

**Sixth meeting of the TMP Volunteer and Data Group  
English Nature Offices Queen Anne's Gate, London  
13 September 2005**

***Those present:***

Jessa Battersby (JNCC, Chair)  
Phoebe Carter (The Mammal Society)  
Esther Collis (BCT)  
Andy Cottam (JNCC)  
Peter Davey (GCT)  
Laura Hurt (PTES)  
Mike Raven (BTO)  
Georgette Shearer (The Mammal Society)  
David Wembridge (PTES)

***1. Apologies for absence***

Elizabeth Barratt (Wildlife Trusts), Dave Cowan (CSL), Tony Dalby-Welsh (BDS), Trevor James (NBN), Robbie McDonald (Quercus), Chris Newman (WildCRU).

***2. Terms of Reference for the group (VDM 6.2 and VDM 6.3)***

The draft ToR were agreed with a few amendments to the scope of the group. The composition of the group was felt to be right in terms of numbers and organisations involved, representing the majority of organisations that actually manage volunteer networks and large datasets. The Group agreed to meet twice yearly, in February and September and to rotate the Chair in alphabetical order of organisation. It was also agreed that the two meetings should concentrate on different aspects, one on volunteer issues and the other on data management issues. The meeting in February 2006 will mainly be devoted to data issues, given that this meeting was concentrating on volunteer issues.

**Action 1: JB re-draft TOR and circulate to the group for approval.**

**Action 2: JB to draw up a work programme for the group using the future directions document as a basis.**

***3 Online data entry and reporting - progress made. Feedback to volunteers - overall TMP feedback as well as individual surveys.***

Andy Cottam from JNCC gave a brief demonstration of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme website, showing the sort of facilities available for online reporting of surveillance data. He noted that there were three ways of delivering data via the web.

One was the high level summary of surveillance trends as shown in the TMP report or on the JNCC Wildlife Statistics website. The second was displaying distribution data and this was achieved mainly via the NBN Gateway. The third was the reporting of individual surveillance schemes and this had been addressed through online reporting on individual organisations websites, e.g. the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. BCT and JNCC will be developing the NBMP online reporting features over the next 12 months. GCT is doing some work on NGC online reporting and The Mammal Society and PTES expressed an interest in looking into online reporting for their surveys in the future.

The main costs were time involvement from JNCC, which would probably not be passed on to the NGOs because online reporting of surveillance data was a corporate target for JNCC to achieve.

**Action 3: JB and AC to meet with Steve Wilkinson to discuss a timetable for online reporting of mammal surveys.**

#### ***4. TMP website update- contents and links – volunteer page – how should this be constructed and what should it contain (VDM 6.4).***

JB noted that the TMP website needed updating with the inclusion of a results page, displaying the overview of results from the surveys and a volunteer page with information for volunteers. The volunteer page should have a introductory paragraph, a recruitment section, a training section, information on health and safety and some case studies of volunteer participation. It was felt that the volunteer management manual should be placed on a separate page providing best practice guidelines for carrying out surveys, because it was aimed more at survey organisers than volunteers and that Health and Safety information should be available on both pages. PC advised that there was also a need for a ‘code of conduct’ when carrying out surveys, listing other things to think about when sending people out into the countryside.

**Action 4: JB to draft volunteer web page and circulate for comments.**

**Action 5: All to send JB information on links to volunteer pages on their websites and examples of information to put in a code of conduct leaflet.**

**Action 6: All to send JB examples of case studies.**

#### ***5. Data access to the NBN - making data available to enhance information on species distribution.***

JB noted that although the TMP surveys were collecting population trend information, the data could also provide additional information on species distribution and should be made available, where possible, to the NBN Gateway. There were some issues around validation of records, but this was only felt to be a problem with rare species or those with restricted distributions. The errors associated with records of common and widespread species were unlikely to be a problem. It was also noted that the time it would take to verify all the surveillance records would be prohibitive.

BCT has already provided the Daubenton’s survey dataset and BTO has agreed to provide all the BBS mammal data at 1km square resolution. There was some

discussion about sensitive data and the use of passwords or even restricting the whole dataset for the use of a few people.

**Action 7: JB to put BBS organiser and BCT in contact with Andy Brewer at JNCC to agree a timetable for provision of BBS and NBMP data to NBN.**

**6. *Volunteer Management Manual (VDM 6.6 draft provided) - next steps including health and safety advice to volunteers. Does this manual represent best practice guidelines? Consideration of BTO H&S document (VDM 6.5).***

It was agreed that the manual should be web-based and should be placed on a new page on the TMP website entitled 'Volunteer and Survey Organisation'. The NBN Trust was also interested in publishing the manual on their website and might put some funds into designing the document to make it more user friendly. Hard copies could be provided for all the partner organisations.

It was also agreed that the range of H&S documents being produced by the TMP organisations should be displayed on the TMP website as examples of what should be provided to volunteers, with links to other relevant pages on partner organisation websites.

**Action 8: All to send JB information on links to relevant pages on their websites and examples of H&S leaflets.**

**7. *Survey issues - spatial and temporal coverage, reporting standardisation, combining datasets etc.***

To be covered at the next meeting in February.

**8. *Databases issues***

To be covered at the next meeting in February.

**9. *Any other business***

An issue for the TMP Steering Group to consider – a high level approach regarding access to land, particularly in relation to the forestry Commission and National Trust land. It was felt that the representatives of land owning organisations on the Steering Group could facilitate access to their land for survey work. There appeared to be legal and H&S issues preventing access to volunteer surveyors at present.

**Action 9: JB to find out as much as possible about this issue and revisit the subject at the next meeting of the VDM.**

**10. *Date of Next Meeting***

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006 at English Nature offices, London. BCT to Chair.**