# Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

**TVERC**

# Data Policies and Procedures

## Summary

This document sets out TVERC data policies and procedures in a single document (with links to further information) and was last updated in December 2012. The following is a summary of the contents of this document.

## Species

Biological data are recorded for many reasons and by many groups and individuals. All species records received by TVERC are stored, filed processed, validated and verified in order to make them suitable to be entered into the TVERC Recorder 6 database. 80% of our species records are from the last 30 years, and 10% (126,000 records) are from the last 5 years. 76% of the data in Recorder was entered in the last 5 years (2008-2012). In 2012, our database included 1.3 million species records of which 14% are protected and notable species.

## Local Wildlife Sites

TVERC implement a Local Wildlife Sites system in both Berkshire and Oxfordshire. In Oxfordshire, the LWS system is delivered through the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project which is a joint initiative between TVERC and BBOWT. In Berkshire the entire LWS project is delivered and managed by TVERC. In both counties, there are Selection Panels which are responsible for making the decisions regarding the status of the LWSs. The LWS system is a dynamic one with most sites being reassessed about every 10 years. TVERC maintains the boundaries of Local Wildlife Sites in digital format. Changes are those agreed by the Local Wildlife Sites Selection Panels.

## Local Geological Sites

Data collection is carried out by the Oxford Geology Trust and Berkshire Geoconservation Group and TVERC has no involvement in this. TVERC maps the boundaries which are checked by a member of the Geology Trust or Berkshire Geoconservation Group.

## Habitats

Data is captured from habitat surveys or through aerial photograph interpretation. The Berkshire and Oxfordshire Biodiversity Data Officers who carry out the Local Wildlife Site surveys and the Biodiversity Data Services Officers have a high expertise in habitats and habitat mapping is mainly done by these staff. Approximately 25% of Oxfordshire has been mapped as either UK BAP priority habitat or Phase 1 and 95% Berkshire has been mapped.

**Data sharing and access**

While TVERC is constantly striving to improve data coverage in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, but we do not hold all existing biodiversity records. Whenever data is requested we will send statements to provide contact details for the main groups where we cannot provide data directly. These statements are available to view on our website and include the proviso that absence of records in the TVERC database should not be taken as confirmation of the absence of a species in the area. We have regular contact with around 70 national and local recording groups and numerous individuals, who allow us to include their data on our database.

TVERC carry out an average of 350 data searches per year; the majority of which (75%) are for development and planning purposes. TVERC provide data to commercial customers through data searches and data licences. Only 12.5% of consultancies who contacted us for data searches in the last year also sent us data directly.

**Charging policy**

TVERC charges for carrying out data searches, habitat surveys, digital mapping of sites and habitats, species surveys and data analysis projects. TVERC charges for the time involved in extracting the data and producing presentable results and not for the data itself. TVERC may also make a charge for time taken to provide information and advice, though this can be waived in some cases, for local groups or students for instance. In these cases we invite a donation to cover the time taken to collate the data. This is not compulsory but will help TVERC to continue to provide our services. Our turn-around time for data searches is usually within 10 working days from the date of return of a signed quotation.

**Data security**

TVERC will ensure that the data it holds is safeguarded from physical loss or damage or loss through unauthorised use or amendments.

**Legislation**

TVERC meets the requirements of the Environmental Information Regulations, Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and the INSPIRE Regulations.

# Contents

## Species

### Data Acquisition

Biological species are recorded for many reasons and by many groups and individuals. The vast majority of data submitted to TVERC is in electronic form, for example, computer readable reports, spreadsheets or occasionally as GIS layers. However, some data is still provided on paper and hence TVERC has two parallel filing systems for dealing with newly acquired species and other data, a paper system and an electronic one. The paper filing system consists of a series of trays through which the data moves while it is being processed. The electronic filing system consists of a series of identical "electronic trays". The paper system culminates in species data being filed by data log number in a physical archive, whilst a similar electronic filing system is the ultimate endpoint for electronic data. Often electronic data (spreadsheets primarily) are generated from paper data sets and these are treated as ordinary electronic data sets and processed and filed accordingly. Therefore, some data is only filed in the paper archive, some only in the electronic archive and some is filed in both.

### Data Sources
- Local natural historians & local wildlife groups
- Ecological Consultancies (often via local authorities)
- Local Wildlife Site surveys
- Landowning NGOs & charities (e.g. BBOWT, RSPB, NT etc)
- Government Bodies (e.g. EA, NE etc)
- Private landowners (e.g. for HSA schemes)
- Other businesses (e.g. Thames Water)
- Members of the public (incidental records)
- Other TVERC run recording schemes (Otter Spotters, crayfish surveys)

### What is a data set?
TVERC treats as a data set any collection of records that fit together logically as a single entity and come from a known individual, group of individual or organisation.

### What is an Incidental Record?
TVERC treats small numbers of records generated by staff, members of the public or other known individuals as incidental records. Incidental records are verified as soon after they are acquired as possible (see below) and are gathered in a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet is then logged and processed as a normal data set on a regular basis (approximately once every six-months).

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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## Data Management

All species records received by TVERC receive processing in order to make them suitable to be entered into the TVERC Recorder 6 database. Generally this can be broken down into the following distinct stages:

- Logging
- Prioritization
- Formatting to make further processing and database entry easier
- Verification (optional, see below)
- Validation (mostly grid reference checking and checking that a full record exists)
- Database entry
- Filing

## Data storage before and during processing

Paper Data: In the paper data trays in the main office
Electronic Data: In the electronic data trays located in G:\Data\Data under process\Data Management Trays

*The Structure of the Data management Trays*

- New Data Arrival: New data is placed here initially on arrival

- Logged to Process: Once the data has been given a log number, its details entered into the TVERC species data log and assigned a priority (low, medium, high) it is entered into this data management tray in one of three sub-folders according to its processing priority.

- In Process: A data set is placed in the appropriate sub-folder according to priority, once a member of staff or volunteer begins work on it.

- Ready to Compute: Once all processing and checks have been completed, data is placed in the sub-folder Awaiting Data Input, to await importation into the TVERC Recorder 3 database. Occasionally, data is put into the Parked sub-folder. This happens if some issue arises during processing, for example over ownership.

Data moves through these trays as the processing proceeds and eventually ends up in the Awaiting Data Input sub-folder of the 4. Ready to Compute tray.

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**Data logging**

TVERC maintains a log of all data sets that it receives. The log is in the form of an excel spreadsheet and has been constantly maintained since 2005. It should be stressed that the majority of data sets sent to TVERC do not come with metadata. The information in the data log often contains the only information we have about a data set. G:\Data\Data under process\Data Log & Inventory\Current Data Log  Inventory.xlsm

*Information recorded in the TVERC species Log*

- Data Log Number: The unique ID number assigned to the data set in the format Year-Number, e.g. 012-056 (56th data set logged in 2012)
- Date of Arrival: Date or approximate date the data was received. Sometimes this is unknown, especially if the data is old.
- Paper Data? Is the primary data source is paper (electronic files may be generated during subsequent processing)
- Electronic Data? Is the primary data source is machine readable (GIS layer, Word Document, PDF document, excel spreadsheet etc.)
- Champion: Member of TVERC staff receiving the data
- Acknowledged? Has the receipt of data been acknowledged? Note: it is TVERC policy to acknowledge receipt of every piece of data it receives.
- Fast-track Requested? Is the data set of such high priority that it needs fast-tracking through the system? This occurs, for example when data if for a site that is being taken to the LWS panel and data is urgently required.
- Confidential? Is the data confidential? Extra information can be entered into the comment column.
- NBN Gateway Consent: This indicates whether we have consent to place records on NBN Gateway
- Date Logged: Date that the data was logged
- Description: This includes a general description of the dataset, for example it could include the number of records, range of taxa, date range, recorder/s, geographical coverage etc.)
- Donor: Who gave TVERC the data
- Owner: Who owns the data. This may be individuals or groups or if data has been gathered as part of a planning enquiry it could be "public domain"
- Type of data exchange agreement: This indicates the relationship between TVERC and the data owner. Some data is covered under SLAs and data exchange agreements, but much is informal.
- Location of data exchange agreement: Where can any agreement be found in the TVERC filing system?
- Conditions of use: A summary of any conditions. This is really to flag up to potential users of the data that there are conditions they need to be aware of. Further details can go in the comment column.
- Verification: Details of the verification status, either self-verified or a date of TVERC verification. Often further details will be in the comment column.
- Quality Satisfactory?  Is the quality of the data suitable for entry into the TVERC database (ok). Further details in the comment column.
- Date of Validation: Date that formatting and validation completed
- On GIS Index? This is used to confirm that for surveys for specific known sites, a polygon has been created and browser table filled for the GIS Index. If the records are for many individual locations, then n/a is entered in this column.
- Computed OK? Has the data been successfully imported into the TVERC Recorder 6 database? Enter n/a in this column for non-species data sets.
- Number of records imported: self-explanatory. Filled in once the data has been successfully imported into the TVERC Recorder 6 database.

- Date of filing: Date on which the data is removed from the Data under process tray system and deposited in the relevant archive (physical or electronic)
- Filed in…..Which system? Physical archive, electronic archive or both
- Who is working on the data set? Name of the person assigned to format and validate the data set.
- Comments: Extra information
- Priority: The priority assigned when logged for processing (low, medium or high) see below.

**Data Prioritisation**

TVERC receives far more species data than it currently has the resources to process. This is partly due to lack of staff and volunteers, but is also due to the TVERC policy of validating data to a high standard before it is imported into its Recorder database. It is therefore important to prioritise the datasets and concentrate on processing those of highest importance first. Prioritising species datasets is carried out by a TVERC staff member when the data set is logged.

- High priority data sets: These are data sets containing wholly or a large part species which are legally protected or otherwise notable. Alternatively data sets for a designated or proposed designated wildlife site containing predominantly non-notable species.
- Medium priority data sets: Data sets containing some legally protected or notable records and not for any designated or proposed designated wildlife site.
- Low priority data sets: All other data sets.

Our target is to validate and verify and upload into our database all high priority datasets within 12 months of receipt.

# Sites

## Local Wildlife Sites

This section provides information on how the Local Wildlife Site system is implemented in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Due to differences in how the system is funded between the two counties, the systems are implemented in slightly different ways.

TVERC has already developed a LWS Criteria document that details the LWS process including the criteria used for LWS selection. Aspects of the process covered in detail by the Criteria document are not repeated here. The Criteria document also covers the LWS system for Buckinghamshire but any aspects specific to this county are clearly noted.

Figure 1 details an overview of the LWS process which is described in further detail in Sections 1 – 5.
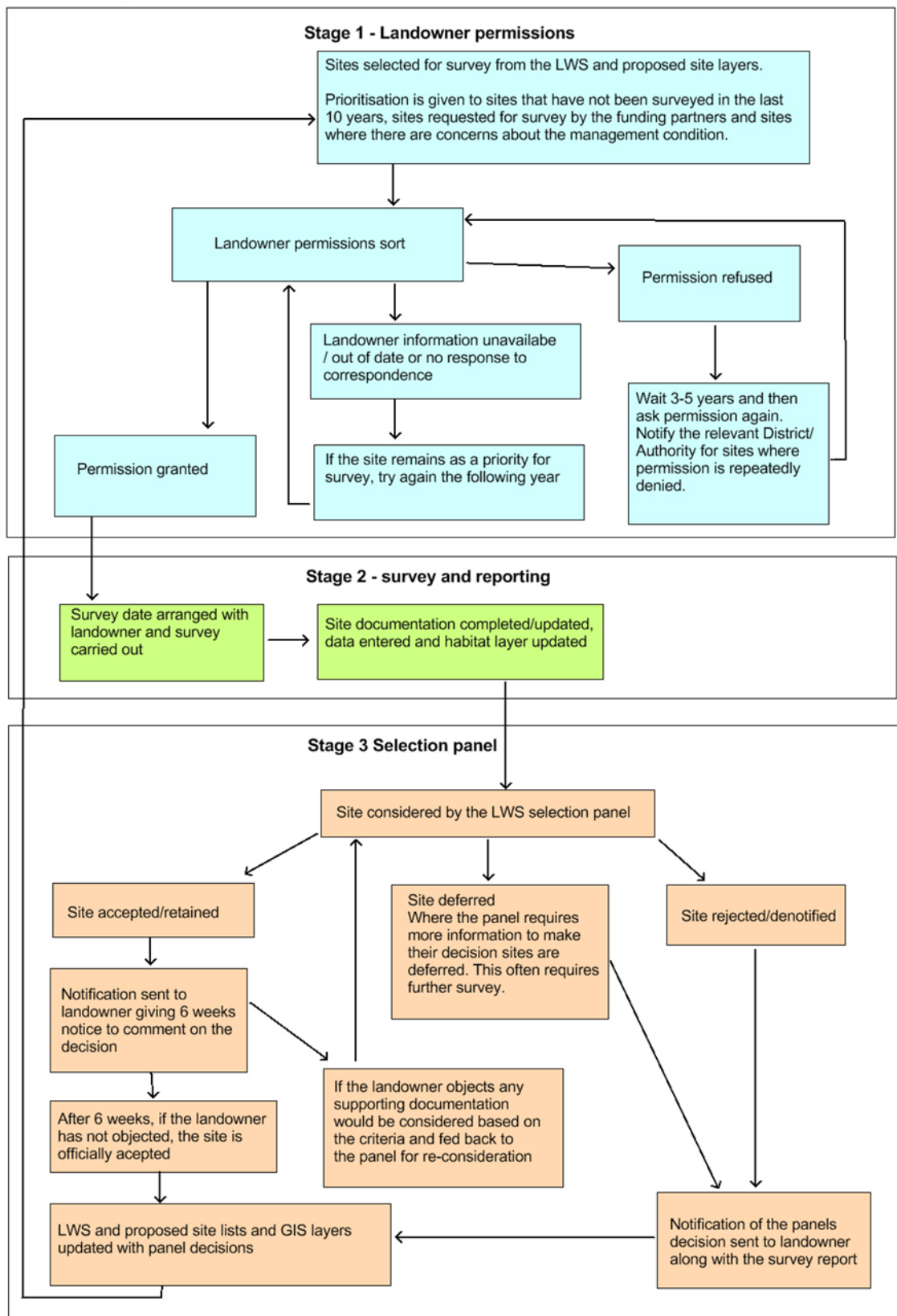
# Figure 1: Overview of the LWS process

## The LWS process

### Stage 1 - Landowner permissions

Sites selected for survey from the LWS and proposed site layers.

Prioritisation is given to sites that have not been surveyed in the last 10 years, sites requested for survey by the funding partners and sites where there are concerns about the management condition.

Landowner permissions sort

Permission refused

Landowner information unavailabe / out of date or no response to correspondence

Wait 3-5 years and then ask permission again. Notify the relevant District/ Authority for sites where permission is repeatedly denied.

Permission granted

If the site remains as a priority for survey, try again the following year

### Stage 2 - survey and reporting

Survey date arranged with landowner and survey carried out

Site documentation completed/updated, data entered and habitat layer updated

### Stage 3 Selection panel

Site considered by the LWS selection panel

Site accepted/retained

Site deferred
Where the panel requires more information to make their decision sites are deferred. This often requires further survey.

Site rejected/denotified

Notification sent to landowner giving 6 weeks notice to comment on the decision

After 6 weeks, if the landowner has not objected, the site is officially accepted

If the landowner objects any supporting documentation would be considered based on the criteria and fed back to the panel for re-consideration

LWS and proposed site lists and GIS layers updated with panel decisions

Notification of the panels decision sent to landowner along with the survey report

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**Delivery and involvement of partners**

In Oxfordshire, the LWS system is delivered through the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project which is a joint initiative between TVERC and BBOWT. A number of other partners are involved in the project through the steering group (South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Natural England).

In Berkshire the entire LWS project is delivered and managed by TVERC. As can be seen in Table 1.1, which summarises the different roles of by TVERC in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, the provision of management advice is a lesser component of the process in Berkshire than Oxfordshire and subject to agreement from the funding partners.

In both counties, there are Selection Panels which are responsible for making the decisions regarding the status of the LWSs. In Oxfordshire, the Panel comprises representatives of the following organisations; Oxfordshire County Council, Botanical Society of the British Isles, Oxford Ornithological Society, Natural England and local experts/recorders. Local recorder, landowners and land managers are also involved in suggesting new potential sites. In Berkshire the Panel is made up from representatives from the local authorities (currently West Berkshire Council), Natural England, BBOWT and TVERC.

Table 1.1 Summary of roles and those responsible for delivery in Oxfordshire & Berkshire

| Role | Delivered by | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Oxfordshire | Berkshire |
| Survey | TVERC | TVERC |
| Reporting | | |
| Maintenance of information on LWS | | |
| Site documentation | | |
| Present survey outcomes to Selection Panel | | |
| Landowner liaison | BBOWT | |
| Maintaining landowner database | | |
| Management monitoring visits | | TVERC where applicable but is currently a lesser element of the LWS process |
| Offering management advice | | |

**Landowners liaison**

*Oxfordshire*

Each year, in consultation with the funders, TVERC and BBOWT draw up a list of sites for survey. Once agreed, BBOWT contact the landowners to ask permission to carry out the surveys. For sites where they do not hold any landowner details they start the process of tracking this down, including use of land registry searches where required. They include a map of the survey site and ask landowners to mark on it the areas that they own or manage. This is to avoid any confusion as which areas can be accessed. They also include some basic information about the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project and about Local Wildlife Sites. In recent years, a small proportion of site permissions (about 5-10%) get refused. In these cases we have not carried out the surveys.

Closer to the time we hope to carry out the survey the TVERC project officer contacts the landowner and arranges a date to access the site. Some landowners and/or land managers prefer to accompany the surveyor during the site visit.

After the sites have been considered by the site selection panel, BBOWT write to the landowners/land managers/tenants informing them of the outcome and providing copies of the survey reports. On sites where management advice is needed, if funding allows, BBOWT offers this to the landowner/land manager.

The consultation process used for proposed sites follows that for existing sites but often requires more time for the identification of the relevant landowner and liaison regarding the initial survey. The landowners are identified and contacted by BBOWT. Information is provided on the OWS project and about LWS. For proposed sites, landowners often wish to discuss the status of LWS and what it would mean for them if their site was accepted. They have the opportunity to discuss this with either/both BBOWT and TVERC staff depending on whether they have queries relating to site status, management and grants or to what the survey involves and what happens to the data collected. Where access permission for survey is given, the survey is carried out and the information presented to the site selection panel later in the year. When a new site is accepted as a LWS the landowner is notified and given 6 weeks to appeal the decision. If they do not object the relevant lists and GIS layers are updated to include the site. If a landowner objects they have the opportunity to submit additional information about the site that would then be reconsidered by the site selection panel.


*Berkshire*
In Berkshire the process is similar to that undertaken for Oxfordshire except that land owner identification and liaison is solely done by TVERC. Occasionally, landowners request a copy of the report prior to it being approved by the Selection Panel. In these situations the owner is given a copy clearly marked "DRAFT" with an explanation that it will remain as draft until the approved. In some instance where there is a proposed significant boundary change such details are omitted from the draft report.

Permission for access in Berkshire appear to be more problematic than Oxfordshire with a higher rate of refusals.

Management advice is provided on a case by case basis depending on the views and preferences of the funding authority for the site and time/financial budget available.

**Landowner consent evidence**

An example of the forms used is provided for [Shambridge and College Woods](#) - two proposed sites that were considered in 2011. There were two landowners in this instance and a permit was required to access areas of the Forestry Commissions land.

For Oxfordshire sites, BBOWT holds the database of landowner information and contacts them to seek permissions for carrying out site visits for most of the surveys. In the given examples the initial contact was made by BBOWT.

**Site survey and monitoring**

The LWS system is a dynamic one with most sites being reassessed about every 10 years. The criteria used are described in detail in the [LWS criteria document](#). Sites that meet the criteria are retained and those that fail to meet the criteria are deselected. TVERC carry out surveys of LWS in order to provide up to date information to the site selection panel on the wildlife interest of sites. If other recent sources of data are available they are included in the assessment.

New proposed sites are regularly suggested by landowners, members of the public or by partner organisations. If there is good reason to believe that the suggested sites have features that make it likely to meet the criteria for LWS selection then they are added to the proposed site list and GIS layer. These sites are then surveyed and considered by the panel in due course, where landowner permissions can be obtained.

The survey methodology used focuses on the habitats present on a site. The survey is based on Extended Phase One (JNCC, 2010) with target notes and more extensive flora species lists (normally with DAFOR values) than is typical for standard surveys, especially where BAP habitats are found. Other species groups are recorded where they are observed and can be reliably identified. TVERC staff have the skills and knowledge to assess the botanical interest and map the habitats found on sites but sometimes information on other species groups is required. On sites where there is good potential for particular species groups that need a specialist survey or survey at a different time of year further surveys are recommended. We have a number of volunteer surveyors including, some of whom specialise in groups such as birds, fungi and invertebrates. Where possible, further surveys for these groups are carried out for sites that are likely to have high value for them.

LWS surveys highlight sites with management issues and, for Oxfordshire sites, BBOWT use the information provided to help prioritise the sites selected for management monitoring visits and advice.

The exact frequency of survey and assessment is dependent on the level of funding available from each district.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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**The interaction with local planning policy**

TVERC hold, maintain and provide access to information on Local Wildlife Sites and proposed sites. This includes the provision of GIS layers of the LWS and proposed LWS boundaries to help inform local planning policy and decisions. The species data collected during LWS surveys are entered on to the TVERC database and are included in updates to the protected and notable species layers that are also provided to partners. Site descriptions (citations) are available for most sites if requested.

TVERC's role in the process is to manage and make available environmental data to help inform our partners and other enquirers. TVERC disseminates the relevant information on the Local Site system and individual sites to the appropriate people and organisations through:
- regular updates to partner organisations
- making information on LWS available on its website
- data search services.

This information can then be used to help inform planning decisions.

**LWS selection panel documentation**

Examples of the selection process with all the relevant documentation are provided including copies of the survey report and selection panel forms highlighting the key features of each site that relate to each of the site selection criteria. The examples given include existing and proposed sites with examples of sites that were accepted and sites that were rejected.

As the sites surveyed in 2012 have not yet been processed by the site selection panel examples from sites processed in 2010 and 2011 are provided.

Table 5.1. summarises the potential outcomes for a site following review at the Selection Panel meeting.

Table 5.1 Potential outcomes following Selection Panel meeting

| Outcome | Explanation |
|---------|-------------|
| Retain | Existing LWS: resurveyed & designation as LWS confirmed |
| Accept | Proposed LWS: surveyed & designation as LWS confirmed |
| Deselect | Existing LWS: resurveyed & de-designation as LWS |
| Reject | Proposed LWS: surveyed & not designation as LWS |
| Deferred | Insufficient information for a decision to be made. |

**Local Geological Sites**

Data collection is carried out by the Oxford Geology Trust and Berkshire Geoconservation Group and TVERC has no involvement in this. These organisations liaise with landowners directly and all surveys are carried out with landowner permission.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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**Oxfordshire**

There is well developed system in the County and nearly all Local Geological Sites were designated prior to the formation of TVERC. New sites and boundary changes are agreed by the committee of the Oxford Geology Trust. Comments on any proposed designation are sought from experts familiar with the County from outside the Geology Trust. The criteria used are those defined by DEFRA in the guidance for local sites.

**Berkshire**

The system of sites has only been developed in recent years. Prior to this only one site had been notified. Proposed sites are taken to same selection panel as for Local wildlife Sites. Local geological expertise is added whenever possible. The proposal documents include full details and descriptions of the interest and sources of information concerning the interest. Comments on any proposed designation are sought from experts familiar with the County from outside the Geoconservation Group. The criteria used are those defined by DEFRA in the guidance for local sites.

**Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Conservation Target Areas**

These areas were drawn by TVERC and then amended through consultation with professional organisations, voluntary groups and recorders. The final product was then agreed and adopted by the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Nature Conservation Forums respectively. Occasionally changes are proposed by BNCF or ONCF and TVERC updates the digital data and distributes that information to relevant organisations.

## Habitats

Data is captured from habitat surveys or through aerial photograph interpretation. Datasets provided by other organisations can be incorporated into the habitat information held by TVERC.

Data is captured:
- Using the MapInfo GIS system
- Using the latest version of Ordnance Survey MasterMap as a base map
- Using standard minimal mappable unit of 0.25ha or better for rare habitats.
- As polygons except for linear features which will be captured as line data or very small patches of habitats (such as fen habitat in small flushes) which will captured as point data where such features are not represented by OS MasterMap polygons.

Habitats are recorded using the UKBAP Priority Classification where relevant and also the Phase 1 habitat classification and the Integrated Habitat System.

Attributes conform to the standard attributes agreed for habitat data capture within the South-east Local Records Centre region.

Datasets from other organisations will be expected to use a standard habitat classification (as listed in the NBN Habitats Directory), include determination and interpretation information and source data if they are to be incorporated into the dataset. Without this information the dataset may be used as a secondary data source to support mapping in conjunction with other sources.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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## Species

### Verification

Verification involves checking that the species reported is correctly identified and is generally the first step in TVERC species data processing.

Deciding whether further verification is necessary: All incoming data sets are examined when they arrive and are logged to determine whether further verification is necessary using the following simple key:

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**Data Verification Decision Key**

1.  The species records have been recorded by a professional ecologist     **7**
    The species records have been recorded by an amateur or amateurs     **2**

2.  The species records have gathered by or on behalf of an organisation with its own verification procedures     **7**
    The species records have gathered by or on behalf of organisations or individuals without verification procedures     **3**

3.  The species records have been recorded by a person or people known by TVERC to be competent to record the taxa covered.     **7**
    The species records have been recorded by a person or people of unknown competence     **4**

4.  The species recorded are easy to identify and unlikely to be wrongly identified     **7**
    The species recorded are difficult to identify or easy to identify wrongly     **5**

5.  The recorder has independently verified the record with an expert or online ID website     **7**
    The recorder has not independently verified the record     **6**

6.  **THE RECORD NEEDS FURTHER VERIFICATION**

7.  **NO FURTHER ACTION – RECORD VERIFIED SATISFACTORILY**

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**Records requiring no further verification**

These records are recorded as self-verified in the TVERC data log and are ready for formatting and validation.

**Records requiring further verification**

If verification is necessary, either it will be done by a qualified member of TVERC staff or specialist help will be requested, for example from county recorders or national recording schemes.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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## Incidental Records

The main source of un-verified records is members of the public and are referred to as incidental records. Some of these records are solicited at public events (e.g. Wychwood Fair) but the majority are either emailed to TVERC or received by telephone. TVERC policy for collecting such records is:

- Always collect contact details for the recorder, so further checks can be made if necessary.
- To request photographs or other corroborating evidence, should the species being reported be unusual or easy to confuse.
- Incidental sightings are dealt with as soon after submission to TVERC as possible, so that the recorder can be contacted while their memory is still fresh, or while it is still possible to secure a photograph.
- TVERC staff will provide verification for the majority of incidental records, although a few will be passed on to other experts or the recorder will be asked to submit a photo to an online identification website such as ISpot to confirm the ID.

## Data verification as part of data exchange agreements

TVERC has some data exchange agreements which involve regular verification of records. For several taxon groups, e.g. macro moths (VC23), Dragonflies/Damselflies etc. TVERC sends records received to the relevant group or individual for verification as part of their data exchange agreement.

## Validation

In this process raw data, either in the form of paper records, machine readable reports, spreadsheets or GIS layers is transformed into a format that can be readily imported into Recorder 6 using the "Import Wizard". This formatting process inevitably involves discovering whether each species observation contains sufficient information to form a good biological record, i.e. we know "who, what, when and where". Once this has been completed, grid reference validation can be carried out using the Mapinfo GIS program to determine whether or not the grid reference is correct. This work is carried out by both TVERC staff and trained volunteers.

## Formatting data

In this process, raw data is used to populate a standard excel spreadsheet. Providing all the columns shown in green can be populated a valid record is created which can be readily imported into the TVERC Recorder 6 database. In general, our policy is to convert non-machine readable data into machine readable format wherever possible in order to minimise human typing errors. However, for paper data, some typing in of information is unavoidable. Electronic scanning of species lists is carried out when feasible. The excel spreadsheet populated in this process has the following columns:

| Latin name | How many? | of what? | When? | GridRef | Definite Wildlife site | Location if not on wildlife site or sub-site of wildlife site | Who saw it? | Who checked it was what was thought? (often an expert!) | How was record obtained? | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scientific Name | Abundance | Sex/Stage | Date | GridRef | Site Name | Locality | Recorder | Determiner | Type of Record | Comment |

## Validating data

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

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Once formatting is complete all records containing at least the minimum amount of information are checked to ensure that their grid reference is correct. In our experience this is the single most common form of error. The following steps are carried out:

- The records in the spreadsheet are read into the Mapinfo GIS program
- The records are geocoded using the Grid Ref Mapper add-in
- The result is saved as a GIS table
- This table is used to compare the location given by the grid reference with the description of location provided by the original recorder. If they match within the precision of the grid reference (e.g. within 100m approx. for a 6-fig and 10m approx. for an 8-fig cgr) then the cgr is considered correct.
- For unsatisfactory grid references, TVERC will correct them providing sufficient location information has been provided by the record to allow this to be done.
- If unsatisfactory grid references cannot be thus corrected then the original recorder is contacted and asked to provide more information.
- If the original recorder cannot be contacted or cannot provide sufficient information to create a valid record, the record does not pass validation and will not be entered into the database.
- The original cgrs are always retained in the above spreadsheet in an additional column.
- A column containing validation comments is also added to contain information thought relevant by the validator.
- Thus a record of all changes made during validation is maintained.
- Records failing validation are removed to another worksheet in the spreadsheet along with the relevant comments explaining the reason for removal.
- The folder containing the data is moved to the Ready to Compute/Awaiting Data Input area in the data management trays.
- The date of validation is recorded in the Species Data Log.

## Recorder 6 Data Importation Policies & Procedures

**Recorder Data Hierarchy**
There are several levels of data hierarchy for taxon records held within Recorder 6.

*Survey*
Event – individual recording events occurring on a single date or date range within the wider survey
Sample – Sets of measurements done within a single event. Different samples may be due to recording at multiple locations within a larger site or perhaps different survey techniques being used at the same site.
Occurrence – A single set of measurements using the same technique at the same location.
Individual taxon records – the actual species observations.

*Survey Types*

There two kinds of survey in the TVERC database

> Type 1: A Survey run by and belonging to a single individual or organisation
> Type 2: A Survey holding information from several individuals or organisations

Recently we have tried to create only Type 1 new surveys. The reason for this is that information about who runs/owns data from a survey is held within the survey information and trickles down to be attached to an individual taxon record. Therefore, it is the most straightforward way of tying ownership to individual taxon records. Generally, surveys of Type 2 feature data where the owner is either the individual recorder or the data is anyway in the public domain (e.g. much consultancy data for planning applications). TVERC is committed to ensuring that ownership details are tied to taxon records because this allows us:

(a)     To acknowledge our data providers
(b)     To ensure that we abide by conditions of data exchange agreements

*Restricted Surveys*

Some data surveys have access restrictions imposed on them by the owners of the data. For example, we may be allowed to provide such data to our partner organisations, but not for commercial data searches. Such data is always placed within a survey whose name starts with the term "RESTRICTED" to flag up this fact.

*Importation Method*

Most data is imported into Recorder 6 from excel spreadsheet (see above) using the Recorder 6 Import Wizard. However LWS surveys records and some other botanical records (e.g. for AWI projects) are entered direct using bespoke recording cards.

*Post Importation*

After the data has been successfully imported and prior to final filing, the following columns should be filled out in the Species Data Log:

- Computed OK?
- Number of records imported

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**Data filing**
Once species records have been successfully imported into the TVERC Recorder 6 database, they should be removed from "Data Under Process" trays and filed permanently. Paper data is filed by log number in filing boxes in the archive room and electronic data is filed in: G:\Data\Data Backups and archive\Electronic Species Records Archive\Main Archive - Filed by log number. The entire contents of the directory containing raw and processed data is moved into this electronic archive.

**Post Filing**
The following columns in the Species Data Log are filled in:
o       Date of filing
o       Filed in….

**Derived Datasets – GIS layers**

Species records in the TVERC Recorder 6 database are used primarily to produce two sets of GIS Layers:

- Legally Protected and Notable Species Layers
- 10 km square GIS species data tiles

The legally protected and notable species layers are produced in three slightly different formats, for different uses:

- Full layer for TVERC internal use
- Data search layer (for commercial & non-commercial data search requests)
- Partner layer – for local authority & other partner organisations.

The 10 km square GIS tiles are created for TVERC internal use mainly and contain all taxon records, not just protected and notable species)

Both types of layer use the taxon records within the Recorder 6 database plus a few extra data sets not held within Recorder 6 (e.g. OOS records, Berkshire Bird Records, any others?).

**Data extraction from Recorder 6**
This is done using a bespoke XML report written for us by Mike Weideli. It allows us to extract all the necessary information for all records entered/imported into Recorder 6 after a date chosen by us.

*What information is extracted from Recorder 6?*
The following is a list of the information extracted by our bespoke query:

| | |
|---|---|
| Common name | Common name of the species recorded |
| Scientific name | Scientific name of the species recorded |
| Abundance | How many were seen |
| Sex/stage | Information about gender, age or other information about the stage (e.g. egg or larva) recorded. Essentially this is the "what was seen" information. |
| Date | Date of observation |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Year | Year of observation |
| Grid Reference | Grid reference of observation |
| Event Location | Where the species was recorded (if it was on a known wildlife site) |
| Sample Location Name | Other information about where the species was seen. |
| Recorders | Who recorded the species |
| Determiner | If the species identity was confirmed by an independent expert, then who? |
| Observation record type | What sort of a record is it? For example was it trapped in a moth trap, bred from a larva, a field observation, dead on the road or hand netted etc.? |
| Comment | Any other information provided by the recorder |
| Easting | |
| Northing | |
| Observation checked | Has the observation in the database been checked after input? (generally no…we don't have time and have already done a lot of checking) |
| Taxon sort order | A code which allows sorting into taxonomic order |
| Data Owner | This is actually the individual or body that runs the survey the taxon observation is part of, hence the importance of setting up appropriate surveys. |
| Survey Name | The name of the survey that the observation is part of in the Recorder 6 database. |
| Checklist | The checklist (a built-in list of species provided with the Recorder software, e.g. British mammals) used to input the species record. The common and/or scientific name may differ according to checklist which is why when we input data into Recorder we try to use only "preferred" checklists. |
| Taxon Group | Taxonomic group of the species observed |
| Entry Date | Date on which the observation was entered into the Recorder database. |
| Alternative Scientific Name | Some species have synonyms (depends on checklist). |
| Alternative Common Name | Some species have synonyms (depends on checklist). |

*What is done to the data post extraction?*

Broadly speaking, the following steps are carried out on the data extracted from Recorder 6 in order to make it compatible with existing GIS layers and so that it can be appended:

1.  Scientific and common names are corrected to make them consistent with standard nomenclature.
2.  Abundance, Sex/stage and record type information is combined into a single quantity (known in the GIS layer as Abund./ Sex_Stage/ Record Type)
3.  Date information is made consistent
4.  Records are labelled by county
5.  A data source column is populated (using a combination of information from Recorder, Data Owner and Survey)
6.  Species designations are added
7.  The grid reference qualifier column (which indicated spatial precision) is populated
8.  Local BAP column populated (Bracknell data only)

A more detailed description of how to carry out these procedures is covered in: G:\Policies and procedures\How to do it documents\Post processing of Recorder data for GIS layers\Instruction Notes.doc

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

# Sites

## Local Wildlife Sites
TVERC maintains the boundaries of Local Wildlife Sites in digital format. Changes are those agreed by the Local Wildlife Sites Selection Panels. Once mapped the layers are checked by the member of TVERC staff responsible for surveying the sites and presenting the data to the selection panels. Only once this is done is the data released.

## Local Geological Sites
In Oxfordshire TVERC maps the boundaries of Local Geological Sites for the Oxford Geology Trust using information supplied by the Trust. Once mapped the new digital information is checked by a member of the Geology Trust before it is released. In Berkshire TVERC maps the boundaries of sites supplied by the Berkshire Geoconservation Group. A member of BGS presents the information concerning the site at the Selection Panel and once the boundary is added to the digital layer it is sent for checking by that person. Only once confirmed the data is released.

## Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Conservation Target Areas
Areas were checked by TVERC staff and agreed by Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum or Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum before data is released. The same procedure applies to any changes made to these layers.

# Habitats
The Berkshire and Oxfordshire Biodiversity Data Officers who carry out the Local Wildlife Site surveys and the Biodiversity Data Services Officers have a high expertise in habitats and habitat mapping is mainly done by these staff. In this respect the data is considered to be self-verified. Habitat mapping carried out by others is verified by these staff. Habitat mapping is continually updated and checked, errors are removed and the quality of the data is improved. Habitat data includes determination and interpretation quality attributes which means that the confidence in the habitat type is clearly shown.

## Geographic & Taxonomic Coverage

While TVERC is constantly striving to improve data coverage in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, but we do not hold all existing biodiversity records.

Whenever data is requested we will send statements to provide contact details for the main groups where we cannot provide data directly. These statements are available to view on our website and include the proviso that absence of records in the TVERC database should not be taken as confirmation of the absence of a species in the area.

We advise customers to contact the following groups:
- The Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire Bat Group (Berkshire only)
- Binfield Badger Group (Berkshire only)
- Berkshire Ornithological Club (Berkshire only)
- The Banbury Ornithological Society (Oxfordshire only)
- Oxfordshire Bat Group (Oxfordshire only)
- Oxfordshire Badger Group (Oxfordshire only)
- Shotover Wildlife Group (for searches that that cover the area around Shotover, near Oxford)
- Butterfly Conservation (where searches cover a site or area known to be of importance for butterflies)

If we are aware of other important datasets which we do not hold we will direct those requesting data to the source. For instance a request for veteran tree information in Wokingham would lead us to direct people to the website of the Wokingham and District Veteran Tree association where the data is available to be viewed.

**Recording Groups**
We have regular contact with around 70 national and local recording groups and numerous individuals, who allow us to include their data on our database. This includes 18 Public Bodies, 1 Academic, 11 local groups, 29 recording groups, 6 wildlife charities, 44 individuals and 3 ecological consultancies. More detailed and up-to-date metadata on data exchanges is available here: <u>G:\Data exchanges, SLAs and licences.</u>

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We currently have data agreements with the following recording groups in Berkshire and Oxfordshire:

| Type of recorder | Name | Type of recorder | Name |
|---|---|---|---|
| Government/ non-departmental public body | Environment Agency | Taxonomic recording group | Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire |
| | Highways Agency | | Association of British Fungi Groups |
| | Lower Windrush Valley project | | Banbury Ornithological Society |
| | Natural England | | Barn Owl Conservation Network |
| | Oxfordshire Woodland Project | | Bat Conservation Trust |
| | University of Oxford, Edward Grey Institute | | Berkshire Flora Group |
| | Wychwood Project | | Berkshire Mammal Group |
| Local authority | Bracknell Forest Council | | Berkshire Ornithological Club |
| | Cherwell District Council | | Berkshire Reptile and Amphibian Group |
| | Oxford City Council | | Berkshire RIGS |
| | Reading Borough Council | | Binfield Badger Group |
| | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead | | British Dragonfly Association |
| | Slough Borough Council | | Butterfly Conservation |
| | South Oxfordshire District Council | | Cotswold Rare Plants Group |
| | Vale of White Horse District Council | | Fungus Group of Oxfordshire |
| | West Berkshire Council | | Hemiptera National Recording Scheme |
| | West Oxfordshire District Council | | National Recording Scheme and Societies |
| | Wokingham Borough Council | | Newbury District Ornithological Club |
| Academic | WildCRU | | North Oxfordshire Mammal Group |
| Local town or parish group | Abingdon Natural History Society | | Oxford Geology Trust |
| | Aston Rowant SSSI Group | | Oxford Ornithological Society |
| | Chris Mason | | Oxfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group |
| | Friends of Aston Eyot | | Oxfordshire Badger Group |
| | Friends of Radley Lakes | | Oxfordshire Bat Group |
| | Henley Wildlife Group | | Shotover Wildlife |
| | Moor Green Lakes Group | | South Bucks and Berkshire Bat Group |
| | Oxford Urban Wildlife Group | | Thames Valley Fungus Group |
| | Reading and District Natural History Society | Wildlife charity | BBOWT |
| | West Oxfordshire Field Club | | British Trust for Ornithology |
| | Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association | | CPRE |
| | | | Earth Trust |
| | | | Ponds Conservation |
| | | | RSPB |

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**Species Data**

In 2012, our database included 1,342,763 species records of which the majority were either vascular plants (47%) or invertebrates (39%). Approximately 188,000 are protected and notable species (14%). The tables below show the species data by taxonomic or species group.

| Taxonomic group | No of records | % of records |
|---|---|---|
| **Vascular Plants** | **633,983** | **47.21** |
| **Lower Plants** | **16,669** | **1.24** |
| **Invertebrates** | **527,564** | **39.29** |
| butterflies & moths | 319,116 | 23.77 |
| **Vertebrates** | **157,550** | **11.73** |
| mammals | 19,613 | 1.46 |
| amphibians | 3,247 | 0.24 |
| reptiles | 4,531 | 0.34 |
| birds | 128,011 | 9.53 |
| **Fish** | **2,148** | **0.16** |

| Species group | No of records | % of records |
|---|---|---|
| Water Vole | 1135 | 0.08 |
| Dormouse | 290 | 0.02 |
| Bats | 3338 | 0.25 |
| Badger | 1331 | 0.10 |
| Brown Hare | 817 | 0.06 |
| Hedgehog | 571 | 0.04 |
| Otter | 2108 | 0.16 |

**Habitat data**

There is a difference in the geographic coverage of habitat mapping in Oxfordshire and Berkshire due to differences in the amount of funding received by TVERC to carry out this work.

*Oxfordshire*

Approximately 16% of the county has been mapped as either UK BAP priority habitat or Phase 1. If you exclude urban and developed areas (buildings, most gardens, roads and railway tracks) this figure rises to about 25%. Developed land will be held in a separate "urban" layer once the data is in the final MasterMap framework, which is due to take place in 2013.

Grasslands, heathland and floodplain grazing marsh have been updated in 2012 as part of the Natural England MOA. Most of the mapping of high quality local mixed deciduous woodland is within Conservation Target Areas and Cherwell District. The figure for lowland beech and yew woodland is low because there are CTAs within the Chilterns AONB which have not been mapped. There are likely to be small patches of wet woodland alongside river and stream valleys which have not been mapped.

Excluding urban areas, coverage of Phase 1 habitat mapping is above 99%.

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*Berkshire*

The whole of Berkshire has been mapped so coverage of BAP habitats is mainly close to 100%. Some areas in towns and all developed areas are not mapped so are not included in these figures. Aerial interpretation has probably overestimated lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Ponds are partly mapped and traditional orchards have not been mapped. Some parkland and wood pasture areas and some small areas of wet woodland without survey information so the coverage for these habitats is about 90%.

Excluding urban areas, coverage of Phase 1 habitat mapping is above 99%.

**Summary table of mapped UK BAP priority habitats (at end 2012)**

| Habitat | Oxon Coverage (% of likely total amount of habitat present) | Berks Coverage (% of likely total amount of habitat present) |
|---|---|---|
| Grasslands | 95% | 95% |
| Heathland | 95% | 95% |
| Floodplain grazing marsh | 95% | 95% |
| Lowland mixed deciduous woodland | 90% | 95% |
| Lowland beech and yew woodland | 50% | 95% |
| Wet woodland | 90% | 90% |
| Parklands and Wood Pasture | 90% | 90% |
| Ponds | Not mapped | 50% |
| Traditional orchards | 95% | Not mapped |
| Rivers | Not mapped | 99% |

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## Currency

In 2012, approximately 240,000 (20%) of the 1.3 million TVERC species records were historic records more than 30 years old (pre-1983), with the remaining 80% being recorded in the last 30 years and 10% being recorded in the last 5 years.

| Year Recorded | No of Records | % of data |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-1983 | 240,731 | 18.6 |
| 1983 | 15,836 | 1.2 |
| 1984 | 39,244 | 3.0 |
| 1985 | 28,093 | 2.2 |
| 1986 | 36,062 | 2.8 |
| 1987 | 32,261 | 2.5 |
| 1988 | 29,023 | 2.2 |
| 1989 | 26,082 | 2.0 |
| 1990 | 37,487 | 2.9 |
| 1991 | 45,531 | 3.5 |
| 1992 | 39,511 | 3.0 |
| 1993 | 29,490 | 2.3 |
| 1994 | 32,774 | 2.5 |
| 1995 | 34,583 | 2.7 |
| 1996 | 37,151 | 2.9 |
| 1997 | 37,005 | 2.9 |
| 1998 | 47,147 | 3.6 |
| 1999 | 39,444 | 3.0 |
| 2000 | 35,892 | 2.8 |
| 2001 | 36,999 | 2.9 |
| 2002 | 56,663 | 4.4 |
| 2003 | 55,474 | 4.3 |
| 2004 | 62,859 | 4.8 |
| 2005 | 39,324 | 3.0 |
| 2006 | 27,741 | 2.1 |
| 2007 | 29,050 | 2.2 |
| 2008 | 36,733 | 2.8 |
| 2009 | 33,163 | 2.6 |
| 2010 | 23,728 | 1.8 |
| 2011 | 21,183 | 1.6 |
| 2012 | 11,180 | 0.9 |

| 5 Year Summary | No. of Records | % of data |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-1983 | 240,731 | 19 |
| 1983-1987 | 151,496 | 12 |
| 1988-1992 | 177,634 | 14 |
| 1993-1997 | 171,003 | 13 |
| 1998-2002 | 216,145 | 17 |
| 2003-2007 | 214,448 | 17 |
| 2008 -2012 | 125,987 | 10 |

| Currency of records | | No. of Records | % of data |
|---|---|---|---|
| Over 30 years old | Pre-1983 | 240,731 | 19 |
| Last 30 years | 1983-1987 | 1,056,713 | 81 |
| Last 25 years | 1988-1992 | 905,217 | 70 |
| Last 20 years | 1993-1997 | 727,583 | 56 |
| Last 15 years | 1998-2002 | 556,580 | 43 |
| Last 10 years | 2003-2007 | 340,435 | 26 |
| Last 5 years | 2008 -2012 | 125,987 | 10 |
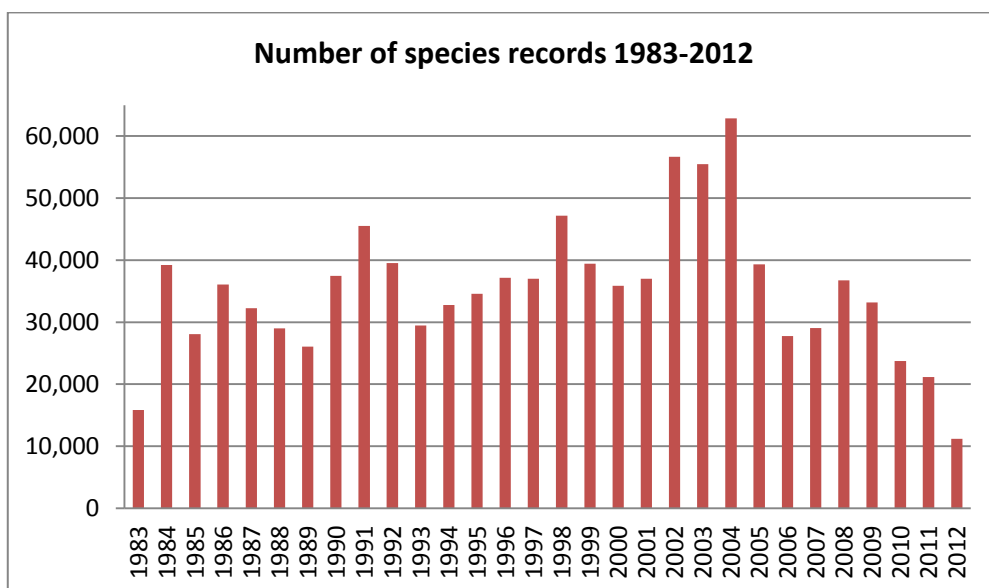


Number of species records 1983-2012

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76% of the data in Recorder was entered in the last 5 years (2008-2012). The table and graph illustrate the number of records in our database increasing since 2001, a reflection of the data collection and management work carried out by TVERC staff and volunteers.

| Year Entered | No of Records entered | % of data | Total number of records |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2001 | 4,007 | 0.3 | 4,007 |
| 2002 | 19,310 | 1.4 | 23,317 |
| 2003 | 11,319 | 0.8 | 34,636 |
| 2004 | 196,194 | 14.6 | 230,830 |
| 2005 | 24,949 | 1.9 | 255,779 |
| 2006 | 35,633 | 2.7 | 291,412 |
| 2007 | 38,497 | 2.9 | 329,909 |
| 2008 | 48,585 | 3.6 | 378,494 |
| 2009 | 36,652 | 2.7 | 415,146 |
| 2010 | 658,465 | 49.0 | 1,073,611 |
| 2011 | 174,389 | 13.0 | 1,248,000 |
| 2012 | 9,6174 | 7.2 | 1,344,174 |

**Total number of species records in TVERC database**
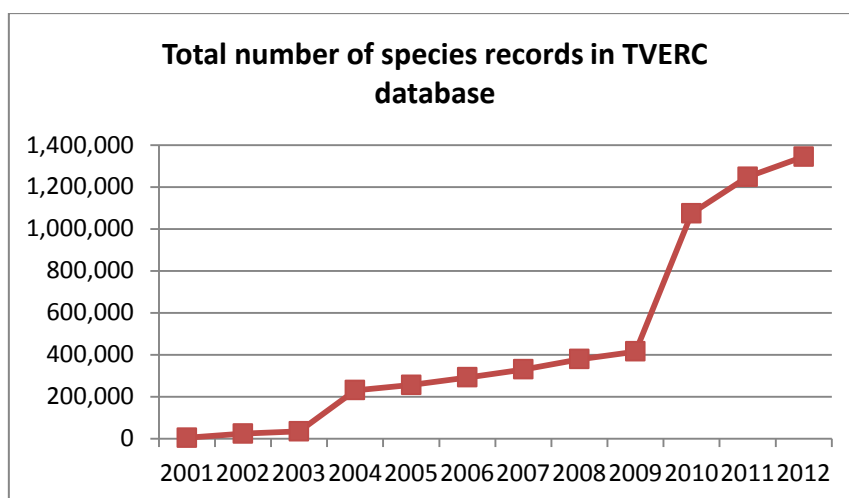


## Accuracy
All our data is carefully checked before integration into Recorder. See validation and verification section for more detail.

## Precision
All data is held at the highest precision possible, which is dependent on how the data owner collected and recorded the data. Where TVERC staff collect data, it is recorded at 6 figure grid reference.

## Data Sharing and Access

## Policy statement
TVERC will provide access to the information that it holds. Access will be controlled in accordance with policies on ownership, confidentiality, charging, data exchange agreements with suppliers, and priority levels imposed by management.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

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## Background

- Data managed by an LRC will have been gathered, and is owned, by a number of different organisations and individuals.
- An LRC needs a clear set of terms and conditions under which users can gain access to data.
- Making data available should reduce the risk of damage to the environment. If it is likely to have the opposite effect, availability may need to be controlled (NBN Data Exchange Principle 2). The LRC may restrict access to sensitive data.
- Data managers should make their terms and conditions publicly available, allowing data owners to have confidence in the management and use of their data (NBN Data Exchange Principle 5).
- Personal data must be managed in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and/or any subsequent legal provision (NBN Data Exchange Principle 6).
- Data managers should make some data freely available (except for handing charges if needed) for not-for-profit, education and research (NBN Data Exchange Principle 7a).
- Data users should expect to contribute to sustaining the provision of data through contributing, either in kind or financially, to the collection, collation and management of data, or at the point of use (NBN Data Exchange Principle 7c).

## Procedures

- TVERC will ask all enquirers to complete an "Information Request Form", and reserves the right to take up references where applicable, before the release of data to each enquirer;
- All data enquiries will be documented and logged;
- All data enquiries will be dealt with within 15 working days, although our usual turn-around time is 10 working days from the date of return of a signed quotation. We can provide a quick response for a data search, for which there is a surcharge. Searches required within 1-3 working days will receive a 100% surcharge. Searches within 4-6 days will receive a 50% surcharge.
- TVERC will release data at full geographical resolution unless specifically requested in the terms and conditions of data agreements.
- Where data is released under a licence this will be time limited but renewable.
- Data provided for education or research or to assist with conservation work by local groups will be provided free of charge (a donation will be suggested).
- The charging policy will be published on the TVERC website.
- Where restrictions have been imposed by data suppliers, these will be adhered to. Persons requesting such data may be referred to the data supplier.
- Requests for access to full data sets may be referred to the data supplier.

## Sensitive data

- Access to sensitive data will be controlled according to the type of data, the data user, and the purpose of the data request.
- Sensitive data could include information on protected or threatened species, or protected or threatened habitats, or information that could increase the risk of damage to the environment. This is in accordance with Environmental Information Regulations Section 12(5)(g).

# Funding partners

TVERC are funded by a partnership of all the local authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus Natural England and the Environment Agency. We provide our funding partners with the data shown on the following table.

| Funding partner | Dataset | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Local Wildlife Sites | Local Geological Sites | Protected & Notable Species | Buffered Protected species | Conservation Target Areas | Biodiversity Opportunity Areas | UK BAP priority habitat | SLA specific species data | Invasive species |
| Oxfordshire County Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| South Oxfordshire District Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| Vale of White Horse District Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| West Oxfordshire District Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| Cherwell District Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| Oxford City Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | | |
| West Berkshire District Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Slough Borough Council | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Reading Borough Council | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Bracknell Forest Borough Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Wokingham Borough Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | n/a | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Natural England | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Environment Agency | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

## Recording groups

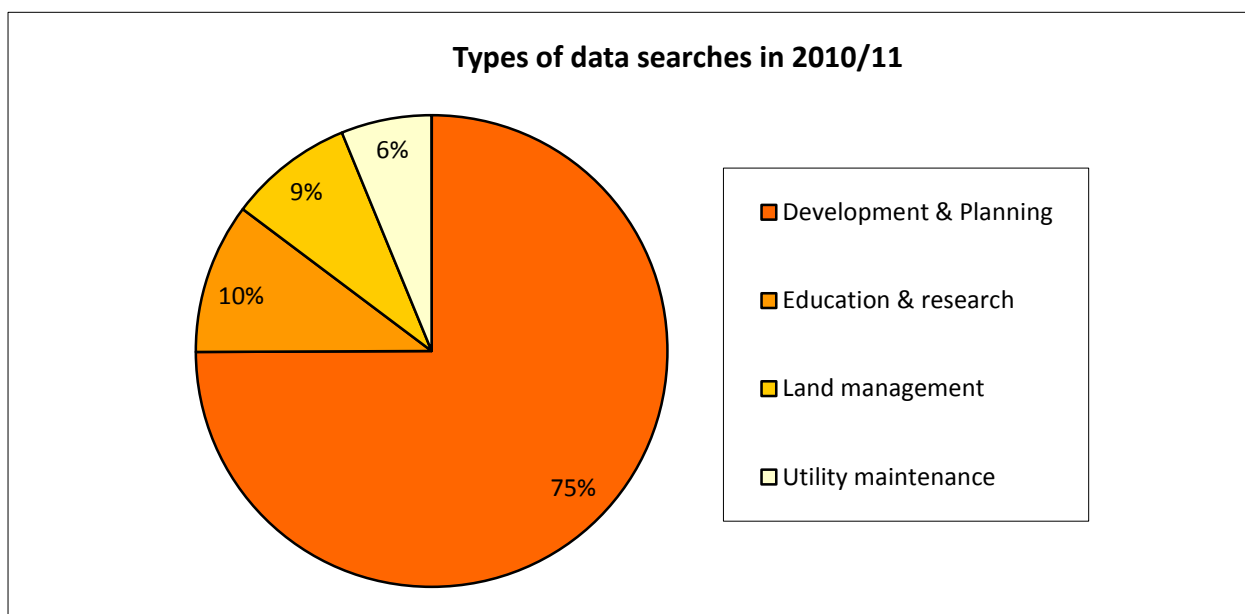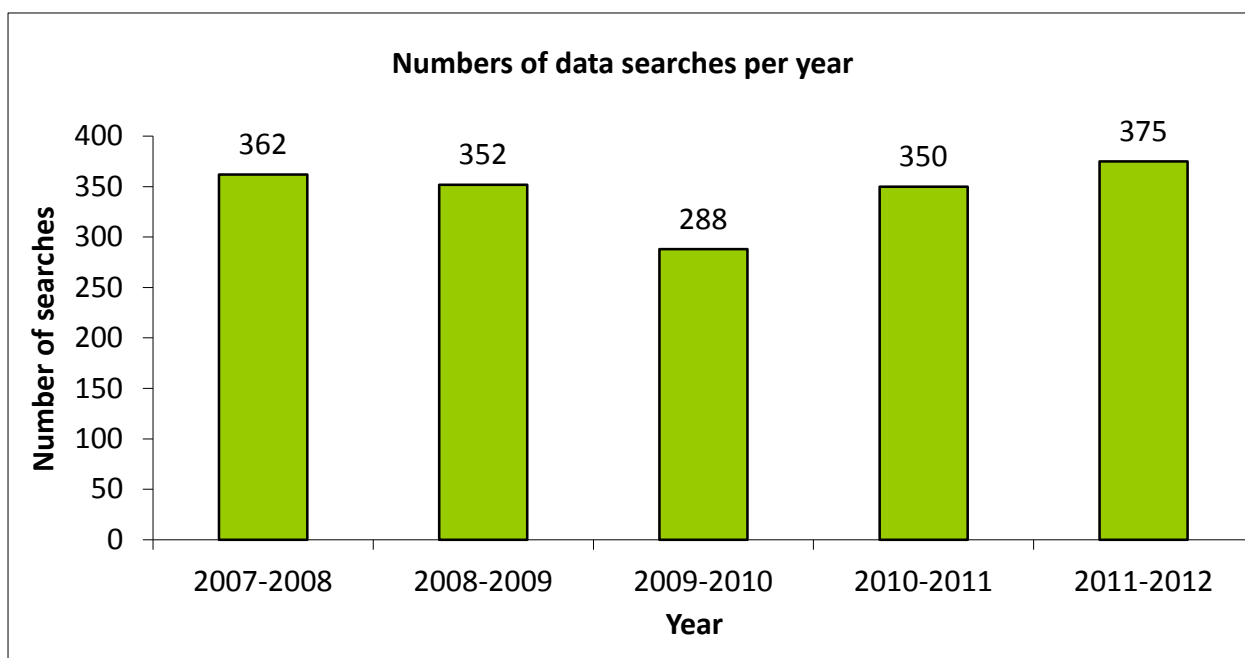See section 'Data Quality'
  'Geographic & Taxonomic Coverage'
    'Recording Groups'

## Commercial customers

TVERC provide data to commercial customers through data searches and data licences. We encourage these customers to share their data with us. Recent analysis has shown that only 24 of the 200 (12.5%) consultancies who contacted us for data searches in the last year also sent us data directly. We have 58 consultancies in our Recorder database associated with species data, which implies that we are getting some data from consultancies indirectly (e.g. from local authority contacts sending us ecological survey reports). The overall percentage of consultancies who share data with us either directly or indirectly is 30%.

### Data searches

TVERC carry out an average of 350 data searches per year; the majority of which (75%) are for development and planning purposes.

**Numbers of data searches per year**



**Types of data searches in 2010/11**



- Development & Planning
- Education & research
- Land management
- Utility maintenance

### Data licences

TVERC currently have annual data licence agreements with the following organisations:

- Thames Water
- Canal and Rivers Trust
- Jacobs (for carrying out work on behalf of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)
- HS2 Limited

## Data flow to NBN

TVERC regularly upload datasets onto the NBN Gateway as a result of our Memorandum of Agreement with Natural England. These datasets are restricted to Natural England access to prevent the misuse of data by ecological consultants.

We will continue to increase the data available through the NBN but most data will only be available to selected organisations who have contributed to the cost of managing the data or at 10km resolution for public access.

This will discourage inappropriate use of data. For instance Ecological Consultants have used data from the NBN gateway without permission of the data owner.

## Charging Policy

TVERC charges for carrying out data searches, habitat surveys, digital mapping of sites and habitats, species surveys and data analysis projects. For data searches TVERC charges for the time involved in extracting the data and producing presentable results and not for the data itself.

TVERC may also make a charge for time taken to provide information and advice, though this can be waived in some cases, for local groups or students for instance. In these cases we invite a donation to cover the time taken to collate the data (from £30 for a simple data search). This is not compulsory but will help TVERC to continue to provide our services.

| | Standard charge (per hour) | Charge for each additional half hour | Daily rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Commercial rate** (see note 1) | £100 | £45 | £400 |
| **Partners rate** (see note 2) | £50 | £22.50 | £260 |
| **Landowners rate** (see note 3) | £50 | £22.50 | £260 |
| **Private individual** (see note 4), **Local group or parish, Student/researcher** | Fees are waived for data searches; a donation of £30 - £100 is invited, depending on the complexity of the request. | | |

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1. Commercial rate is applied to data searches, work for private companies, and organisations with which TVERC does not have a service level agreement or other data exchange agreement. For NGOs and other not-for-profit organisations the fees may be waived if a data exchange agreement is in place.

2. Partners rate is applied to organisations with a service level agreement with TVERC for work that is not covered under the terms of the agreement. It may also be applied to companies working directly for one of our SLA partners.

3. Landowners rate – where this is just in relation to a single defined site, such as a Local Wildlife Site, the fee would normally be waived. Commercial rates are applied where development is involved.

4. Private individual – this does not include private individuals making requests related to proposed development on their own land.

**Commercial data searches**
The standard charge covers 30 minutes data search or other work time plus the administration time which includes the time to quote for a search and the time involved in invoicing (just over an hour in total). We will give you a written quotation before we proceed with any work. The majority of commercial data searches are charged at £190 or below.  Including habitat data in your search request will add at least £90 to the cost. Our turn-around time for data searches is usually within 10 working days from the date of return of a signed quotation. We can provide a quick response for a data search, for which there is a surcharge. Searches required within 1-3 working days will receive a 100% surcharge. Searches within 4-6 days will receive a 50% surcharge.

*Single species & bat searches*
We provide a free service for such requests where we will respond by email with a brief summary of the information available. This will provide an idea of how many records there are, how close they are to the centre of the search and how old the records are. This will give consultants an idea on whether they need to proceed with a paid survey. If only small amounts of data are involved in search requests the charge is reduced to £72.50 plus VAT.

If this free search comes up with only low quality data, (i.e. very old records, or those with non-specific location information or species information), we will make that available to the requestor at no charge. If that data is from the Natural England dataset (which is available on the NBN and which we administer) we will ask the requestor to use the NBN Gateway as then we don't have to spend time extracting the data.

We use the following wording in our response to data search requestors, for single species and bat searches:

The search came up with the following results: xxxx. Due to the small amount of data within your search parameters, we will waive the charge for this data search.

As the Data Provider for this dataset, we give you permission to use these data provided that you comply with the NBN Gateway Terms and Conditions (see http://data.nbn.org.uk/help/popups/generalTerms.jsp). When you present the data, please ensure that you acknowledge TVERC as the Data Provider and the Original Recorder (if available) (2.4) and include the statement that the "the Data Provider, Original Recorder [where identified], and the NBN Trust bear no responsibility for any further analysis or interpretation of that material, data and/or information" (2.8).

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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## Data Security

This sets out the policy of Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre concerning digital and paper data. Personal data is covered under the section on 'Data Protection Act'.

TVERC will ensure that the data it holds is safeguarded from physical loss or damage or loss through unauthorised use or amendments.

### Digital data
Data consists of information in a variety of formats:
- MapInfo Geographical Information System layers
- Microsoft Excel spreadsheets
- Microsoft Access databases
- Microsoft Word documents
- Adobe pdf documents
- Recorder 6 database.

### Security
This data is stored on the servers of Oxfordshire County Council. Data is backed up every night following Oxfordshire County Council's standard backup procedures.

### Accessibility
Recorder 6: data is only accessible to TVERC staff who must use a login in to access the data. Data which is considered as confidential is tagged as such in the database. Tools that perform more complex operations such as "delete survey" are only accessible to System mangers. Access to the database using other programs is only available to TVERC data managers. Volunteers are other short term contractors are only allowed to add data to Recorder using Recorder access controls.

Other data: the TVERC drives are only accessible to TVERC staff once logged into the County Council network. Computers that are left unattended are automatically locked after a short period without use.

### Paper data
TVERC holds a variety of paper data. These are:
- Original survey data
- Copies of survey data
- Survey reports
- Paper records collected by the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre

### Security
TVERC works to the principle that copies of data files will be kept in separate locations wherever possible and for the most important datasets.

The paper files can be grouped as follows:
- Local Wildlife Sites. A copy is held by BBOWT.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other Natural England Surveys. Originals held by Natural England.
- Non-critical files. Many records will be copies sent by the recorder. A copy of the BBOWT habitat survey 1985-1988 is held offsite. For other records there is no other copy.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

Data is kept in an office with restricted access. The outer doors to the building also have restricted access. The office has security alarms which are set whenever the office is unoccupied.

Paper data, for which there are no copies, will be kept in a fire resistant room. The office has fire alarms which are tested on a regular basis.

**Accessibility**

Data is only accessible to Oxfordshire County Council staff with access provided to the archive room.

## Environmental Information Regulations

On 1 January 2005 Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) came into force, giving members of the public the right to access environmental information held by public authorities. EIR apply essentially to the same public authorities that are covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI):

• Central government and government departments
• Local authorities
• Health and education establishments
• Police forces and prison services
• Advisory groups, commissions and agencies

However, unlike FOI EIR also include:
• Any body or person carrying out a function of public administration
• Any body or person under the control of a public authority who has responsibility in relation to the environment. This includes some private companies and public private partnerships and includes the Environmental Records Centre operations.

### What information is covered by EIR?

Environmental information covers a range of information on the state of the environment. Those areas most pertinent to Environmental Records Centres include:
• air, water, soil, land, flora and fauna diversity, genetically modified organisms,
• measures and activities such as policies, plans and agreements,
• reports, cost benefit and economic analyses,
• cultural sites and built structures (as they may be affected by environmental factors)

### Principles of EIR policy

This policy supports the principle of the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre as an open and accountable body and it will use all appropriate and necessary means to ensure that it complies with the EIR.

In complying with these regulations TVERC will apply the 'public interest tests' to determine if the any of the potential exceptions may apply, for example, to avoid harm to the environment, intellectual property rights or avoid harm to the interests of the person who supplied the information.

### Data delivery

Under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 a request for data must be responded to within 20 working days of the request being made. An extension can be sought for more complex requests.

If TVERC holds data belonging to a third party, organisation or individual who has not consented to its disclosure then that data cannot be released and the person requesting the data will be transferred to the original Data Custodian with their consent.

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

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**Charges for supply of data**

If the data can be made available then the person requesting the data will be told, in writing, the nature of the data and what charge will be made in respect of costs reasonably incurred for the supply of that data (see TVERC's Charging policy for details of standard charges be supplied). The schedule of charges follows the guidance laid down in the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

A request for data, the disclosure of which would make it more likely that the site, habitat or species to which such data related would be adversely affected, may be refused. An example of this could be the location of a rare or threatened species. In such cases the enquirer may be referred back to the original Data Custodian.

**Reasons to refuse disclosure**

In accordance with Regulation 12(5)(g) which states:

(5) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(a), a public body may refuse to disclose information to the extent that its disclosure would adversely affect -

(g) the protection of the environment to which the information relates

A request for data, the disclosure of which would make it more likely that the site, habitat or species to which such data related would be adversely affected, may be refused. An example of this could be the location of a rare or sensitive / threatened species, or, any data release that may harm an active partnership with volunteer recorders and/or landowners.

When a request for data is refused the reasons for refusal will be specified in writing in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations.

**Re-use of EIR data**

The supply of information under the Environmental Information Regulations does not automatically give the requester of the information the right to re-use that information. Separate permission needs to be obtained from the copyright owner, as set out in the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005.

**Information Request declaration**

When submitting a data request the enquirer has to agree to the conditions of the Information Request Declaration (in writing) which states that they are aware of restrictions on copyright & use of the data, and limitations on data quality.

# Freedom of Information Act

The FOI Act came into force on 1 January 2005. The Act applies to any request for recorded information made to a public authority and is retrospective. Therefore, it applies to any information whenever created. The FOIA applies to all public authorities listed in Schedule 1 of the Act e.g. local authorities, central government departments, NHS bodies, police, fire service and maintained schools. This includes TVERC as we are hosted by Oxfordshire County Council.

The 'right to know' is set out in Section 1 of the Act. A requester has two related rights. These are:

- the right to be informed whether or not the information requested is held by the authority (known as the duty to confirm or deny), and, if so,
- the right to have that information communicated to him/ her.

## S39 – Environmental information

The Act goes on to make clear that these rights are subject to exemptions. Section 39 exempts environmental information whose disclosure must be considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. See section on Environmental Information Regulations.

# Data Protection Act

TVERC follows the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Oxfordshire County Council Data Protection Policy, which is outlined below.

## Aims

This policy sets out the Council's commitment to the lawful and fair handling of personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. For detailed guidance on Data Protection and procedures, please refer to the Data Protection Manual available on the OCC intranet.

## Background

The Data Protection Act 1998 ("the Act") regulates the holding and processing of personal data - that is information relating to living individuals, which is held either on the computer or in some cases in manual form. The Act also gives rights to individuals whose personal information is held by organisations.
The Council needs to collect and use personal information in order to carry out its functions effectively. Information can be held concerning its current, past and prospective employees, suppliers, service users, residents and others with whom the Council communicates.

The Council and in some circumstances its individual employees could face prosecution for failure to handle personal data in accordance with the Act.

## Policy statement

Any personal data which the Council collects, records or uses in any way whether it is held on paper, computer or other media will be subject to appropriate safeguards to ensure that the Council complies with the Act.

The Council fully endorses and adheres to the eight Data Protection Principles which are set out in the Act and summarised below:

Personal data shall be:
1. Fairly and lawfully processed
2. Processed for specified and lawful purposes and not in any other way which would be incompatible with those purposes
3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Accurate and kept up to date
5. Not kept for longer than is necessary
6. Processed in line with the data subject's rights
7. Kept secure
8. Not transferred to a country which does not have adequate data protection laws.

**Action**

In order to meet the requirements of the data protection principles and its obligations under the Act, the Council will ensure the following:
1. Renew its entry of the Register of Notifications held by the Information Commissioner's Office;
2. Maintain a register of particulars about the types of personal data the Council holds, purposes for which it is held and used and types of organisations to which personal data may be disclosed;
3. Appoint officers with specific responsibility for data protection in the Council;
4. Any forms used to collect data will contain a 'fair processing notice' to inform the data subject of the reasons for collecting the personal information and the intended uses;
5. Any personal information that has been collected will be used only for the purposes for which it was collected;
6. Data subjects (individuals to whom the personal information relates) are able to exercise their rights under the Act, including the right:
   - to be informed that their personal information is being processed
   - of access to their personal information
   - to correct, rectify, block or erase information that is regarded as wrong
7. Personal data will only be disclosed to third parties when it is fair and lawful to do so in accordance with the Act and with any Information Sharing Protocols;
8. Sensitive personal data will only be processed with the explicit consent of the data subject or if an exemption applies under the Act. Sensitive data is personal data about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, physical or mental health, sex life, details of the commission or alleged commission of any offence and any court proceedings relating to the commission of an offence;
9. Procedures are in place to check the accuracy of personal data collected, retained and disclosed;
10. Review the time that personal information is retained or stored to ensure that it is erased at the appropriate time;
11. Compliance with the Code of Good Practice set out in ISO 17799 which sets out the requirements for an Information Security Management System;
12. All officers who hold or process personal information will receive appropriate training in order to comply with the Act; and
13. Audit compliance with this policy and the Act and any incidents involving breaches of this policy or the Act are recorded, analysed and disciplinary action taken as appropriate.
14. This policy is reviewed regularly and updated when necessary

Camilla Burrow, TVERC Director

January 2013

**Thames Valley**
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**Further Information**

Detailed guidance on complying with the Data Protection Act and procedures to be followed can be found in the Data Protection Manual, which can be found on the Council's intranet pages.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the independent authority set up to monitor compliance with the Act. It also issues guidance and good practice notes. The ICO's website address is www.ico.gov.uk The ICO can consider complaints about an organisation's failure to comply with the Act following the initial reply from that organisation. Where appropriate, Oxfordshire County Council will consider complaints using the Corporate Complaints Procedure, however it may refer the complainant directly to the ICO. If you have any queries relating to this policy please contact Angela Mills in Legal Services on 01865 323913 or angela.mills@oxfordshire.gov.uk

**Policy review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer at least every three years or sooner to ensure that it continues to remain legally compliant and meet the responsibilities of the Council.
Responsible Officers: Monitoring Officer, Council's Data Controller
Date: May 2011
Review Date: May 2013

# Inspire Regulations

The INSPIRE Directive aims to make available consistent spatial data sets about the environment and create services for accessing these datasets so that they can be more easily shared or combined to benefit the development and monitoring of environmental policy and practice in all Member States and across the European Community. The INSPIRE Regulations 2009 No 3157 came into force on 31 December 2009 and turn this Directive into law that applies in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Public authorities and third parties must not take any action in connection with these Regulations in connection with a spatial data set without the consent of the owner of the intellectual property rights to that spatial data set. They should not for instance, copy or publish such data or make them available to the public on-line, unless they are required to do so by statute or have the rights owner's permission.

**Metadata**

Separate Metadata Regulations under INSPIRE came into force on 24 December 2008. Public authorities must create full metadata: for themes in Annexes I and II by 24 December 2010; and for themes in Annex III by 24 December 2013; and must keep it up to date.

The detailed specification for what data owners need to produce is set out in the Metadata Regulations. In summary, metadata for spatial data sets and data services must include the following information:
-   quality and validity [e.g. where the data comes from and its scale]
-   who is responsible for creating, managing, maintaining and distributing the data or service
-   any restrictions on public access and reasons for such restrictions
-   conditions on access or use
-   any charges for access or use.

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*Data themes relevant to TVERC*

<u>Annex I</u> - Protected sites
<u>Annex II</u> - Geology
<u>Annex III</u> - Habitats and biotopes
Species distribution

As a public body, TVERC has a legal requirement to comply with the Inspire Regulations. TVERC meets this requirement by having metadata for the following datasets available for public view on our website. This is an interim solution until such time as a MapInfo application is available which allows the metadata to be electronically associated with the relevant GIS files and be viewed in MapInfo.

The following datasets will have metadata which is compliant with INSPIRE Regs by end January 2013.

- Conservation Target Areas (Oxon only)
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (Berks only)
- Road verge nature reserves (Oxon only)
- Local Wildlife Sites (Berks and Oxon)
- Local Geological Sites (Berks and Oxon)
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and other land use data
- Protected and notable species
- Buffered protected species

The metadata will include the following information:
- Date metadata updated
- Title
- Keywords
- Abstract
- Purpose
- Supplemental information
- Access constraints
- Use constraints
- Lineage
- Data update frequency
- Data time period
- Coordinate systems
- Dataset environment and format
- Data attributes
- Contact details for further information

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January 2013

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