11 Links to other initiatives
Introduction

An LRC provides an information service to local partners, whose needs drive the work of the LRC. In some instances, there are needs that are common to one or more local partners, sometimes in response to particular initiatives. This section looks at the relationships the LRC should have with two key initiatives: Wildlife Site systems and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). Both these initiatives are supported by policy and practices at different levels across the UK. They are active in most areas, although at widely varying stages of development.

LRCs should consider what levels of involvement they will have with these, and other, initiatives. The way the LRC operates in relationship to LBAPs and Wildlife Sites will depend on which local partners lead each initiative and on whether the work is managed through a partnership. In particular, the LRC needs to clarify where the resources that enable it to contribute to these initiatives will come from, and how they will be managed.

12 Relationships with Wildlife Site systems

Summary

- One of the most important functions an LRC can have in the delivery of an effective Wildlife Site system is the storage and management of biological and site-based information.
- The involvement of an LRC in the collection of Wildlife Site information and in site identification, selection and review can be valuable, but it is optional and will vary from system to system.
- An LRC should be a place to go for Wildlife Site information; however, it should not provide a Wildlife Site advisory service.
- It is extremely important for an LRC to formalise its relationship with the local Wildlife Site system.

12.1 Background

12.1.1 What are Wildlife Sites?

Wildlife Sites are non-statutory areas which are locally recognised as being rich in wildlife. They can be as valuable for wildlife as some statutorily designated areas, and provide a refuge for many rare species. The network of Wildlife Sites complements legally protected sites by maintaining wildlife corridors, linking sites and providing buffer zones. Although the term ''Wildlife Sites'' is the most common name for these non-statutory sites, a number of others are also used (eg Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest).

12.1.2 What is a Wildlife Site system?

A *Wildlife Site system* is the mechanism used for identifying, selecting, assessing, monitoring and protecting Wildlife Sites within a local area. The efficient operation of a Wildlife Site system requires access to a large volume of continuously updated data on sites, habitats and species. It should also have documented procedures for:

- producing written selection criteria (to ensure that Wildlife Sites across the UK are of equivalent value within their local context, selection criteria should be written according to a framework of national minimum standards which take account of local variation such standards are currently being developed for England and Wales)
- identifying sites, through detailed survey and assessment against written criteria
- maintaining the value of sites by working with landowners and land managers
- protecting sites through the planning system
- monitoring site integrity
- assessing the effectiveness of the system

For more information about Wildlife Site systems, see The Wildlife Trusts' *Wildlife Sites Handbook.*

12.1.3 Status of UK Wildlife Site systems

A report produced by The Wildlife Trusts - "*Status of UK Wildlife Site systems 2000"* shows that there are Wildlife Site systems, at various stages of development, covering almost all of the UK. In most cases these systems are supported by local partnerships, with one partner (usually the Wildlife Trust or a local authority) taking lead responsibility for running the system. Although there is no statutory requirement for any organisation to run or use a Wildlife Site system, many organisations work together to identify and protect Wildlife Sites. The range of partners involved in the Wildlife Site system varies, but they are often the same as those involved with LRC partnerships (eg the local Wildlife Trust, local authorities, museums, statutory environmental agencies, naturalists and other voluntary bodies).

At the time of publication, LRCs are involved in approximately 33 per cent, and take a leading role in running 7 per cent, of UK Wildlife Site systems (*Status of UK Wildlife Site systems 2000*). If an LRC has no involvement with the Wildlife Site system operating in its area, this may be because: the LRC was not in existence at the time the Wildlife Site system was developed; other LRC services take priority; the LRC has insufficient resources; or because there is a dedicated Wildlife Site project team which fulfils many of the functions normally associated with an LRC.

12.1.4 Developing strategic plans for Wildlife Sites

In October 1999, the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) organised a review group to look at the role of Local Sites in England and Wales (in this instance, the term 'Local Sites' is used to refer to both local Wildlife Sites and Geological/Geomorphological Sites). The group comprised representatives from statutory and government agencies, conservation organisations and farming and landowner organisations. A report of the group's deliberations and recommendations was published in March 2000 (*A report to DETR 2000*). As a result of this report, DETR is looking at research into the cause and extent of damage to Local Sites in England and Wales (apart from damage caused by permitted development activity), and developing guidance for those running Local Site systems.

It is hoped that the work of DETR will be instrumental in developing a more strategic and uniform approach to the selection of Wildlife Sites and the running of Wildlife Site systems in England and Wales, and that these standards can be adopted elsewhere in the UK..

12.2 The Wildlife Site system and the role of the LRC

12.2.1 Managing Wildlife Site data and information

Wildlife Site systems rely on a wide range of data. Baseline habitat survey data, species distribution data and contextual information are needed to identify potential Wildlife Sites and generate selection criteria. Site-specific data are then needed to assess and monitor sites against these criteria. Once the sites have been assessed, notification details, site boundary details and descriptions of selected sites also need to be stored and managed.

It is recommended that the storage and management of this biological and site-based data are carried out by an LRC on behalf of the Wildlife Site system. The LRC :

- is able to generate data from a wide range of sources and is therefore able to provide a more complete picture of the data available on a particular site
- should have the experience and expertise to handle data, giving due attention to validity, security and confidentiality
- can provide national and regional contextual information against which the relative importance of local species, habitats and sites can be assessed
- should have good links with a wide range of data suppliers
- should have computerised databases to integrate site and species data, flexible and efficient data handling tools, and links to GIS
- can provide a 'one-stop shop' for suppliers and users of Wildlife Site data, so avoiding duplication of effort
- can incorporate Wildlife Site data into its wider data holdings to enhance its other services

Before it can contemplate becoming involved in running a Wildlife Site system, an LRC must have a minimum holding of good quality data and the necessary systems in place to manage these data.

New and evolving LRCs need to clarify their relationships with their customers and the existing local Wildlife Site system, to ensure that the future management of Wildlife Site information is carried out in the most efficient and cost-effective way. It is preferable to have all the relevant information available via the LRC; but, if an LRC is not currently involved in the management of data for its local Wildlife Site system, it should refer enquirers to the relevant Wildlife Site system contact. In these circumstances, it is also recommended that the LRC and Wildlife Site partnership establish an agreement to ensure that the flow of information about damaged or destroyed Wildlife Sites is maintained.

12.2.2 Selection criteria

The generation and review of Wildlife Site selection criteria should be informed by all the local data and contextual information that are available (see *The Wildlife Sites Handbook*). As discussed in section 12.2.1 *Managing Wildlife Site data and information*, an LRC should play a central role in the provision of this data and information. Analysing this information, however, and assisting in the generation and review of Wildlife Sites selection criteria, are beyond the usual remit of an LRC.

While it could be argued that an LRC is in a good position to generate criteria because it has the skills and knowledge to understand the data, this would result in the LRC having to make value judgements rather than maintaining an impartial role in the process. The LRC may, however, be able to identify local experts who could assist the Wildlife Site system partners with these activities.

As the biological information base grows, any gaps in selection criteria can be filled and existing criteria redefined where necessary. Any LRC responsible for coordinating the management of these data has a valuable part to play in providing the data to fill these gaps.

12.2.3 Collecting site data

The involvement of the LRC in the collection of data, either for the identification and assessment of new Wildlife Sites or for the review of existing Wildlife Sites, is optional, and depends on the requirements of the partners running the Wildlife Site system. If the LRC is required to carry out this activity on their behalf, then this service should be provided as part of a formal agreement.

For some LRCs, identification of sites is one of their main functions in terms of Service Level Agreement (SLA) requirements. For example, Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) has agreements with the local authorities in the area to provide Wildlife Site information. As part of these agreements, SERC is proactive in seeking to identify potential sites, both through review of existing data resources and through systematic survey.

Other LRCs have no such formal arrangement and any identification of potential sites is purely incidental (eg through other survey activities or as a result of reports from other recorders, naturalists or members of the public). This is the case with Derbyshire Biological Records Centre, which has no formal agreement to lead identification of potential sites. However, Derbyshire BRC always passes on any incidental information in relation to the identification of potential sites to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, the lead partner of the Wildlife Site system. In turn, the Trust provides the LRC with an up-to-date list of Wildlife Sites in the area. This practice is recommended where LRCs are not formally involved in the identification of sites; it is also recommended that procedures for the exchange of such data and information be documented.

12.2.4 Site selection and review

Since it has the expertise to understand the data, an LRC is well placed to carry out site selection. However, this is an optional role and will vary from one system to another. If an LRC is involved in site selection, it should assess potential sites against selection criteria which have been provided by the Wildlife Site system partners. This ensures that the selection process follows formally agreed standards and procedures, and negates the need for the LRC to make any value judgements. Before an LRC can contemplate becoming involved in the selection of Wildlife Sites, it must have a minimum holding of good quality data (see section 12.2.1) and access to experts in key taxonomic areas.

As part of the selection process, the LRC should provide written documentation stating clearly the reasons for selecting or not selecting a site as a Wildlife Site. Once selected, the list of Wildlife Sites should be passed to a third party or selection panel for final confirmation.

If selection criteria are reviewed at any point, a thorough review of selected sites is required; this is essential if criteria are to be applied consistently and if the Wildlife Site system is to stand up in a public inquiry.

12.2.5 Landowner liaison and advisory services

LRCs should not give advice to landowners or managers on site management. Though liaising with landowners and~~,~~ giving advice on site management and grants are important aspects of any Wildlife Site system, these functions are outside the remit of an LRC and should be carried out by a separate partner or a dedicated Wildlife Site advisory team.

In addition to biological and site-based data (see section 12.2.1), a considerable quantity of data relating to liaison with landowners is generated in running Wildlife Site systems. Managing this data effectively is just as important as handling the biological data used to identify, assess and monitor sites. However, the role of the LRC in the management of this information is less crucial. It is therefore recommended that this information is held and maintained by the partner responsible for advising and liaising with landowners.

12.2.6 Providing access to Wildlife Sites information

LRCs should provide information about Wildlife Sites to aid decision makers (eg those commenting on planning applications or advising on land management). The information provided should cover both the status of the site (ie that it is or is not a Wildlife Site, the reasons for its selection and date of selection~~s~~) and any biological data relating to the site (on species and habitats). However, this information should be impartial (ie the LRC should not make recommendations based on the information). For the LRC to fulfil this function, it must have an up-to-date list and digitised maps of Wildlife Sites, even if it is not responsible for managing information on behalf of the Wildlife Site system.

12.3 Managing the relationship

Regardless of how actively an LRC is involved in the running of the local Wildlife Site system, it is essential that the relationship between the two is clearly defined and documented. Documenting the relationship ensures that the LRC and the partners involved in the Wildlife Site system have a clear understanding of who (at both individual and organisational levels) is responsible for which aspect of the system, and of the exact procedures for the system's delivery.

Any work the LRC does on behalf of the Wildlife Site system should be done as part of a formal agreement, either a single contract or a Service Level Agreement (SLA) (see section 15 *Relationships with core users*).

Ideally, such an agreement would be made between the LRC and a single body representing the Wildlife Site system; but, in reality, this is rarely practicable, as most Wildlife Site systems are run informally by a number of partners rather than as a unified entity. It is therefore usually more feasible for the LRC to have individual agreements with the full suite of Wildlife Site system partners.

In theory, each partner should contribute equally for the services provided by an LRC. However, although most Wildlife Site systems have a steering group and an agreed development plan, the partners involved usually have variable roles with regards to implementing the system, and each has different requirements from the system according to their particular agenda. It is therefore likely that the agreements between the LRC and the Wildlife Site system partners will vary according to individual needs.

The LRC should carry out a needs analysis for each partner before defining the terms of each agreement. These agreements will be greatly influenced by the willingness of the different partners to participate and, ultimately, by the availability of adequate resources. As a minimum, most partners should have an agreement with the LRC for the storage, management and provision of Wildlife Site information (see section 12.2.1). Other services (eg collection of site data, site identification, selection and review and the provision of Wildlife Site information) are optional. As discussed in section 12.2 *The Wildlife Site system and the role of the LRC*, the role of the LRC in providing these additional services will vary from one system to another. Where the LRC does play a role in providing these additional services, it is likely that these will be written into the agreements of some, but not all, system partners, according to their needs.

12.4 References

A Report to DETR. DETR Local Site Review Group, 2000.
The Wildlife Sites Handbook. The Wildlife Trusts, Version 2, Newark, 1997.
Status of UK Wildlife Site systems 2000. The Wildlife Trusts, Newark, 2000.

Case study 1

Somerset Environmental Records Centre

Formalising relationships with Wildlife Site system partners

Background

Somerset Environmental Records Centre

Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) was established in 1989 by Somerset Wildlife Trust with the full support of Somerset County Council and all five local district councils. It is operated as part of the trading subsidiary of Somerset Wildlife Trust; this has the disadvantage that the LRC is not an independent organisation but, because its management is overseen by a management group of key users, it is usually seen as independent. Principal users of the LRC include local authorities, statutory agencies, conservation organisations, naturalists, the public and land managers. The centre has four full-time members of staff: a director, a survey manager, an IT manager and a support officer. It also has its own in-house survey team comprising between eight and ten graduate trainees.

The Wildlife Site system in Somerset

The Wildlife Site system for Somerset is well established and involves a wide range of partners including SERC, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset County Council, five district councils, Exmoor National Park, English Nature, National Farmers Union and Country Landowners Association. The most active partners are SERC and Somerset Wildlife Trust. SERC takes a leading role in the administration of the system, including survey work, data management, and the collation and dissemination of Wildlife Site information. Somerset Wildlife Trust, which has a dedicated Wildlife Site project team, leads on the delivery of an advisory service, which informs landowners about selected sites and gives them advice and support on site management, grants and incentive schemes.

Relationships between SERC and other Wildlife Site system partners

Although SERC carries out a substantial amount of survey work using its own trainee survey team, it also manages information which has been collected by others (eg species data collected by recorders and specialist groups, and landowner contact and liaison details collected by the Wildlife Trust's Wildlife Site project team). SERC has written agreements with many of the recorders and specialist groups, who supply the LRC with an exclusive copy of their records in return for a PC and a satellite copy of Recorder. With other recorders, the supply of data relies on the LRC building strong relationships with those concerned. Currently, there is no written agreement with the Trust's Wildlife Site project for SERC to be supplied with landowner contact and liaison records; however, there are plans to formalise this relationship in the near future.

Since its initiation in 1989, SERC has had SLAs with all seven local authorities in the county. Over recent years, similar funding arrangements have been established with Wessex Water, English Nature, Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency (although, at the time of writing, the agreement with the Environment Agency is under renegotiation).

The SLAs are usually run for a period of three years, after which time they are reviewed. In each case, SERC is to provide a standard information service for a fixed number of hours per year, in return for a set fee. The SLAs cover a wider remit than just Wildlife Site-specific services, and vary from one partner to another according to partners data needs. Some partners have additional services written into their agreements; others make separate arrangements for SERC to carry out additional projects, which are then invoiced separately. Some of the standard services provided which are specifically related to Wildlife Sites include:

- storage and management of Wildlife Site data and information
- supply of up-to-date Wildlife Site information, in electronic format on GIS, every six months
- data searches against selected planning applications (selected by clients using criteria set by SERC)
- ongoing survey and resurvey

As well as covering the overheads of SERC, the SLAs contribute to the costs of the free Wildlife Site information service that SERC provides to the public and to individual land managers. SERC does not, however, provide free information to organisations which do not have SLAs (eg MAFF and the Forestry Commission).

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13 Relationships with Local Biodiversity Action Planning

Summary

- The LBAP process has the potential to place considerable demands for products and services on LRCs.
- An LRC needs to assess its current potential to service the information requirements of the LBAP, and it must plan to meet those requirements.
- These demands will enable the LRC to increase its capacity.
- The LRC must avoid adopting a reactive stance in which ad hoc decisions to provide uncosted and unplanned services threaten the quality and sustainability of its wider operations.

13.1 Background

In 1994 the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published as part of the UK's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK Biodiversity Steering Group was established to coordinate the implementation of the plan and in 1995 published *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report*, which proposed how this should be done. This included the recommendation that Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) become the primary mechanism through which national strategy and targets are translated into effective local action. Local partnerships, usually involving local authorities, conservation agencies, NGOs and land management interests, have been formed to draw up and implement LBAPs.

The stages of the LBAP are described in the Steering Group Report. The UK Local Issues Advisory Group and the Scottish Biodiversity Group have also issued guidance on the various stages of the LBAP (see 13.5 *References*).

The key stages of an LBAP are:

- carrying out a biodiversity audit that identifies all occurrences of local and national priorities
- selecting species and habitat priorities for action
- setting measurable targets for those priorities
- developing and implementing specific actions to achieve the targets
- monitoring implementation of the actions
- systematic monitoring of biological outcomes of the actions
- reporting and review of actions and outcomes

The Steering Group Report pointed out that information on local biodiversity is crucial to effective target setting and reporting, and that LRCs, where they exist, have considerable potential to assist the process. Where they do not already exist, the report suggests that partnerships might wish to set them up. The formation of partnerships to manage the LBAP process provides an ideal opportunity to develop new LRCs or to enhance the capacity of current LRC operations.

13.2 Role of LRCs in supporting LBAPS

The LBAP process has the potential to place considerable demands on LRC products and services, and it is important that LRC managers understand the nature and implications of these demands. The LRC must take a strategic view of its capacity to meet these demands and the associated resource requirements. In many cases, the partners involved in managing the LRC are the same as those involved in the LBAP, which should make understanding the information needs of the LBAP easier.

13.3 LBAP stages

Demand for products and services from an LRC will vary during the LBAP process, but is likely to be considerable at all times. A summary of the role of LRCs at the different stages is given below:

13.3.1 Audit

A biodiversity audit that assesses habitats and species must be carried out by the partnership. It is the basis and starting point of an LBAP. LRCs should play a central role in the audit and should be the source of data for the partners to carry it out. The audit is a dynamic and ongoing exercise intended to locate data, to bring them together and to identify data gaps. If gaps are identified that impinge on the ability of the partnership to implement the LBAP, then any further surveys needed must be identified by the partnership and included in the costed action plans.

13.3.2 Priority setting

Priorities should be based upon information contained in the audit. They should be determined according to criteria set by the LBAP that incorporate both objective data (eg occurrences of UK BAP species) and more subjective judgements (eg significance of local populations, local threats, practical opportunities for effective action and local preferences). LRCs should be central to supplying this information and must be clear about the difference between providing objective data and providing advice, and should avoid compromising their impartiality. LRCs should also be able to identify local experts who can assist in priority setting.

13.3.3 Target setting

Measurable targets must be set for specific actions to further LBAP objectives for priority species and habitats. These targets should be measured against the audit and must be agreed by the LBAP partnership. It is the responsibility of LBAP partners to set targets and to consider their implications in terms of the skills, time and other resources required to monitor progress. The LRC should not set targets, but may provide expert advice on how to set biological targets that can be measured through particular survey methods, and on the implications of employing particular survey techniques (see volume 2, section 9 *Recording methodologies).*

13.3.4 Action planning

Actions to achieve the targets may involve one or more organisations. These organisations may or may not be partners in the LBAP, and they may be professional or amateur, voluntary or statutory. Action planning often takes place in subgroups, with decisions then ratified by the partnership, as a whole. Timetables and resources should be included in all plans of action. Strictly speaking, LRCs should not be involved in action planning, although they may have actions allocated to them; in this case it is necessary for the LBAP partnership to allocate resources to the LRC to carry out tasks on its behalf. LRC staff may also be asked to sit on working groups that are involved in planning.

13.3.5 Monitoring implementation of actions

Systems to monitor progress in implementing action plans are needed by the LBAP partnership both to manage the process and to report on progress. As managers of biological data, LRCs should not play a role in this. In exceptional circumstances, the LRC may wish to cost this service and employ additional resources to carry it out.

13.3.6 Monitoring effectiveness of actions

Systematic monitoring of progress should have been fully considered during target setting. The skills and resources required to monitor biological outcomes are considerable, and it is unlikely that the LRC could provide more than an advisory role (see volume 2, section 9 *Recording methodologies).* The data generated during monitoring should, however, be managed by the LRC, which should also be in a position to carry out the required analyses. As the quality of data analysis depends on survey design, the LRC may wish to provide an advisory service on monitoring, which it must quantify and cost. Case study 1 provides an example of an LRC advising on the survey methods needed to ensure efficient delivery of high quality data.

13.3.7 Reporting and review

Reporting and review are the responsibilities of the LBAP partnership. For the UK BAP, lead partners are responsible for UK priority species actions and lead agencies are responsible for UK priority habitat actions. The process is at an early stage and the NBN will be central to the development of satisfactory reporting mechanisms. LRCs will be the source of most data needed to report on the biological outcomes of LBAPs, and will be asked to produce regular status reports for particular species and habitats by local and national partners. It is important that these demands are agreed and programmed into LRC business planning.

13.4 Managing the relationship

The UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report sees high-quality information as being the foundation of the UK BAP process, and LRCs as central to information provision at the local level. LRCs must be a key component of LBAPs, whose partners must recognise and fund LRC activities accordingly.

The most straightforward mechanism for quantifying and supporting the LBAP's information needs is for the partnership, acting as a single entity, to define its needs and to provide the resources to meet them. Case study 2 illustrates a partnership that has constituted itself as a legal entity with definable goals. In acting in this coherent way, an LBAP partnership is able to enter into agreements with service providers, including LRCs, through contracts or Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Section 15 *Relationships with core users* describes the benefits of SLAs to LRCs.

Local BAP partnerships tend to be informal mechanisms consisting of a steering group and associated working groups, with variable membership dependent on local circumstances and the stage the process is at. The LRC therefore needs to work with the individual partners to help define their needs, based on their individual contributions to the LBAP. The process will inevitably be complex and will require negotiation, but will help enhance the capacity of the LRC and widen the group of organisations supporting it.

The LRC must ensure that demands for products and services to support the LBAP are clearly defined, quantified, understood and agreed. As well as carrying out analyses of data requirements on behalf of LBAP partners, the LRC should be a key partner in the LBAP process. Similarly, it is appropriate for representatives of the LBAP partnership, (eg the chair of the steering group) to be involved in the LRC's management body. A users' forum is another good mechanism for understanding LBAP needs.

There are various requirements within a LBAP for reporting on progress and outcomes. Some reports are required by the LBAP partnership for national reporting and should be handled in the same way as other requirements for LRC services. Reporting requirements placed upon the lead partners within the UK BAP will generate needs for information from LRCs. Other reports will be needed at the local level for LBAP management. It is the responsibility of the partners to define and resource their information requirements, although the LRC should be aware of the need for reports by different agents for different reasons.

13.5 References

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Case study 1

Relationships with Local Biodiversity Action Planning

Fife Nature

Background

Fife Nature provides objective information on species, habitats and sites to all users in Fife.

Advice on its business plan, work programmes and budget is provided by a liaison group, comprising organisations with a major interest in Fife Natures activities (Fife Council and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)).

An official recorders group of around 25 local species and habitat experts is seen as crucial to Fife Nature's success. This group provides an important verification layer and ensures adherence to national data collection standards as set out by various recording schemes and societies.

Fife Nature is part of Fife Council, which underwrites its costs, including two full-time posts. Fife Nature provides an information service to the Council through the council ecologist and has a Service Level Agreement with SNH that covers around a quarter of its total costs. There are other income streams including grants, sales and charges for services (although not for data).

Fife Nature and the Local BAP

In Fife the local authority is central to the LBAP process and the partnership steering group is chaired by the council ecologist. As the lead partner in the LBAP, Fife Council supports the process in a number of ways, including the provision of staff time and other resources. Fife Nature provides a range of services that are central to LBAP activities; these include providing local habitat and species information for audits, providing contextual information for priority setting, facilitating contacts with local experts for planning actions and advising on survey methodologies for auditing and monitoring.

Priority setting

Fife Nature has devised a scoring system so that the identification of priority species is based on good contextual information and on an objective and consistent approach. This system was endorsed by the LBAP partnership and involves using a matrix, composed of various elements of contextual data, to assign local priority values. Broadly speaking, species were selected whose populations are in either local or national decline and for which sites could be identified.

The availability of up-to-date habitat, species and contextual data of known quality has enabled an efficient and consistent approach to LBAP priority setting and has allowed for the targeting of species that are indicative of locally valuable habitats.

Monitoring effectiveness of actions

The theme of consistency, objectivity and common standards has also been applied to the monitoring of the LBAP. The Fife LBAP partnership has requested that Fife Nature advises the partners on their requirements for monitoring the biological outcomes of actions.

Fife Nature is promoting best practice in monitoring outcomes to ensure that this is carried out successfully and efficiently, and that all data are collected using standard methods and are of a high and consistent quality. Fife Nature is advising on survey methods to ensure that surveys are well designed and that survey data are fully verified.

The actual survey work will be conducted by a variety of LBAP participants, including volunteers, partner organisations' staff, contracted professionals and expert amateurs. The systems of quality control provided by Fife Nature are intended to enable monitoring work to be conducted to a high and consistent standard by all surveyors.

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Case study 2

Relationships with Local Biodiversity Action Planning

Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre

Background

Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre is located within Nottinghamshire Natural History Museum, and is currently funded mostly by Nottinghamshire County Council. Core LRC services to the County Council include the review and monitoring of all county Wildlife Sites (locally called SINCs); this survey and data management work has provided an information base for monitoring the impact of LBAP actions.

Guaranteed revenue funding is currently sufficient only for supporting half a full-time LRC post, and additional funds are obtained on an ad hoc basis. The LRC is working on drawing up Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the local district councils.

In Nottinghamshire, the Biodiversity Action Group (BAG) manages the LBAP; this group has support from the County Council and all the district councils. The County Council is a key partner on the BAG and acts as its banker.

Current and future role of the LRC in the LBAP

The Nottinghamshire BAG provides an example of an LBAP partnership that is acting as a coherent entity with definable needs and with which the LRC can enter into agreements. The BAG brings together many organisations and allows their information needs in support of the LBAP to be jointly defined. The LRC has already conducted a number of projects for the BAG (funded through both partner contributions and sponsorship), and is seeking to establish itself as 'official record keeper for the LBAP. The LRC is working towards establishing an SLA with the BAG for overseeing the monitoring of biological outcomes of LBAP actions. It will do this through managing contracts with paid surveyors. In addition, information on the actions themselves is widely dispersed, and the LRC is looking at the possibility of monitoring them as well as their biological outcomes.

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