

SBIS board meeting

13th November 2025 – Microsoft Teams online meeting hosted by SBIS

MINUTES

Present:

James Meyer, East Suffolk Council, Chair
Emma Aldous, SBIS
Hannah Alred, SBIS
Harriet Codling, Environment Agency
Tim De-Keyzer, Suffolk County Council
Nick Dickson, Suffolk County Council

Rupert Masefield, Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Jacqui Miller, RSPB
Andrew Murray-Wood, Suffolk County Council
Luke Pidgeon, Ipswich Borough Council
Gary Quilter, West Suffolk Council
Martin Sanford, SBIS

Apologies:

Graham Hart, Helen Jacobs, Richard Parmee
The meeting commenced at 2 pm

Related documents:

• A SBIS Board Meeting minutes Feb 2025 • B SBIS Budget 2025_26 Draft • C Hannah slides • D Emma slides

ITEM	ACTION
1. Apologies and Introductions Apologies were received as above, Tim De-Keyzer sent apologies that he would be late joining the meeting.	
2. Minutes of the last meeting (Attachment: A SBIS Board Meeting minutes Feb 2025) The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting. Previously James Meyer offered to contact NE to find a representative to attend board meetings. James has contacted NE but had no success yet. This is rolled on as a continuing action point. It was suggested to contact: Joanna Wright (joanna.wright@naturalengland.org.uk), Manager for Suffolk, Agri-environmental Schemes, Catchment Sensitive Farming, National Nature Reserves and England Coast Path	JM
3. SBIS update and succession planning Martin provided an update on SBIS activities. The data that SBIS provides to SLA partners shows the previous 20 years records. Every year older records are removed and c. 250,000 new records are added. These new records added need verification, and Martin outlined a new process he has successfully used to filter the data from iRecord that needs to be sent to county recorders. He noted that the iRecord platform is a major source of new records, however the quality can often be poor, with no recorder name, or badly identified locations. New red data list of flora published, with even more species appearing on it Martin will retire Spring 2027, succession planning is in progress. Tim De-Keyzer suggested that, with the planned changes in local government, the earlier the board can come to an agreement about how to manage the succession process, the better. Add to next meeting agenda.	MS
4. Budget (Attachment: B SBIS Budget 2025_26 Draft) Local government changes will impact the SBIS funding model with some local Councils closing and new ones being created. Martin noted that SBIS provides free data to SWT, and suggested they could be a possible funding partner in future. Nick Dickson spoke about project based funding for SBIS. Including developing larger scale landscape projects off the back of the ancient woodland inventory update. Nick is planning to set up discussions to develop ideas into a project that can attract lottery funding and potentially engage with students in higher education. Various project ideas were discussed. The current budget is looking healthier than previous years, after increasing fees the predicted deficit is reduced to c. -£500. However, pay awards were more than budgeted for. It was noted again that SBIS is nearly at full capacity for consultancy work, even with the new streamlined administration process.	ND
5. Ancient Woodland Inventory update, Searches and Records (Attachment: C Hannah slides. Link: SBIS map www.suffolkbis.org.uk/awi) Hannah gave an update, The AWI project is complete and approved. We now have c. 7,000 hectares compared with c. 4,500, and more than double the number of woodland parcels registered. Details of the Natural England results map, and the SBIS map were shared and more comms work was announced. Adding so many new sites to the CWS register is a large amount of work and may not happen immediately. Tim mentioned that as sites are on the AWI they are now protected areas regardless of CWS designation.	

Hannah shared graphs showing the number of searches and records delivered for the year to date. Noting that all records are manually checked, which in April, amounted to some 83,000 records. Searches and records delivered were then compared to the same period in previous years, which clearly showed the increasing demand for searches and numbers of records being delivered, which is having a significant impact on workload. Hannah reiterated how busy the team are keeping up with commercial searches. Tim De-Keyzer noted that the new planning and infrastructure bill will lead to changes in the way that developers undertake site assessments. Potentially leading to fewer 'standard' searches, but an increase in larger searches. He also reported that there are a tranche of new NSIP developments expected.	
6. New invoicing system, Consultant charging, CWS Hub (Attachment: D Emma slides) New system: The new invoicing system has been implemented and has reduced invoicing time by c. 75%. Emma shared some examples of the financial performance data that SBIS can track using the new system. Consultant Charging: Emma compared updated SBIS pricing to other LERCs, noting that several have implemented significant price rises this year. Emma proposed increasing all prices inline with CPI (3.6%) making a standard search £171+VAT. This was approved by the board and will come into effect on the 1st April 2026. The SBIS website is to be updated to show notice of pricing increase from 1st January 2026, and all prices updated in April CWS Hub: The CWS citations and register had been managed using Google Smartsheets, until it became uneconomical. The attached slides show the new CWS Hub, which is being developed on the SBIS website to allow both SBIS and SWT to manage CWS data in one location.	EA
7. CWS re-survey and rewrites Rupert Masefield had to leave the meeting early, but shared this update with the meeting in writing: • 64 CWS citations updated. • Input to the Local Wildlife Site report to DEFRA, now published with recommendations. • 92 landowners now on the Green Hay register, which is a national record for a county. • 2 new volunteer conservation advisers have been recruited, increasing our ability to provide advice on management of CWS. • All CWS owner events have sold out this year and are in high demand. • CWS owners are participating in a county wide bat detector survey. • Volunteer surveys of churchyards have identified two potential new CWS sites. • In addition to this, Graham has built up a network of 'Private Nature Reserves' now covering more than 1,000ha with 265 landowners.	
8. ALERC membership After discussing the benefits of ALERC membership with the regional LERC forum, the SBIS team decided to join, especially as SBIS were eligible for the small LERC membership. Hannah reported that membership has already proved useful with an informative forum and lunchtime learning sessions. Emma will be evaluating the ALERC accreditation process to determine the scope of work involved and discover whether SBIS has enough resource available to move forward with the process. <i>The ALERC Accreditation criteria covers organisation structure, principles of continuous improvement, data custodianship and data services. It builds confidence in LERCs as bodies which hold biodiversity information in trust for society and that they manage public resources well, as well as ensuring that data providers and users alike have confidence in LERCs individually and collectively.</i>	EA
9. AOB Hannah has been asked to make a map for the Suffolk Verges Group of all the conservation cuts or verges work that the District and the County Council do to tie that all together. Hannah requested help from James Mayer and Gary Quilter in obtaining the location and cutting regime data from their respective councils.	JM/GQ/HA
10. Next meeting Spring 2026, to be arranged via Doodle Poll	MS
With no further business the meeting was closed at 3:20pm	