



GLAMORGAN BIODIVERSITY ADVISORY GROUP



SEWBR^eC

SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
CANOLFAN COFNODI FIOAMRYWIAETH DE DWYRAIN CYMRU

Glamorgan Recorders' Forum 2005

Saturday 12 March 2005, Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales, Tondur

BRIEF REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS:

The day was opened and those attending were welcomed by the event Chairman, Steve Moon (Bridgend CBC & Chairman of SEWBR^eC).

Alison Jones (Caerphilly CBC) gave a brief report on the 2004 Forum.

The establishment of SEWBR^eC: Supporting biological recording and recorders for the benefit of biodiversity (Adam Rowe, SEWBR^eC)

Presentation contents:

- The role of SEWBR^eC
- SEWBR^eC development
- SEWBR^eC's funding partners
- How will SEWBR^eC help those concerned with biodiversity?
 - Improving accessibility of existing biodiversity information
 - Making biological recording easier
 - Simplifying data flows
 - Publicising and facilitating training opportunities
 - Providing services to individual recorders & recording groups
 - Data Exchange Agreements
 - Strengthening support for voluntary recorders
- Providing services to funding partners and other users
 - Examples of products and services
- Current and future data holdings
- Current priorities
- Closing thoughts

A full electronic version (on CD) or hard copy of this presentation may be obtained from SEWBR^eC on request

Data Exchange: Strengthening the relationship between recorders, National Schemes/Societies and LRCs (Russel Hobson, Butterfly Conservation Wales)

Presentation contents:

- Butterflies for the New Millennium: Utilised a simple data-flow model
- New issues: sharing data; working with LRCs; authority over records
- Dorset Case Study (part of NBN South West England Pilot Project):
 - Examined document data flows and blockages
 - Formalised data exchange relationships
 - Mobilized data
 - Comprehensive data flow analysis: Defines roles of local recorders, VC Recorder (or local Butterfly Conservation branch), LRC, National Society and NBN Gateway
 - Data Licence Agreement established: defines roles; licences LRC to disseminate data (with controls).

- Other spin-offs: new BC data access and data privacy policies; new recorder agreements; new BC recording form statements
- **Key outcomes:** BC and Dorset LRC sharing data; provides a model approach for use in other areas (already being adapted for SEWBRcC use); starting to address legal issues of recording

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LBAP progress reports

Paper updates from all 8 LBAPs in the Glamorgan area were included in the attendants' packs. Verbal updates/presentations were given by:

- Kate Pryor (Vale of Glamorgan)
- Alison Jones (Caerphilly)
- Sarah Mellor (Bridgend)
- Gareth Ellis (Swansea)

Question and answer session: LBAPs and SEWBRcC

A short discussion session took place prior to lunch. Main issues discussed were:

- **The need for SEWBRcC to avoid aiming just to recover costs:** Additional income must be generated to allow research and development, equipment replacement etc. These views were welcomed, however charges to the commercial sector and the possibility of tendering for contracts, mean that SEWBRcC is already aiming to recover more than just costs.
- **Legal liability:** Data Exchange Agreements absolve recorders from legal liability for inaccurate records. Concern was expressed that this may leave SEWBRcC open to being sued for inaccurate data it supplies. Caveats attached to all releases of data should adequately cover SEWBRcC. LRCs only pass on objective data and are apolitical; it is unlikely that a case against an LRC would stick for these reasons.
- **Marine boundaries:** Clarification was sought on how far away from the coast the SEWBRcC area extends for submission of marine sightings. Advice will be sought from others (e.g. CCW, EA, Sea Fisheries Commission) to clarify this issue. SEWBRcC is likely to hold a copy of CCW's marine data. Plans have been discussed for a marine LRC to compliment the 4 terrestrial LRCs in Wales.
- **Meteorological data:** SEWBRcC is not planning to hold data of this type, but links may be made from its web-site as appropriate and if there is demand.
- **CCW data:** Recorders expressed concern that much data is held at CCW HQ as well as in site offices etc. SEWBRcC needs to access and incorporate this data if possible.
- **Duplication of records:** The same records are likely to crop up from more than one source (e.g. moth records may be on GMRG database as well as held by WTSWW and CCW). Communication is important to highlight these issues to SEWBRcC where they are known about. SEWBRcC will check for duplication where possible, but would rather accidentally obtain the same data twice than not at all.
- **Coarseness of data:** Concern was expressed that some data is gathered at a coarse geographical resolution. SEWBRcC will accept all records but encourages recording at finer level than tetrad or 1km square.

Prioritising data: Building SEWBRcC databases and identifying gaps in our knowledge (Adam Rowe, SEWBRcC)

- A brief presentation was given to highlights SEWBRcC's current level of awareness of data holding organisations, groups and individuals in Glamorgan.
- Further issues were covered including the identification of gaps in knowledge of active recorders, as well as geographic and taxonomic gaps in data coverage

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- The second part of this session involved those present being invited to annotate lists of known data holding organisations, groups and individuals with additional potential contacts for SEWBRc to pursue.
- Those present were also encouraged to highlight those datasets which SEWBRc should treat as a priority during its establishment phase

WORKSHOP SESSIONS:

1. Data flows: defining roles; avoiding duplication of effort (Facilitator: Russel Hobson)

A useful and wide-ranging discussion took place, focussing on issues of avoiding duplication of effort and data verification/validation. Main outcomes of discussions were:

- There needs to be a simple but vigorous protocol for all MapMate users to avoid duplication of sites/records etc.
- SEWBRc should work towards becoming the hub for all MapMate users and all taxonomic groups.
- All records of all orders should be passed back to the county record to ensure that they are validated before they enter the GIS Linked database.
- Where there is no county recorder for a taxonomic group, SEWBRc should ensure that there are suitable referees so that records can be validated before going onto the GIS-linked database.
- The GIS-Linked database needs to have a 'validated' field added so that records do not appear until they are validated.
- Steps should be taken to avoid duplication of record entry. Spot checks should be done on datasets to ensure that they have not been entered previously.
- SEWBRc should develop standards for site entry to avoid duplication, designating site names where necessary.
- SEWBRc should look into providing segregated taxon-based master copies of databases.

2. Identifying and providing the services that recorders need from SEWBRc (Facilitator: Adam Rowe)

The group discussed the relative merits of a previously identified list of services that SEWBRc could offer to recorders and was invited to suggest additional services from SEWBRc that would benefit them as recorders.

- **Assistance with computerisation of paper records:** Widely welcomed and of particular interest to the Glamorgan Bird Club as they have a large backlog of records that need digitising. This is likely to be the case with other recording groups and individuals too. It was suggested that it may be possible for recording groups to apply for *Species Challenge Fund* money, and use some of that money to employ person(s) to enter data. This could be particularly useful for inputting data on Section 74 (CRoW Act) species.
- **Software provision and training/support:** This was welcomed, and thought to be an excellent way of standardising biological data across Glamorgan. It was suggested that we need to consider the duplication of sites (and therefore records) on *MapMate* with the provision of more copies of the software. A 'definitive list' of sites on *MapMate* may need to be produced and disseminated.
- **Access to LRC databases for personal enquiries:** The ability to access LRC databases for a recorders taxonomic (and associated) group was supported as a standard service.
- **Advice on gaps in knowledge and un-recorded sites:** It was asked whether SEWBRc will record negative records, as blanks on distribution maps do not necessarily mean that an area has not been recorded but that a species was not found. By not recording these negative results, duplication of effort could occur. SEWBRc needs to consider this further.
- **Assistance with atlas/publication production:** The offer from SEWBRc of financial and/or staffing assistance with the publication of material was welcomed.

- **Base maps to support survey effort:** Whilst this was welcomed, subject to SEWBRcC confirming that its OS licence permits it to provide copies of maps to recorders. SEWBRcC will need to attach conditions to copies given out, to prevent further copies being made as this is likely to contravene the OS licence.
- **Publicity for the work of the recorder or recording group:** This was welcomed, especially by the Glamorgan Bird Club who may be interested in a contacts page on the SEWBRcC website with hyperlinks to various groups. SEWBRcC could also help membership recruitment to various other recording groups.
- **Notification of opportunities which may arise for paid or unpaid survey work:** This was welcomed, especially as it may lead to investigating sites which a group or recorder may normally not have access.
- **Organisation of annual Recorders' Forum meetings:** YES! But the meeting should try to avoid clashes with: highest/lowest tides, good recording weather(!), species training days, rugby internationals etc. It was suggested that a meeting could be held in January or February (avoiding clashes with other Recorders' Forums)

Additional suggested services:

- **Archiving of notebooks:** SEWBRcC should be involved in this, although material should be archived professionally by specialist archive services or the National Museum.
- **Recorders' Newsletter:** This would be welcomed by recorders, although it was suggested that work to produce a newsletter should not create a large additional burden on SEWBRcC. A brief news update would suffice, or a newsletter which made use of articles written for other purposes (e.g. LBAP reports).

Recorders' News: Reports of past and forthcoming recording activities

- Brief updates on forthcoming organised recording activities were given by Richard Smith, Russel Hobson and Mervyn Howells.

Steve Moon thanks those who had attended and brought proceedings to a close.