC)	Jacqui Miller (RSPB) (JM)
Nick Collinson (SCC) (NC)	Desi Reed (Waveney DC/Suffolk Coastal DC) (DR)
Peter Garrett (Babergh/Mid Suffolk) (PG)	Martin Sanford (SBRC) (MS)
Ben Heather (SBRC) (BH)	John Smithson (SEBC) (JS)
Sue Hooton (SCC) (SH)	Chris Strachan (EA) (CS)

**Apologies:** Dorothy Casey (SWT)

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Peter Garrett was welcomed as a new member, representing Babergh and Mid Suffolk DC. He has recently joined the District Council as the Corporate Manager for the Public Realm.

### 2. Election of Chair

NC was confirmed as the permanent chair. This enables SCC to be represented by Sue Hooton, Senior Ecologist.

### 3. Minutes of last meeting (29<sup>th</sup> September 2014) agreed with the following change:

- a. 4(c) 'Protected Species surveys' should read 'desk top studies'.

#### **Actions to be taken forward:**

5.i) JM and GB to bring the issue of developers sending species data to the Planning Group. Group should look at the idea of planning authorities putting a condition on applications to this effect.

DR: Waveney and SCDC have undertaken a consultation on the validation checklist. The results were adopted November 2014.

**Action: DR to check if submission of data to SBRC can be made a condition of planning permission.**

**P.3 5.i) BH to set up web pages to show where records are more than 20 years old for each taxonomic group.**

Action feedback: SBRC Recorders conference is being organised for October 2015. The conference will a) emphasise how important collecting records is in

the context of planning and development; b) ensure the issue of duplicate records is discussed.

**P.3 5.ii) GB to approach the IT department of a college to see if they'd be interested in developing the on-line planning scenarios.**

**P.4 5.ii)** Action feedback: SBRC has organised some CPD training with Anglia Ruskin University.

**MS to organise focus groups to work on specific aspects of SBRC work.**

**P.5 6** Action feedback: discussions have been held with Ipswich Museum on using their collections to improve learning.

**It was decided that future meetings will be held at Constantine House.**

#### **4. Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership**

(website: [www.suffolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org))



**Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership**

GB gave a brief presentation highlighting some of SBP's work since Sep 2014.


- Website:
  - Updated Priority Species & Habitats Gateway – 2 new species added to Suffolk BAP.
  - Events and Funding Opportunities updated regularly. All encouraged to send details to GB for inclusion.
- SBP Autumn and Winter 2014 newsletter highlighting partners' work.
- Highly successful Planning and Biodiversity seminar in Nov 2014 which included ecological consultants for the first time. There was a charge of £50 for consultants, but not planners.
- Planners' Update Autumn 2014 circulated; Spring 2015 ready to circulate next week.
- Species and Habitats Factsheets. 8 habitat factsheets have been drafted and circulated to partners for comment. 2 species factsheets are already on the website – Turtle Dove and Tassel Stonewort.
- (see: <http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/biodiversity-action-plans.aspx>)

GB confirmed that the Project Fund is still operating and some funds are currently being used to support the East Suffolk House Sparrow Project in schools.

AC is planning to put some factsheets about aquatic invertebrates (i.e. mayflies) on the Suffolk Naturalists' Society website. These can be linked to the SBP website.

**SUFFOLK BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP PRIORITY HABITAT FACTSHEET 2**

### Arable Field Margins



**Definition**

- Herbaceous strips between an arable crop and the field boundary, managed specifically to provide benefits for wildlife.
- May be cropped, left fallow, managed as a temporary grassland habitat or as a more permanent tussocky grassland strip.
- Provides wildlife corridors and connectivity between important habitats; buffers sensitive habitats and helps to reduce diffuse pollution.

Example of high quality management of field corners under agri-environment scheme in-field option. Image: Diane Ling

**IMPORTANCE FOR WILDLIFE**

Up to 75% of the biodiversity within an arable field can be found in the margins, regardless of the farming practice. The margins provide linkage between all farmland habitats and buffers them against farm operations.

**Birds and Mammals**  
Nesting sites for ground-nesting birds and hunting areas for barn owls and other birds of prey. Refuges for small mammals, habitat for grasshoppers and other insects that provide food for the young of birds such as grey partridges.

**Invertebrates**  
Over-wintering habitat for insects and spiders. Wild flower strips attract nectar-feeding insects, such as bees and hoverflies which are important pollinators. Refuges for all invertebrates.

**Amphibians and Reptiles**  
Refuges for amphibians and reptiles.

**Plants**  
Conservation sites for rare arable plants.

**FACTORS AFFECTING HABITAT IN SUFFOLK**

- Intensive arable production involves high use of herbicides and insecticides.
- Phosphate in farmyard run-off can inhibit winter protection and on the loss of winter

## **5. Budget**

MS circulated a) Final Budget 2014/15 and b) Draft Budget 2015/16 before the meeting.

### **Final Budget 2014/15**

MS confirmed that the figures for 2014/2015 are generally as expected. He had budgeted for £98 k, the actual sum was £100 k. Income from consultancy was £8 k higher than expected at £28 k, increased from the previous year.

The consultancy work is very good and efficient with no unnecessary paperwork. The Highways work is for Kier May Gurney.

### **Draft Budget 2015/16**

A figure of £25 k has been estimated for consultancy income, which may be lower than actual.

Running costs are expected to be £101 k.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have paid their contribution already.

Natural England has reduced their contribution by 50%. The MOA is extremely long but has not been signed off yet. NE promised a 4-year agreement combined with the Environment Agency, but the legal departments are unable to agree. Some record centres have switched off access via NBN for NE, but MS believes the data should be available and recommends only a slight reduction in services.

AC responded that £5 k will be allocated to each record centre, but negotiations are individually tailored. Unfortunately this means that the data from different counties will not be comparable.

**Action: MS to provide an update on MOA progress at the September meeting.**

## **6. County Wildlife Sites re-survey**

(website: [www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/wildlife-sites.aspx](http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/wildlife-sites.aspx))

- There is a great deal of information from the 1980s, but there have been huge changes and the information needs to be updated. It took 3 years to produce the original CWS register.
- CWS panel members cannot undertake to visit all 900 + sites. Last year's pilot programme clearly showed that this would not be possible. The woodlands probably haven't changed much, but some may never have been surveyed as they were included from the Ancient Woodland inventory.
- Good quality data is vital. Volunteers can be used if adequate training provided.
- There is an issue over identification of owners.
- The re-survey should open doors for further surveys of birds and other groups.
- Prioritising is essential.
- Several districts have recently surveyed some of their CWS – Suffolk Coastal, Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury – with match funding from SCC / SBP.
- Funding is needed for a 3 yr project. MS is happy to host a post at SBRC. The amount needed is very large, in the region of £100 k +. SWT is willing to put 2 days a week of

CWS officer time into the project. A £20 k contribution from SCC to put a bid together for the 'Breaking New Ground' project resulted in a successful £2 mill bid.

- The register is dynamic, with sites frequently added or removed.
- DR suggested assessing the total cost of the project to see if any planning funds could be made available.
- SH suggested there could be academic value to the project – it could form the basis of a PhD.

**Action: JM to look into funding sources RSPB used for their trainee ecologists to see if the project could use similar funding.**

**It was decided that:**

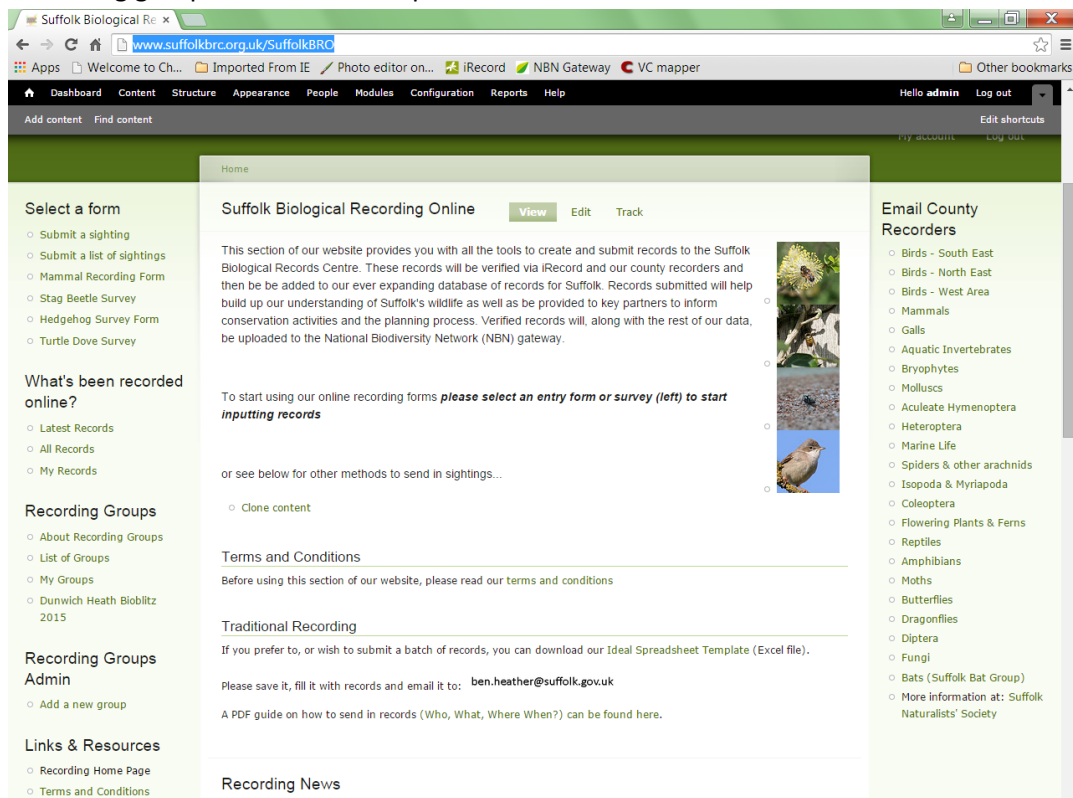
1. **Something needs to be done!**
2. **The project needs to include training and volunteers**
3. **Professional fund raisers should be sounded out and funding streams identified**
4. **It is a possible HLF project with match funding from planners**

**Action: CWS panel to produce a paper outlining an appropriate skills-based project over a long period**

**The Board agreed a spend of up to £10 k by SBRC on the project subject to consultation.**

## 7. Website Developments

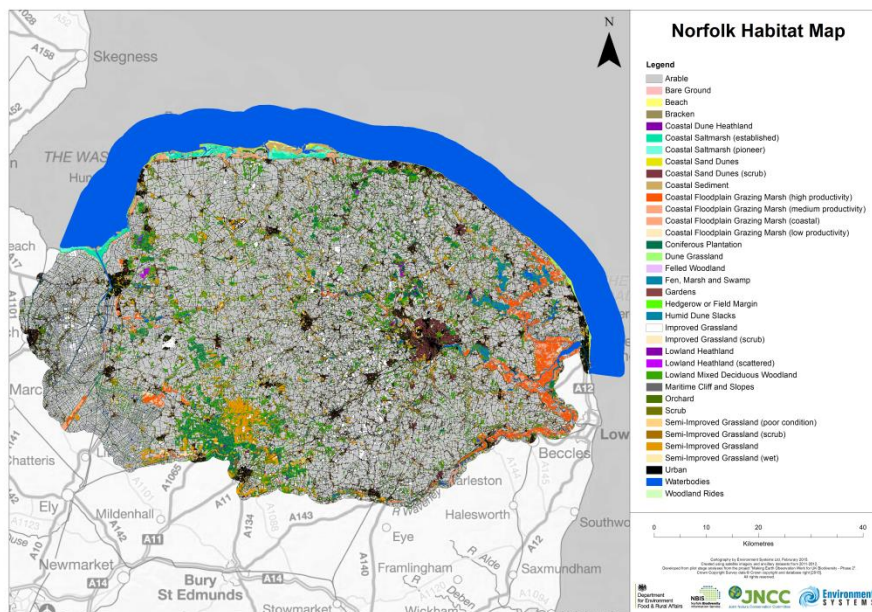
BH reported that the on-line recording system was live from last week. It has the same coding as i-Record. BH showed the log-in process. <http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk/SuffolkBRO>  
Recording groups have been set up.



The verification process is improving as more people are logging in who are able to verify. Photos are very helpful, but some groups still cannot be verified without a sample.

## BH described Object Based Image Analysis (OBIA)

OBIA can reveal vegetation structure and can pick out individual species. It could be used for landscape character and green space, especially gardens, and salt marsh. However, the system is very expensive and would cost £40-£50 k for Suffolk, although it has already been developed for Norfolk.



Watch this space!

MS: there seems to be plenty of funding to support training for young people, but little for adults (over 25). However, the retired sector is the fastest growing demographic and is not currently covered by other grant schemes. MS recommends a bursary scheme for adults for FSC identification courses etc.

He suggests offering bursaries with 50% initially and 50% on the submission of 100 records in the group on which training was given. This will incentivise recipients to use their training while it is still fresh which should help to reinforce new skills.

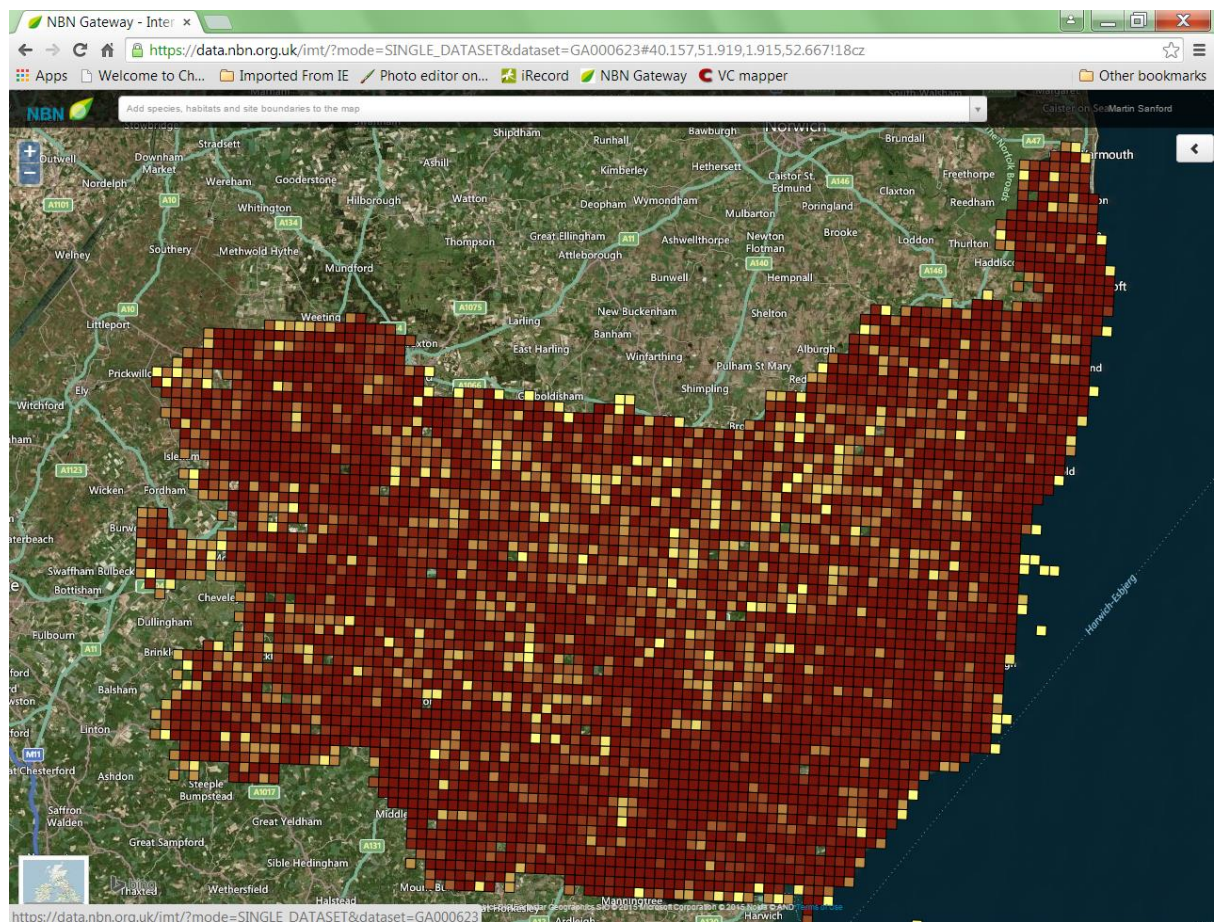
It was agreed this is an excellent idea and £1-£5k from SBRC reserves should be made available for bursaries.



**Action: MS to liaise with other partners to agree criteria and develop a paper for the next Board meeting.**

## 9. AOB

- CS : The B Lines Project is funded by NE. The aim is to link floristically rich habitat to provide 'roadways' for pollinating insects. This is a national scheme, GIS being done for Norfolk and Suffolk by NBIS.
- RM: There is a Show and Tell Day 19<sup>th</sup> Aug at Ipswich Museum. It involves SBRC, SWT and GeoSuffolk. The idea is to empower people to identify items for themselves.
- AC has been looking at DNA projects:
  - He has been allocated sites in Suffolk to sample water for DNA of Great Crested Newt.
  - The Natural History Museum is developing a standardised set of samples with the barcode of DNA attached.
- MS: There are now 2.3 million Suffolk records on the NBN Gateway visible to the general public at tetrad resolution.



Date of next meeting: **October 2015**

MS will circulate a Doodle Poll to set a convenient date