
NBRC 2014 Questionnaire Report



A review of the responses to a questionnaire based survey conducted in October-December 2014

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Acknowledgments.

NBRC staff would like to gratefully acknowledge the help of all those who took the time to complete and return the questionnaire on which this document is based, and to thank everyone who has helped with building up the county wildlife database over the last eight years.

Introduction

As a preliminary to the development of a bid to secure HLF funds for the proposed **WILDside Project**, a questionnaire was drawn up to cover five main areas:

1. The **respondents'** role(s) and interests in relation to biological recording and biodiversity information use;
2. Views on **recording** and **biodiversity information use** in Northampton;
3. Opinions on the activities of the **Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre**;
4. Comments on future **needs, opportunities, threats, gaps or overlaps** in relation to information provision and support for recording;
5. What the focus and outcomes of **WILDside** should be.

The intention was to build up a picture from different perspectives as regard the current situation and to use this, and comments on potential short and longer term goals to

- help inform NBRC's **development** over the next few years and establish how this might mesh effectively with WILDside;
- determine what different **audiences** considered to be the most pressing needs and most useful outcomes;
- frame the detailed project proposals in relation to their views, and NBRC's wider work and objectives.

The six-page questionnaire comprised a series of issues, topics and types of location, asking respondents to give their view on the importance or value of each, and to make their own suggestions, enabling quantitative analysis together with completely free form answers, to make the most of the experience and different perspectives of the respondents.

The questionnaire was circulated via e-mail to the NBRC Steering Group, NBRC's recorder contacts list, the Northamptonshire BAP partnership mailing list and officers of the Wildlife Trust BCN involved with using biodiversity information, recording or monitoring activities, as well as to NBRC's staff. The fact that the survey was underway was also advertised via NBRC's Twitter account but yielded no additional responses.

A total of 19 largely complete questionnaires were received, representing some 23 per cent of those individuals directly invited to comment. A further two were received subsequently, with views consistent with those set out below.

This report provides a summary and analysis of the responses for the consideration of NBRC's Steering Group in relation to the Records Centre's development and operations over the next few years.

It has also provided the basis for the formulation and refinement of the WILDside project proposals.

Steve Whitbread

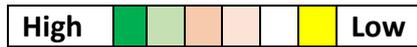
March 2015

Presentation of information

Key to Tables

Where responses were scored (0-5) a colour range from **green** (high score) to **red** (low score) is used to summarise those values graphically, with the total, enabling comparison of the strength of response between sections.

For questions where only a positive response was required (or was all that was given), these were counted. Colours are applied to category fields to indicate the number of positive responses.

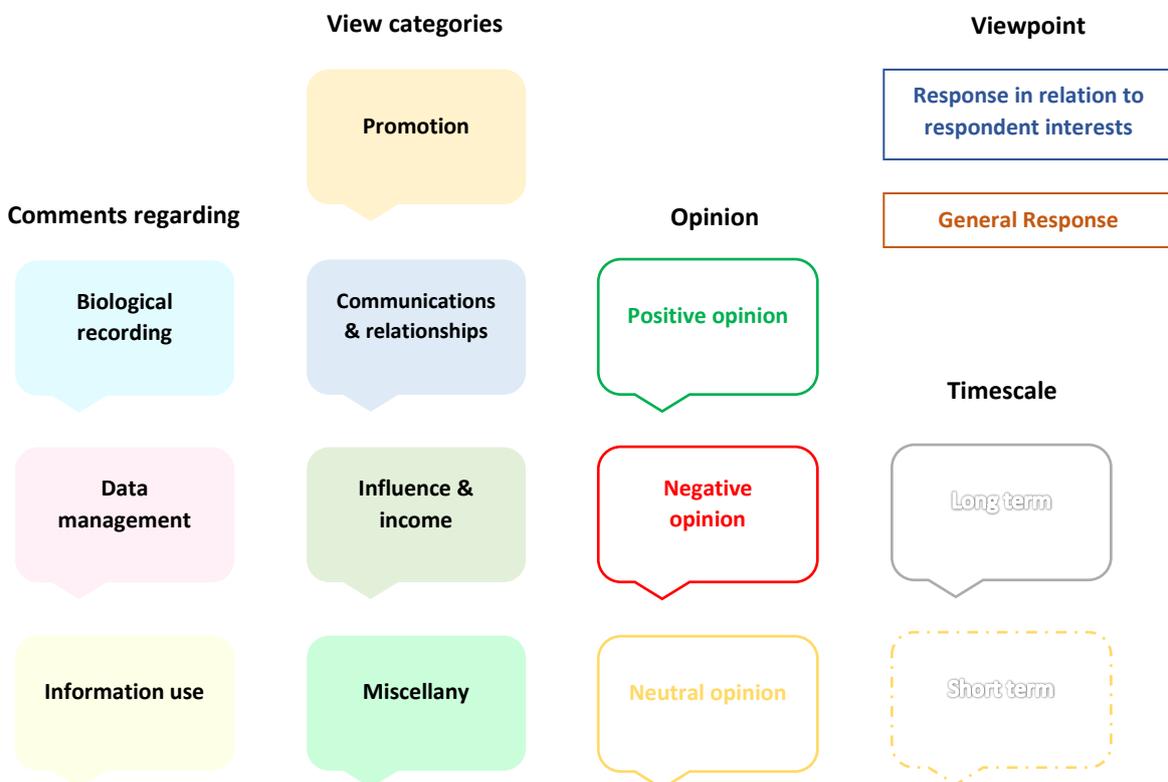


Note that there was some variation between the number of people supporting a particular view or proposal and the strength of individual and overall support.

Key to Comments

The most useful comments received are quoted verbatim, with only obvious spelling errors corrected, omitted words {inserted} and any contractions indicated by an ellipsis (...).

Comment balloons are coloured consistently to indicate categories in each section and margins are coloured/patterned (e.g. positive views are indicated with **green** margins, negative views with **red**), so that it's possible to tell at a glance the degree of support for current or recent activities or whether proposals relate to the short or longer term.



Section 1. Respondents and their interests

How respondents are involved with biological recording and biodiversity information use

Respondent Involvement	
13	Recorders
5	County Recorders
2	Organisers
1	Trainers
6	Information providers
4	Information users
5	Local contacts
11	Volunteers
10	Employed

A large proportion of the 19 respondents are involved in surveys or making other records, with 5 of them currently active in collating records as Northants County Recorder for a particular species group, and some being part of wider, national bodies. Additionally, some (mainly, but not exclusively NBRC staff) are involved in providing information for others to use. Just four of the respondents were users of information (for conservation or planning). Some were involved with recording on an entirely voluntary basis, others undertake surveys professionally and some do both.

Aspects of recording, information use and data management in which individuals are interested

Respondent Interests	
15	Species groups
15	Local wildlife
11	Environmental monitoring
10	Habitats
10	Conservation
10	Impact assessment
9	Designated Sites
7	Validation & verification
6	Mentoring others
6	Training or education
5	Planning
5	Community engagement
4	Group coordination & support
3	Other
2	Geology

Respondents' roles were reflected in their interests, with nearly all being concerned with the whereabouts of local wildlife and (various) species groups covering a range of plants, vertebrates and invertebrates. Uses to which information can be put featured highly, with some individuals presently involved in supporting recording (from training or mentoring others to validating and verifying records) in different ways.

Few had an interest in geological information, although this was partly a consequence of the biodiversity focus of those contacted.

There were few other issues identified and it is considered that the list presented in the questionnaire effectively encompassed the majority of interests.

- Other than for ecological consultancies (intended to be covered as part of a East of England regional consultation), one or more responses were received from each of NBRC's main audience groupings.
- The majority of questionnaires were completed in full
- Whereas it would have been helpful to have achieved a higher response rate, the quality of responses and suggestions was very welcome
- Although there was a useful breadth of opinion, there was general consistency to the responses, rather than any clear forking of competing views

Section 2. Views on current position in Northamptonshire

Biological recording in Northamptonshire

It is done by separate interest groups who keep their own lists and don't 'talk' to each other. In fact, they may not know of the others' existence

The county has skilled individuals but how they are actually recording ... generally unknown

There is a decent amount going on, certainly for some groups, although others aren't covered

Similar to many areas, but there are some counties with very good schemes that seem to work – need to emulate them

Overall there is limited capacity or coordination, with little concerted effort put into support.

There is very little support or communication between recording groups and no central 'hub' or 'recording community'

There are a dwindling number of active county recorders within Northants and the number of taxonomic groups being covered is becoming very small

There is very little support or communication between recording groups and no central 'hub' or 'recording community'

There is minimal recording and what there is, is only performed by a small number of people. Generally, most of these are an ageing group

The Natural History Society {in Northampton} doesn't seem to be actively promoting species recording and has a focus on photography and astronomy rather than species recording. As the local NHS is usually the first port of call for individuals looking to become involved in recording I don't feel that it's easy for people to know where to go

Biological Record Centres across the country are limited by staff numbers, continuity, knowledge of local sites and species and this varies widely

Probable location bias to accessible/favourite sites

I think there are still a lot of gaps

Some very active recorders covering some taxa thoroughly, other taxa are not well covered

Somewhere in the middle between best practice and worst, but not really sure where it lies

Rather piece-meal without firm direction or aim or stated purpose

Other areas of the country have really good recording programmes

Perhaps a similar picture with some areas being worse and others far better. Is this better where areas have a good Natural History Society?

Probably similar. It seems to be clustered around a small number of knowledgeable people

Well covered for some taxon groups but a lot of gaps

Limited number of individuals recording data and there appears to be no co-ordination

Lots of features in common with other counties but Northants is generally relatively poorly off

Compared to the 'expected benchmark' - not as good as the rest of the UK

- Opinions about existing recording activities in Northamptonshire were less than positive
- Whilst there is useful work being done in some areas, there is a lack of geographic and taxonomic coverage
- Not enough is being done to support or coordinate efforts
- There are concerns about recruitment of successors to existing, active but ageing volunteers
- Overall, Northants was considered to be generally less well placed than other counties

Record sharing and data management in Northamptonshire

Most recorders do share records, but there are other sources of records which are not well shared e.g. planning applications, specialist surveys relating to biodiversity projects

I would hope it would be better, but with resources ... it could well be a similar picture

Varied. There are various datasets that have been shared but have yet to be incorporated into what is a small existing database as well as large numbers of paper records that need to be dealt with. Records in the RECORDER database need cleaning. Relatively few records are made available via the NBN Gateway

It should be easy to submit a record, and it should be easy to enquire about any records. But I don't feel that it is, currently

NBRC management of records improving. Other management of records by private individuals unclear

Good for some groups, not for others

Sharing between members of groups is probably quite good though (for some groups anyway), e.g. moths, butterflies, birds, plants. The management of these records within them is possibly also quite good

Record sharing variable dependant on relationships and perceptions of the usefulness of the BRC

Records are available, but you have to know where to go

Very similar, although across the country it seems to be different with each recording scheme

There appear to be quite a few unconnected groups, societies and individuals within the county that don't have any communication with NBRC and it isn't known what happens to the records/information they gather or if the information is kept in a usable format

Some counties have groups that are more advanced in 'joined up' communication and send their sightings to both county and national databases

Compared to the 'expected benchmark' - on an improving/upwards trend

Becoming increasingly more structured, formal and organised; within, and driven by ... NBRC itself

Poor. Records not consistently shared and where {they} have been (to NBRC) many haven't been processed

Information is not easily shared between individuals or organisations

Probably about average in all cases!

Overall very positive experience - could improve though

- Based on the mix of positive and negative viewpoints, the situation as regards information sharing, accessibility and the management of available data appears to be quite varied across different groups
- Ease of use and access, and simply knowing what is available as well how to access it seems important
- Within the county it is possible that approaches already followed by certain recording groups might serve as a model for others
- A review of existing practices – both in and beyond the county – is indicated
- *What steps would best help to address the negative points?*
- *Where would support be most beneficial?*

Record sharing and data management in Northamptonshire



- Respondents appear to be less well informed or feel less able to comment on biodiversity information use in relation to other areas
- It is evident that the situation is generally less than satisfactory
- This would appear to be an area for NBRC to pursue improvements, both in relation to the information that is available and its accessibility/ease of use
- Where practicable, lessons should be learned from records centres in other counties

Section 3. NBRC's support and operations

- Overall, opinion of the Records Centre's work to date (P6) is less than positive
- Whilst there are reasons for this, it is important that NBRC continues to build on the activities and improved relationships resulting from the efforts of the last three years (P7)
- NBRC staff have invested considerable effort in the progress that has been made
- Future plans will need to take account of the views presented here as well as acknowledging the recent improvements

3: Views on NBRC support and operations

NBRC's support for

Biological Recording

Data management & sharing

Information use



NBRC's recent activities and development

It is consistently improving

More proactive. More effort being put {into} involving recorders

An accumulation of issues/problems has been identified, prioritised and largely dealt with

I think it is important that the records centre continues to look at ways to improve their service provision and the idea they could become the 'hub' for information across the County

Given that the Local Authority no longer has an in-house ecologist having access to records is particularly useful.

Staff levels have increased and with a manager in post, more time and effort is being put into looking at long term objectives and funding streams. This will enable NBRC to move forward rather than having to provide a bare minimum in order to stay afloat

Processing of records now happening other than just Local Wildlife Sites surveys.... more communication with county recorders than in past, verification of records, procedure to enter records which means they "are better"

A more proactive approach has been adopted... It feels like NBRC is moving on from the phase of establishment and effectively keeping its head above water

The team appear to be working with a sense of direction and purpose which I hope will build the reputation of the BRC and repair damaged relationships

More engaging, outward looking, provision of more services

The response process / structure to external consultants and enquirers has been made more formal and efficient

It's improving. Employing more staff has allowed more data input and more data searches. There is a long way to go in encouraging incidental sightings

Now in a position to develop and become more useful and effective - putting the skills and enthusiasm of its staff and the county's recorders to better effect - in future.

Things generally seem far more promising

- It is evident that recent NBRC activities have been generally well received, especially in relation to the views expressed earlier
- It should be noted that this is a result of the first stages in a process of necessary improvement which needs to be continued
- For NBRC, the question is how best to build on recent successes and improvements in the most effective and most sustainable way
- Expectations will need to be managed, but steady, planned progress - in consultation with recorders and information users - should ensure that NBRC provides effective, well-regarded services that people will want to continue to benefit from and to support

Section 4. About the future

Suggestions for action in the short-term: (a) Recording, data management and information use



(b) NBRC communications, operations and relationships



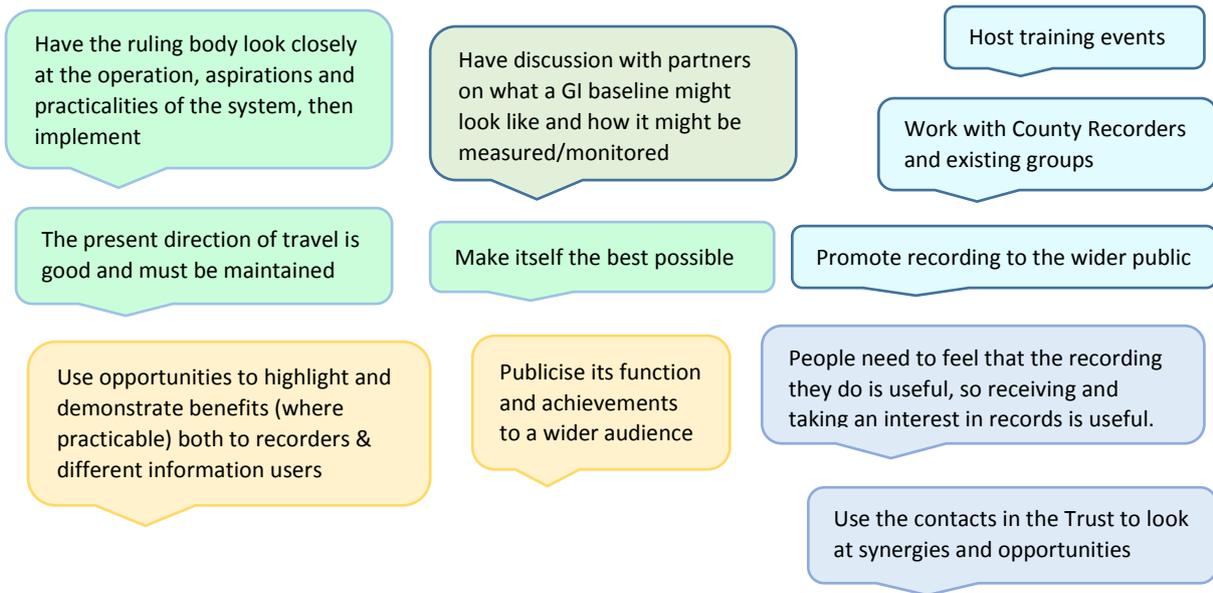
- A variety of comments addressed a range of issues for short term action
- The views expressed covered both respondents' own interests and their wider view
- No one commented on data management and access (beyond the digitisation of historic bird records)
- Creating opportunities for others to get involved – both with recording and accessing information – was frequently suggested
- A better understanding of what information was available and how it might be used and interpreted was stressed
- Improved communications in general – promotion of the Records Centre and what it can offer , and how the information might be used – featured strongly
- Whilst there may be few – if any - quick solutions , these comments help point the way to what NBRC should focus on in the short term

Suggestions for action in the longer-term

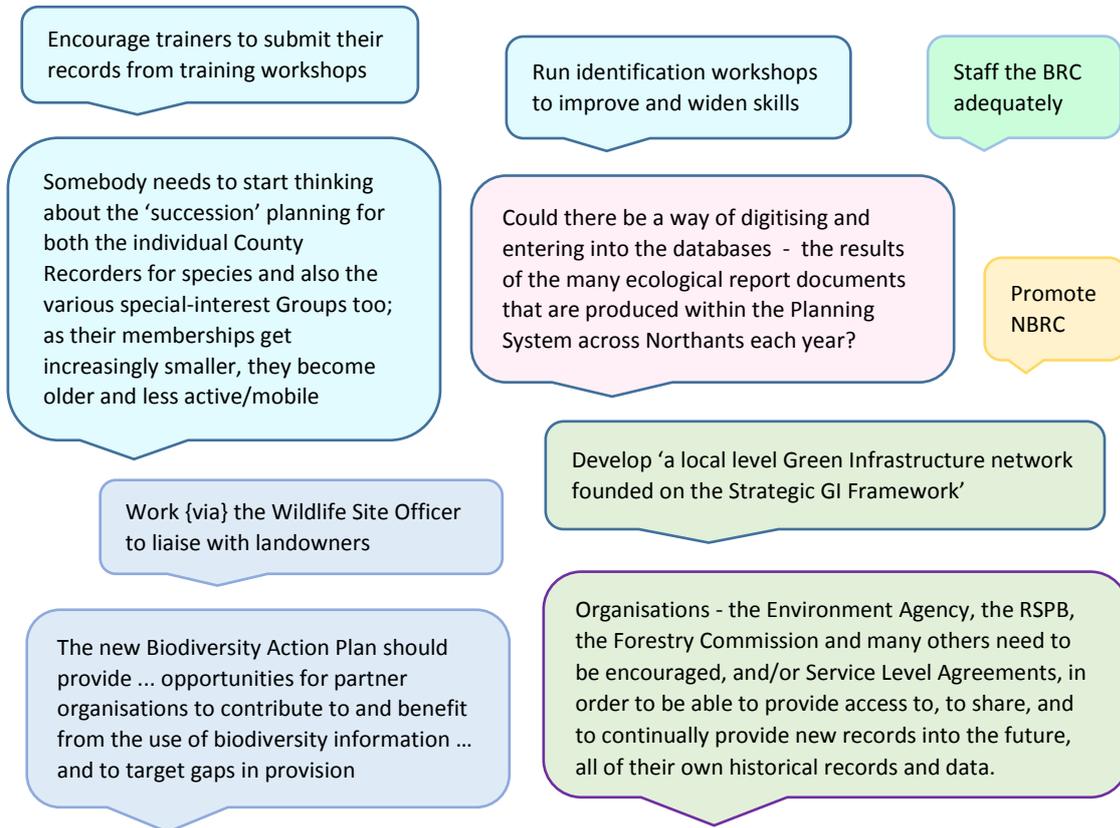


- A number of recurrent themes were apparent
- In part these, amount to continuation of short-term initiatives, others – generally more specific in nature – would depend on other steps having been taken first
- A number will depend on more formal relationships – and on funding

What might NBRC do to support these actions?



What might others do to support these actions?



- The split of the means by which NBRC and others might help to facilitate the suggested short and long-term actions revealed considerable overlap - suggesting that a joined-up, partnership approach would be advisable
- As well as publicising its own operations, NBRC should seek to promote and link with the usual activity of others and highlight other opportunities, e.g. with the BAP

Views on suggested actions and achievements

Thirty-two possible targets that NBRC might set itself to accomplish by the end of 2016 were identified.

Targets for NBRC to achieve by end of 2016		Notes
80	++ communication with county's recorders	
80	++ equipped to manage data & local-national data flows	
79	All currently shared data incorporated within NBRC database	
79	Key data providers & information users rate NBRC highly	
77	Working closely with local experts/institutions	
73	Local Authorities highlight need for biodiversity information in planning	Dependent on developing relationships with local authorities
72	NBRC information used in local plan evidence base	
71	++ support for local recording community	
71	Database is updated on 6/12 monthly basis for all taxa	
70	Staff skilled in analysing/presenting spatial info/stats	Requires some staff development
70	Data sharing agreements in place for all major species groups	
69	++ communication between county's recorders	
69	Able to encourage and support local atlas publication	
69	Good coverage of protected/priority/alien species	
69	LPAs using biodiversity maps in local plan preparation	
67	Standard habitat maps available for entire county	
66	LNP uses NBRC as key biodiversity information provider	
66	SLAs/MOUs with all local authorities in Northants	
64	NBRC able to report & interpret analyses	
64	Easy to use online recording on website	Already planned
63	Better feedback for nature reserve & green space management	
61	Recorder networks better equipped to be self-supporting	
61	Easy verification system for records submitted online	
61	Two-way flow of information between NBRC & Biodiversity Action Plan	
60	Non-sensitive wildlife information easily accessible to all	
60	Effective opportunity maps for habitat restoration/creation	
59	++ involvement of NBRC staff/volunteers in supporting recording	
57	++ opportunities for volunteer involvement/leadership	
56	ALERC accredited	Requires policy development
52	SLAs/MOUs with all other public bodies covering the county	
49	Useful Web services/info tools linked to NBN database	
40	One million+ records on the NBRC database	

Those which were scored most highly came under two main headings:

- the **relationships** - communications and working arrangements - between NBRC and the county's recorders;
- the **management of data** provided to the Records Centre

Beyond this were

- the question to the extent to which **biodiversity information** is then made available, put to use and its value recognised – most notably with regard to local authorities, and
- the extent to which NBRC is actively **supporting** the recording community.

Whilst the number of available records is important it was evident that overall focus was on the relationships with recorders on whose continued activities the provision of information depends.

Information Provision

Where the Records Centre should focus effort and resources depends in part on the information that is required to meet different needs. Respondents highlighted key themes.

What should NBRC hold/provide information on?		Notes
205	Priority species	Protected species and designated site information is core to the majority of data requests, priority species/detailed habitat information tends to be lacking despite its importance
205	Protected species	
203	Priority habitats	
193	Sites of value to wildlife	
181	Invasive species	Increasingly important for guiding effective joined-up action or responses.
169	Current wildlife trends	
162	Enhancement/restoration opportunities	
158	Habitat sensitivity or resilience	
156	Geological sites	Designated site information
156	Enhancement/restoration projects	Useful for commercial & conservation purposes
152	Historical wildlife records	
152	Accessible local green space	Essential to strategic development
142	Green infrastructure & waterways	These are likely to be important in future but are dependent upon habitat and species information as above
140	Flood or other environmental risks	
132	Ecosystems services	
91	Tranquillity maps	

Respondents' *Three Things...* summary

Operations	Focus	2
	Funding	6
	Professionalism	2
	Service quality	3
	Procedures	3
	Analysis	2
Influence	NBRC Profile	7
	Impact	4
	Information usage	5
Relationships	People	6
	Communication	4
	Partnerships	3
Facilitation	Recording	3
	Promotion of recording	1
	Support & engagement	4
	Training	2
Record collection & management	Product quality	6
	Data gaps	2
	Verification	1
	Data Accessibility	2
	Usability	5
Audiences	Recorders	10
	Local Authorities	9
	Consultants	1
	Conservation bodies	1

- The thrust and content of respondents' answers in relation to the open question as to '**What three things should NBRC do or achieve by the end of 2016?**'* were categorised in five main groups
- Based on their comments, NBRC should be seeking to:
 - Strengthen its relationships with its different audiences and partners, partly by improving its communications in general
 - Raising its profile and having greater impact by extending the extent to which biodiversity information is used in Northants
 - Increasing the usability (and awareness) of its services, and the quality of the information that it is in a position to provide
 - Facilitating the actions of others
 - To achieve these it needs to have regard to ensuring that it has adequate funds with which to operate effectively
- The existing and potential partners which it needs to focus on are **recorders** (as might be expected) and **local authorities** (reflecting the need to ensure they have appropriate access to biodiversity information – which presently isn't the case)

(* See overleaf)

Respondents' *Three Things...* 'What should NBRC achieve by the end of 2016' suggestions



- Proposals covered the majority of NBRC's operations, their future development and the relationships on which they depend
- Identification of particular goals and hallmarks in response to the above points would provide the basis for an effective short-term development plan

Section 5. Setting goals for WILDside

Initial focus

What should be the initial focus of WILDside?	
200	Simple species surveys
171	Promoting wildlife recording generally
161	Encouraging experts to train others
153	Promoting NBRC
151	Providing access to training resources
150	General recording skills
147	Promoting Id and survey resources
147	General survey/monitoring skills
144	Promoting mentoring of novices
143	Survey skills for particular habitats
143	Surveys for improvers
141	Promoting wildlife information
141	'Advanced' survey of particular habitats
141	Basic identification skills
139	Public engagement surveys
138	Improving identification skills
138	Advanced identification skills
137	Public bio-blitzes (with active support)
135	'Advanced' surveys of particular sites
130	Surveys of particular indicators
129	Surveys of particular species groups
126	'Advanced' assemblage surveys
117	Using other environmental data

The majority of opinion was in favour of a focus on 'traditional' recording, with records of (priority and protected) species, habitats and sites known to be of value (e.g. reserves. Local Wildlife Sites). Whereas green infrastructure and ecosystem services/natural capital are considered to be important new approaches to guide resource stewardship, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, they gained relatively low scores. Information about enhancement and restoration opportunities and the monitoring of related projects, attracted intermediate scores, despite the spectrum of respondents' interests.

The overall emphasis was more on knowing 'what of conservation value is where' so that it might be protected, rather than reflecting more landscape-scale approaches that seek to address conservation in the longer term, e.g. in relation to climate change and population growth. However, at this stage in NBRC's development (and with regard to the gaps in its database), this provides an accurate reflection of priority information needs which need to be addressed, to which - in accordance with respondents' views - the WILDside project proposal would necessarily make a positive contribution.

Activity types

Activities should cover:	
115	Identification
110	Recording
108	Communications
108	Mentoring
108	Promotion
107	Training
104	Field methods
100	Lab techniques
99	Data analysis
97	Survey design
95	Information use

Have a seminar setting out NBRC services and how these could be effectively used in planning

Initial emphasis should be on supporting the development of field recording, identification and survey skills and encouragement of mentoring by local enthusiasts

I see a record centre as a Record Centre, not an educational or conservation facility. Concentrate on data, not running events – Therefore, should link in rather than run

Run more mini bioblitzes to allow opportunities for new {recorders} /improvers to get involved

It would be useful to understand what services we could be accessing independently using on-line resources

Courses that complement existing WT training workshops, and are aimed at cultivating the next generation of county recorders

Field skills are already promoted by {WTBCN} Workshops ... perhaps more publicity is needed

- There was strong support for providing access to training on species identification and recording skills more generally, together with mentoring by established recorders
- Whilst there was little emphasis on providing instruction in how to put biological information to use, there was backing for promoting the value of recording to engage new audiences and to effective communications with recording networks
- Respondents recognised the advantages of fitting in with and benefiting from existing provision

5: WILDside project opportunities

Species groups

Species Groups	
121	Vascular plants
115	Invertebrates
103	Fungi
100	Bryophytes
100	Mammals
99	Lichens
97	Herptiles
95	Birds
92	Fish

Specially protected invertebrates with no information at present

Invertebrates. Because they are a good introduction to microscopes, have good keys and are great habitat indicators

Most recorders although proficient in a core group notice other groups and things they find as naturalists. There should be a method of knowing who to go to so that [species are] correctly identified and recorded appropriately

Identify existing gaps in coverage and target these

Link to WTBCN training workshops to prevent overlap

Since all nature is interrelated in the environment I can't see that any group needs more focus than any other if a comprehensive picture is required. Obviously any group where data is missing needs help

Pick a group with the least current information

It would be easier to focus on invertebrate groups that we currently have county recorders for... This would; help ensure continued interest and support for new and current recorders, have easily accessible experts for verification purposes and help with identification

Representatives of species assemblages associated with particular habitat types

A suite of species groups to attract, beginners and developers, potentially fitting in with national and WTBCN surveys, as well as making use of local expertise

- Whilst there was support for encouraging species recording in general (c.f. habitat recording), there was a clear emphasis on vascular plants (which are fundamental to recognising and evaluating habitat type) and key invertebrate groups
- Responses were focused on the most useful /needed information types
- Some of the other groups offer more easily identified species for engaging initial interest but how they are presented and the support given can make a very real difference

Habitats

Habitats	
103	Woodland
98	Veteran trees
97	Grasslands
96	Brownfield
95	Lakes & ponds
94	Rivers & streams
93	Farmland & hedgerow
93	Urban habitats
91	Wetland
90	Parks & gardens
83	Habitat interfaces
78	Heathland

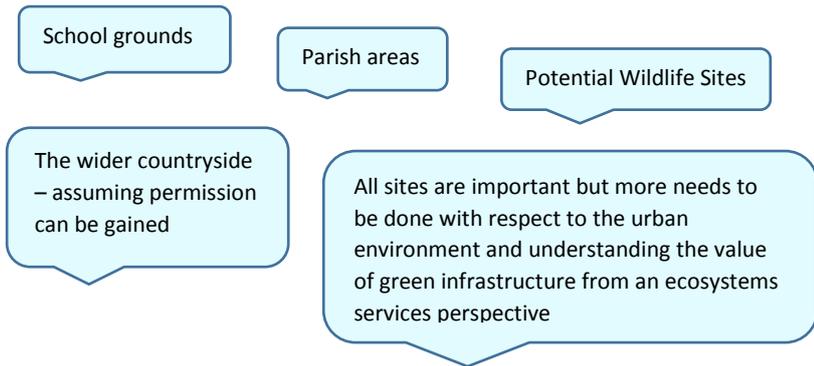
Scrub/matrix habitats

All habitats are important, it's how they link to ensure freedom of movement for wildlife

- Trees and woodland areas were strongly favoured by the respondents as the features and habitat types to include
- Grasslands and areas with still and flowing waters also scored highly
- Brownfields were scored very highly by some but included in the habitats highlighted by relatively few individuals
- Although heathland is an important and vulnerable habitat, it is of relatively small extent in Northamptonshire
- Domestic and publicly assessable greenspaces were included by relatively few, despite the fact that these are the areas where most people are most likely to encounter wildlife, albeit of a restricted range

Site types

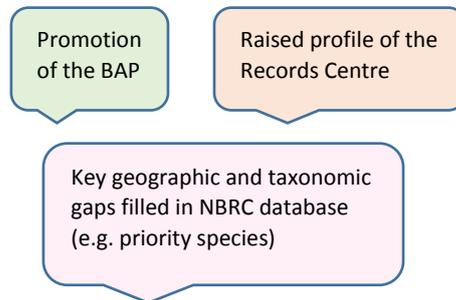
Site Types	
98	Urban areas
94	Nature reserves
93	Protected areas
91	Green corridors
89	Landscape areas
88	Local wildlife sites
85	Rural areas
83	Public parks
75	Other greenspace



- Contrasting somewhat with the habitat preferences, urban areas featured more frequently and scored more highly than other identified site types
- Conversely, public parks and what were described as ‘rural areas’ were rather less favoured
- Local Wildlife Sites, nature reserves and green corridors also featured in the majority of lists

Respondents’ views on suggested project outcomes

Outcomes	
122	++ awareness of value of/support for recording
116	Fill geographic & taxonomic gaps
111	++ number/skills of novice & improving recorders
110	++ recording of key groups/habitats
110	++ involvement in structured surveys etc.
108	New audiences engaged
106	Recorder networks extended/strengthened
103	++ understanding/use of biodiversity info
98	++ recorder self-support
97	++ reporting of wildlife in key sites



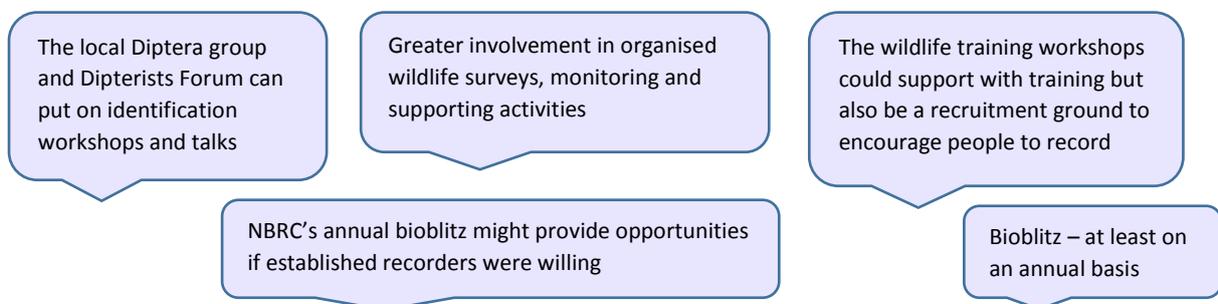
- There was strong support for encouraging and supporting recording networks and targeting existing knowledge gaps, partly by engaging and enthusing new volunteers
- Each of the proposals received backing
- Given the overall support, it can be expected that a project that would facilitate the necessary actions and relationship building would be well received
- The relative strength of support suggests a likely sequence of actions to achieve these outcomes within and following on from WILDside
- NBRC should take full account of these views when finalising WILDside proposals in relation to the project’s outcomes

Respondents' views on project audiences



- From those yet to be engaged and existing novices and casual recorders through to existing experts - all whose involvement might lead to positive outcomes should be targeted
- The challenge will be to provide the correct mix of opportunities to attract and then keep participants engaged – whilst ensuring that the planned outcomes are achieved

Respondents' views on particular project event opportunities



- The comments again stress the point that advantage could and should be taken of existing arrangements that offer opportunities for collaboration to mutual benefit and, e.g. in the case of the NBRC's annual bioblitz, possible extension

Summary of findings

- It is evident that, whereas there is much **positive feeling** about the Records Centre's recent progress, the preceding period was one of **disappointed expectations**, particularly for the county's recorders.
- It is important that NBRC continue its process of **steady improvement**, taking advantage of opportunities that may arise whilst focussing on the objectives it sets for itself in consultation with the recorder network and in agreement with its Steering Group.
- There are **significant gaps**, in information both geographic and taxonomic - from particular invertebrate groups (e.g. aculeate hymenoptera) to whole kingdoms (fungi). This is the case even with well supported groups such as flowering plants – there is but a handful of active botanical recorders in the whole county.
- Whereas there is a lot of excellent work being put into particular species groups by keen individuals, they are often working alone or with little regular support.
- There is very strong opinion in favour of NBRC seeking to **promote and support recording** across Northamptonshire, particularly linking up with existing initiatives, which would also help it to promote itself.
- Flowering **plants** and key **invertebrate groups** are the suggested taxonomic focus, although the requirement to engage and inform a wider audience may necessarily encourage inclusion of other groups.
- **Woodlands, grasslands** and **freshwaters** are the habitats to focus on with **veteran trees** and **green corridors** being part of or encompassing these, in **urban** or rural areas.
- Private gardens and public parks, were considered to be of lower priority than **nature reserves** or **local wildlife sites**, although they do provide easy, regular 'doorstep' access to wildlife, especially within urban situations.
- Beyond efforts to increase awareness and attract potential new recorders, Identifying and targeting individuals who show or who already have an interest in (recording) wildlife – whatever the audience they might be categorised with - is seen as important, as well as a means of focussing effort where it is most likely to have a benefit.
- Both in terms of short and longer term goals, respondents identified the need to further develop the relationship with **local authorities** in relation to their ensuring they have access to biodiversity information
- Within available capacity and some additional volunteer support, NBRC staff should now have the manpower to tackle existing datasets during 2015-16, alongside addressing data enquires and funding agreement obligations
- Within existing resources it is not possible for the Records Centre team to do more than this and accomplishing the great majority of what respondents considered to be important, will require additional resources and staffing.
- Changes or initiatives made possible as a result of any short term funding, will need ongoing support, and NBRC should seek to encourage those measures that are likely to be sustainable – whether conducted by itself, others or in partnership.
- There is clear support not only for NBRC to seek additional funding to take on a project to deliver change, but a willingness to support and contribute to activities and initiatives that would be part of it.

Recommendations

NBRC to:

- a. continue to work to incorporate backlogs of recent data sets (2000 AD onwards) into its RECORDER database and establish arrangements to facilitate the regular addition of new data every 6-12 months
- b. clean individual datasets already within RECORDER and to track progress with this
- c. update its website to enable improved communications and facilitate online recording and verification
- d. highlight and demonstrate the benefits of biodiversity information provision and use to local authorities in relation to their statutory obligations
- e. work in support of the new Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan to facilitate the collection, provision and use of biodiversity information for planning and monitoring purposes, in so far as is practicable within its capacity
- f. promote biodiversity information use and wildlife recording in general, as well as the existence and role of the Centre
- g. work in partnership with local recorders, recording groups and other interested bodies to support and strengthen, existing recording networks, encouraging approaches that will be sustainable in the longer term
- h. run a project that, in addition to supporting **f** and **g**, will attract, encourage and help develop new and existing recorders, and scheme organisers, under the title of **WILDside**

Based on this consultation, the objectives of **WILDside** will be to:

1. promote biological recording as a rewarding, useful pursuit that can influence conservation, and development
2. increase the number of active, regular recorders in Northamptonshire
3. help those who are willing to broaden and deepen their recording and identification skills, particularly through working in partnership with local enthusiasts and experts to help apply and reinforce skills and knowledge gained through both formal and informal training sessions
4. generate significant numbers of new records, focussed on priority locations and habitats and particular species groups, helping to address future information
5. provide the opportunities, resources, coordination and support required to achieve the above
6. test the utility of a range of different approaches, seeking to adopt the most effective, practicable and sustainable, for future use
7. develop and strengthen communications and lasting partnerships with interested bodies and individuals
8. provide a sound framework for any 'next steps', follow-up schemes

Alongside improvements in relation to NBRC's own day-to-day operations and long-term development, it is considered that WILDside will provide the ideal vehicle to enable NBRC and the biological recording community to support and strengthen activity across the county, and to address both the concerns and aspirations highlighted by the present consultation, in relation to recording and information provision.

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NBRC WILL BE SEEKING TO INCREASE VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES IN 2015

*Keep a look out for news about **WILDside***

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



NBRC 2015