

**GWENT RECORDERS' DAY**  
**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2002**  
**Glen yr Afon House Hotel, Usk**

**Attendance**

Adam Rowe (AR)	Trevor Evans (TE)
Eric Hawkeswood (EH)	Michael Kilner (MK)
Georgina Holdsworth (GH)	Martin Anthoney (MA)
Elsa Wood (EW)	Mark Pavett (MP)
Steve Williams (SW)	John Kennett
Nicola Sharpe	John Harper
Adrian Wood	Jerry Lewis
Richard Clarke	Ian Smith
Bruce Campbell	David Clements
Ian Rabjohns	Ruth Brown
Chris Hatch	Colin Titcombe
Graham Harris	Matthew Harris
Chris Jones	Alan Williams
Janice Kinchington	Roger James

24 Recorders and 4 Official

**Apologies**

Sam Bosanquet	Kevin Dupe
Roger Gaunt	David and Shirley Gladwin
Brian Gregory	John Hines
Robert Jones	David Lewis
Peter Smith	Peter Twinn
Melanie Sutherland	Alison Jones
Julian Branscombe	Mike Wilson

11 Recorders and 4 Official

**10.00 RECEPTION AND COFFEE**

**10.15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

GH (Monmouthshire Biodiversity Co-ordinator) welcomed attendees and read out apologies received. She introduced Nicola Sharpe (Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Officer), EH (Gwent Wildlife Trust Acting Conservation Officer), AR (Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park Local Record Centre Manager) and MA who agreed to act as chairman for the discussion "*Taking Recording forward in Gwent*".

**10.25 GWENT SPECIES AUDIT AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS**

All the recorders that have been involved in the species audit process were sent a copy of the draft audit prior to meeting. GH summarised the production of the consultation draft of the Gwent Species Audit.

**Recorders Day 2000:** GH recapped on what had been done prior to the last Recorders Day at both the UK and Welsh level and reviewed the achievements of the first Recorders Day, where recorders identified:

- UK Priority Species and Species of Conservation Concern (SoCC) they knew occurred in Gwent (taken from the 1995 UK-SoCC list)

- species they thought were of conservation importance in Gwent that did not occur on the UK-SoCC list (1995) with justification; and
- which Unitary Authority areas they occur in

**Compilation of the Species Audit:** GH explained that the process of identifying these species had continued long after the Recorders Day. She had been in touch with numerous people collecting more information, and she and others had conducted research to identify UK Priority and SoCC species for which we had little local information, but also occurred in Gwent. She then explained that the Audit had recently gone out for consultation. It is an audit of all the UK Priority species and SoCC with Gwent records and other species of conservation importance in Gwent as identified by recorders.

**Consultation Draft:** The draft currently contains over 500 species. She showed a typical page of the audit and ran through each of the data columns and reasons for their inclusion. She then explained that what needed to be done:

- To correct mistakes and/or omissions
- To comment on the species listed
- To fill in any remaining information gaps (especially for "Ecology" and "Threats").

She emphasised that this was the first consultation draft in an ongoing process and ran through the functions of the Audit, which were mainly to:

- Inform the LBAP process
- Highlight gaps in our knowledge
- Raise awareness
- Provide information to facilitate protection
- Inform the planning process

**Species Action Plans:** GH then went on to talk about the next step, which is to start producing Gwent Species Action Plans (SAPs). To avoid duplication of effort, the production of Species Action Plans for the Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) (local authority areas) in Gwent would be co-ordinated through the LBAP Officers and the Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group (GGBAG). There are 4 species sub-groups:

- Plants, Lower Plants and Fungi
- Mammals, Herpetofauna and Fish
- Invertebrates
- Birds

These need to be set up to include members of GGBAG and recorders. They will then be responsible for deciding which Species Action Plans (SAPs) need to be produced for each LBAP in Gwent. All current information for SAPs will be made available to these groups (e.g. existing SAPs). The development of these groups will mean that individuals can decide how they would like to contribute to the group, for example through consultation or writing plans. GH asked those present if they were interested in being involved in SAP production to sign up to a species group.

Finally, she explained that at the last Recorders Day criteria for the selection of species onto the list had been discussed. However, after further discussion it had become clear that, with the exception of birds, a lack of information made these criteria difficult to use, especially in trying to establish species decline. The use of these criteria for the selection of species that need SAPs will need to be discussed by each species subgroups.

If you wish to be on a species group please contact Nicola Sharpe Tel: 01495 355716  
Email: Nicola.Sharpe@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

[Update 26/11/02: Nicola left Blaenau Gwent CBC – please contact Melanie Sutherland in Caerphilly CBC Tel: 01495 235 253 or email: sutherm@caerphilly.gov.uk]

#### 10.40 LOCAL RECORD CENTRES (LRCs)

##### Presentation by Adam Rowe, Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park LRC

AR outlined the reasons why we should collect biological records; explained what a Local Records Centre (LRC) is and what the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) does; addressed recorders concerns about data confidentiality; described the benefits of an LRC and dispelled popular myths. Details of the presentation are attached at the end of these minutes.

**Gwent Recorders Newsletter:** GH briefly showed those present the two issues of the Gwent Recorders Newsletter that had been produced so far, and asked people for their comments and articles for the third issue. She then passed over the proceedings to MA.

#### 11.30 TAKING BIOLOGICAL RECORDING FORWARD IN GWENT

##### Discussion chaired by Dr. Martin Anthony

**Discussion Points:** Concerns were raised regarding duplication of effort in data reporting. AR emphasised that if recorders were happy for their data to be used by the LRC, it could make the links with national recording schemes and obtain data directly from them. He emphasised that the wishes of recorders regarding their data were paramount and that any caveats they may have on sharing their data would be totally respected. Recorders were keen to understand data management, particularly sensitive data. Concerns were aired regarding the following data management conditions:

a) Validation of data

Recorders expressed concern for the level of accuracy of data. AR explained that there would be a system in place to review the accuracy of data but it would largely rely on historical records and experts knowledge. However, GH added that from her past experience with record centres systems for checking the reliability of data often evolve over time to meet the practical requirement of the record centre.

(b) Reporting formats

Recorders raised the need for having a consistent recording format. It is likely the data will be used with the computer package Recorder 2000. AR explained this would be simple in that records should contain the following:

- Grid Reference
- Name of Recorder
- Date of Record
- Name of Species recorded (common and Latin names)
- Quantity

c) Back-up of data

AR emphasised the importance of backing up data. He encouraged the group to think about copying their data on paper or on disk and to ensure relevant people knew where copies were held. AR said it was important to think about the future of their data since data is sometimes lost if not identified in a will.

MA asked the group how they felt about an LRC for South East Wales: TE raised a concern of the size of the LRC in comparison to other LRCs. AR explained the boundaries of the LRC remit were decided upon considering the maximum size possible given the man power and resources available, in order to deliver an effective service. EW raised concerns about the need for a development officer for the LRC. AR and GH explained that a development officer would be in post not to actually start the LRC up initially, but to carry out a feasibility study in order to establish whether or not the LRC is required and to determine its financial feasibility.

### 1.30 SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOMES

**Proposal for a Gwent Recorders Forum:** It was agreed that this meeting should take place on an annual basis and that this group would be known as the Gwent Recorders Forum. It was generally agreed to see if it would be possible to find a small amount of money to fund future activities. It was suggested that Wildlife Sites may be a good topic of discussion for the next meeting (EH).

**Representation on GGBAG:** Recorders agreed that if required a representative of the group would attend GGBAG meetings.

**LRCs:** Formal propositions: the Gwent Recorders Forum are in favour that an LRC should be established - "subject to satisfactory points this group is in favour of a Gwent Recorders Centre". The following points were raised regarding this statement:

- satisfactory controls given to recorders over the management of their data
- the LRC had adequate staffing to be successful

**Other Topics raised by the group:** Trevor Evans expressed concern for the size of important habitats in Gwent, particularly Carboniferous limestone habitats. It was explained that the issues surrounding limestone habitats would be addressed in a Habitat Action Plan (HAP).

### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**Education:** Some recorders expressed an interest in holding educational workshops on species for volunteers. (MK, MP, SW)

**Survey directory:** MA suggested it would be a good idea to have a directory on recording schemes known to the group. (Please see enclosed survey directory).

GH offered her thanks to the group for all their hard work and co-operation in compiling the Gwent Species Audit. She informed the group of her intentions to leave her present post as Biodiversity Officer for Monmouthshire County Council on 15 February 2002. She also added that working with the recorders had been one of the highlights of her career as a biodiversity officer. In turn the group thanked her for her significant contribution to the species audit and the formulation of the recorders group.

### 1.45 END

# LOCAL RECORDS CENTRES: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

## Adam Rowe's Presentation Notes

### CONTENTS

- Why collect biological records?
- What is a Local Records Centre (LRC)?
- What is the National Biodiversity Network (NBN)?
- LRCs – In touch with local needs
- Data security and confidentiality
- What can LRCs offer the recording community?
- Other benefits of LRCs
- Dispelling popular myths about LRCs!
- Conclusions

### WHY COLLECT BIOLOGICAL RECORDS?

- General interest
- Atlas production
- Monitoring population changes
- Contributing to national schemes
- To assist protection and conservation of species and habitats
- To assist with biodiversity action planning and monitoring

### WHAT IS A LOCAL RECORD CENTRE?

LRCs exist to provide the link between the collection of biological records by voluntary and professional recorders and the use of those records to inform decision makers. The assumption that drives LRCs is that:

**"Appropriate biodiversity information should be available to all who need it, enabling everyone to make informed decisions, and thereby to minimise biodiversity loss"**

The aims of LRCs include:

- Acting as the focus for wildlife information in the locality
- Promoting, encouraging and coordinating the gathering, collation and dissemination of wildlife information
- Providing appropriate information to those who need it
- Promoting local awareness of wildlife
- Applying high standards to safeguard the interests of data suppliers while ensuring quality of service to users

There are now over 40 LRCs across the UK at various stages of development and operation.

### WHAT IS THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (NBN)?

"A network of 'data custodians' working together to give a complete picture of the status of the UK's wildlife".

#### Three types of data custodian:

- National organisations (e.g. CCW, NMGW)
- National recording schemes
- Societies (data often held centrally at the BRC, Monks Wood)

## LOCAL RECORDS CENTRES

### Functions of an LRC:

- LRCs must be in touch with local needs
- *LRCs must respond to the needs of local users and retain the trust and co-operation of local data suppliers*
- LRCs provide the link between voluntary recording effort and the NBN; *without LRCs the NBN will not have access to local data*
- LRCs must cement links with volunteer recorders and provide support and guidance to the recording community. They should act as a focus for local biological recording.

## DATA SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

LRCs must have strict protocols to ensure that:

- They always comply with the wishes of data providers on the use of their data
- Confidential or sensitive information does not get into the wrong hands
- Data Exchange Agreements are in place before any handover of data
- Users must sign Data Supply Agreements to control their use of data
- Detailed written records are kept of all data usage
- Access to data is strictly controlled
- Data held at LRCs is securely stored

## WHAT CAN LRCs OFFER THE RECORDING COMMUNITY?

### Data Exchange Agreements

- Agreements through which recorders permit the LRC to use their data
- Details of agreements can be altered to meet recorders' needs

### Examples of benefits include:

- Access to LRC databases for personal enquiries
- Regular reports of records of interest to the recorder
- Advice on gaps in knowledge and un-recorded sites
- Assistance with atlas production
- LRCs may develop recorder support networks with newsletters, electronic newsgroups etc.

## OTHER BENEFITS OF LRCs

- **Promoting good standards of biological recording:**
  - Encouraging detailed geographical references
  - Tetrad records or vague named locations no longer sufficient for today's uses of biological records
- **Promoting good geographic coverage of recording**
  - Encouraging recording at under-visited sites and areas
  - Promoting good taxonomic coverage of recording
  - Encouraging recording of poorly covered groups
  - Encouraging new recorders through training or mentoring
- **Archiving and safeguarding records**
  - Providing storage, archiving and back-up facilities
  - Encouraging recorders to ensure their records will be safe for ever

- **Raising Awareness**
  - Organising local recording schemes
  - Enhancing public understanding of local biodiversity

## **DISPELLING POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT LRCs**

- **"LRCs will sell my data for profit"**

No they won't - all LRCs operate on a not-for-profit basis and charges are made purely to recoup costs of record management and administration.

- **"LRCs will publish my records"**

No they won't - ownership of all records remains with the recorder. LRCs may assist recorders with getting records published, but cannot act without the consent of recorders.

## **CONCLUSION**

- Maximising the benefit of your recording efforts
- LRCs provide a means to ensure that the best possible use is made of your records, ensuring they directly contribute to the protection of wildlife.
- Establishing an LRC in South (East) Wales
- There now exists the best opportunity yet to establish an LRC in South Wales.
- A South (East) Wales LRC will only succeed if it has strong backing from the recording community.