

Local Biological Record Centre (LRC) – Scoping and Options

Background

The Jersey Biodiversity Partnership (JBP) is an informal partnership of committed organisations, environmental groups and individuals who are involved in various island surveys, research projects; practical conservation management activities or environmental campaigns. The JBP is currently scoping and facilitating the need for a local biological record centre (LRC). Figure 1 outlines the process we wish to take. The JBP are keen to know the view of local recorders, local environmental organisations and the general public on this important resource required to help protect and conserve Jersey's species and habitats.

Current Situation

Many local NGO's and dedicated individuals carry out monitoring and recording of species and habitats collecting large amounts of biological data. The data is held in private and largely unconnected collections. At the moment there is little (or non-existent) coordination between data users and suppliers. There is currently no central place in which to store and share records.

Some groups regularly share data amongst themselves and some individuals share between each other. Specific data is also sent off to national recording schemes from groups and individuals. The States of Jersey (SOJ) also have many bespoke databases, spreadsheets and geographical data etc. all of which are managed by different sections. Much of which is not coordinated into a central resource. The SOJ is committed to reporting back to the following international conventions including other national recording schemes;

- Convention on Biological Diversity Bonn Convention on the Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) (1979 / 1985)
- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) (Appendix II to Bonn Convention) (1995 / 1999) (under Bonn Convention)
- Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats Eurobats (1995 / 2000) (under Bonn Convention)
- Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (1979 / 2002)

All of the above require concise surveying and recording, for this reason both the Jersey's Biodiversity Strategy (2000) and Rural Economy 2011-2015 white paper (draft) request the need for an island-wide environmental database in the form of a Local Biological Record Centre (LRC).

Although it is recognised the SOJ has a strong role to play in the development of a LRC it is important to recognise that an LRC would stand as independent organisation/group. This common purpose in collecting and storing information is required if we are to protect and conserve Jersey's species and habitats effectively.

Introduction

Biological recording is documenting the occurrence of wild species or habitats at a place, at a particular time, by a person. A LRC is a local facility for the storage, validation and usage of biological data. It collects, collates, manages and disseminates information of known quality relating to the wildlife, wildlife sites and habitats of a defined geographical area.

By bringing a variety of environmental information together and interpreting it, an overall picture of the status and distribution of different habitats and species becomes apparent. If this information is collected systematically over time, real changes in the health of Jersey's biodiversity can be monitored and accurately assessed. This justifies the following project;

Project Goals

1. To scope the potential for a Local Biological Record Centre (LRC) assessing the opinions of island recorders.
2. To investigate the current state of the local biological recording.
3. To hold a workshop for islanders & recorders to discuss issues arising from the proposed LRC and produce a questionnaire.
4. Identify the range of issues that need to be considered in establishing or developing an LRC.
5. To investigate the likely costs involved in the development of the LBRC and to submit a report.

Rationale

In recent years the nature conservation sector has been encouraged to develop a more planned and strategic approach to conservation activities, driven by the States of Jersey's Strategic plan 2009-2014. Both nationally and locally there is an increasing requirement to deliver and report on key biodiversity targets on both designated sites and in the wider countryside.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of biological information in informing better governmental, commercial, voluntary sector and personal decision making. The momentum for this comes from a range of recent initiatives including the drive from the Biodiversity Action Plan, international wildlife legislation and increased demand for information in the sustainability agenda.

If biological information is to influence decision-making processes then it must be credible. To achieve this, information must be complete, accurate, well maintained, readily accessible and up to date. Above all biological information must be easy to use. This information should then form the evidence-base for all decisions related to nature conservation. This includes target setting, planning and monitoring outcomes. It should seek to inform the future and not simply describe the past.

Figure 1: Outline the process

