

GlamBAG Recorders Day, 15th March 2003 Summary

The first Recorders Day for Glamorgan Recorders was held on the 15th March 2003 at the South and West Wales Wildlife Trust Education Centre, Tondy. The event was attended by 22 recorders and 16 representatives of the GlamBAG Partnership.

The purpose of the event was to introduce Recorders to the work of GlamBAG and the local Biodiversity Partnerships, to provide recorders with an opportunity to feed into discussions about the proposed Local Record Centre for South East Wales and to provide recorders from different disciplines an opportunity to network with other recorders and meet representatives from Local Biodiversity Partnerships.

Following an introduction by Iorwerth Rees, Chair of the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group, and a presentation by Alison Jones on the Role of GlamBAG, Richard Wistow and Suzanne Waldron illustrated how important the recording community were in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Process.

Discussions after these presentations, identified the need for recorders to support Local Biodiversity Officers. Geri Thomas was concerned that some officers were on short term contracts, and he had tried to raise the profile of LBAP officers by sending letters of praise to councils who were supportive of LBAPs. It was suggested that there was a role for GlamBAG to write a letter of criticism if biodiversity officer posts were not renewed. Steve Bolchover drew attention to the importance of recorders getting opportunity to influence the planning system and the importance of getting involved in the UDP process.

The rest of the day was taken up with presentations and workshops about local record centres. Adam Rowe, Manager for the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and BBNP outlined how the Record Centre operates in Powys, and its relationship with local recorders. This was followed by a presentation by David Slade, Development Officer for the proposed SE Wales Biodiversity Records Centre who outlined the aims of a record centre in the South East Wales area, and the progress made towards setting it up.

Workshop sessions after lunch gave recorders the opportunity to discuss issues that may concern them including confidentiality of data, verification of data, charging, and other issues of concern. There was a lively debate on how these three issues would affect the various recording groups and individuals.

Confidentiality – It was considered that there were only a few species where special consideration would need to be taken on how data was distributed. It was considered that those few people wishing to damage or take species are already aware of their location. Some concern was expressed by use of data by developers. The general consensus was that better knowledge generally meant better protection, and supply of information from a record centre would show a clear audit trail. It was suggested that a vetting system should be

considered for people requesting information, and for some species information limited to a 2km square location.

Verification/Ownership of Data – The validity of records held by the Record Centre was an issue that could undermine the value of the data. The best solution would be to seek confirmation from the existing county recorders before accepting new records. It was confirmed that ownership of the records should remain with the original recorder, and that recorders should keep original hard copies unless the record centre is requested to hold the information on their behalf. During the establishment phase however, the LRC would need to be custodian of the data while it was being processed. The ownership of records passed on through death was discussed and would largely depend on the wishes of the donor or donor's family.

Charging – A concern for those recording groups that make money from the data that they hold and use the funds to benefit the recording group. The solution would be for the record centre to provide services that the funds have been used for – such as assistance with the provision of equipment, computer hardware and software, atlas production and annual reports.

The event was drawn to a close by Iorwerth Rees, and a show of hands indicated that further meeting would be welcomed by the participants.