

SOLENT FORUM NATURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION AND DATA DRAFT PROJECT PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

The project stems from the results of the facilitated session at the first meeting of the Nature Conservation Subgroup, which steers the Nature Conservation Initiative. The outcomes of this session have led to project ideas under three themes, communication, information and data and plans policies and guidance.

The theme of information and data included a number of ideas for action including: Data management; Development of an information system, which would identify needs, establish what data exists, identify gaps and outline a programme of action to fill these gaps; Collating existing habitat data; Maintain a definitive and up to date database of nature conservation projects; Quantify threats and levels of activities; Develop a strategic understanding of the habitat and species resource.

Some of these actions are linked and could therefore be joined together into one project looking at data management. Others may form discrete projects. Survey, research and information was also one of the themes covered in the coastal BAP workshop in April 2003. One of the ideas for action to come from this workshop was the development of an information and reporting system for biodiversity information.

Although there is a lot of information collected on coastal habitats and species in the Solent, it seems that people are unclear on what data is held, where it is held and how it can be obtained.

There are currently a number of ongoing projects and initiatives, at the local, regional and national level, which look at biodiversity information and monitoring. For example the National Biodiversity Network, Biodiversity Record Centres (Hampshire and Sussex), DISC the Solent Forum's Meta Database and the Channel Coast Observatory (CCO). The CCO has also carried out a scoping study on including coastal-ecological monitoring within the South-east Strategic Regional Monitoring Programme.

The South East Strategic Regional Coastal-Ecology Monitoring Programme project is being carried out by the Channel Coast Observatory (CCO) for English Nature (EN) and the Environment Agency (EA) and is looking at incorporating BAP and SSSI/cSAC monitoring into the South-east Strategic Coastal Monitoring Programme (SSRCMP). So far a scoping study has been carried out. The study included visiting local authorities, their corresponding Biodiversity Record Centres and regional EN offices in the south-east to:

- a. Tell them about the initiative;
- b. Try to decipher how monitoring of BAPs/SSSI's/cSACs was undertaken;
- c. Identify what data management and analytical tools were used;
- d. Identify what information existed that was relevant to the scoping study.

With regards to existing data and gaps, data was collated that was useful and relevant for the scoping study but it did not collect or note all existing ecological data. It was assumed that the biodiversity record centres hold most local ecological data. Therefore, if ecological monitoring was incorporated into the existing SSRCMP then the CCO propose to provide links to this data via a meta-database and web. This would also link with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

With so many projects and initiatives already in place it seems unlikely that another information or data management system is needed for the Solent. However, as the issue of data continues to be raised it seems that there is a need for a guide to information looking at what data is available, where and how the data is held and collected, how people can access the data and also if you collect data where you should send it.

AIM

To provide an understanding of the current biodiversity data recording system and provide data users and organisations in the Solent with a simple system for obtaining and depositing biodiversity information.

OBJECTIVES

- Investigate who holds what habitat and species information in the Solent and how it is held.
- To clarify the roles of the different organisations responsible for holding biodiversity information.
- Develop a web based resource to point people in the right direction for obtaining and depositing biodiversity information.
- Determine the best format for guidance material on biodiversity information.

SCOPE

The project will cover coastal habitats within the Solent Forum study area. Key habitats will be defined according to the coastal BAP. The project will be carried out in partnership with those organisation which are currently collecting and managing data to ensure completeness.

APPROACH

A preliminary list of identified project activities is shown below. The project can be carried out in two phases.

Information Audit

1. Building on the work of the scoping study for the South-east Strategic Regional Coastal-Ecology Monitoring Programme, carry out an audit of who holds what general habitat and species information in the Solent and how it is held and collected.
2. Note any gaps in the information held and log any relevant projects to DISC.
3. Depending on the results from the audit it may be necessary to develop a programme of actions to ensure a baseline level of data is available.

Development of a guide to information

1. Development of a webpage which will act as a signpost to sources of biodiversity information.
2. Development of DISC to provide information on nature conservation projects which have been done and also information on those projects which need to be carried out.
3. Production of guidance material and / or an event.
4. Displays at Solent Forum meeting by those who hold most of the information.

DELIVERABLES

- A webpage acting as a signpost for biodiversity information.
- DISC developed to include all nature conservation projects and also those projects which organisations would like to see carried out.
- Guidance document detailing the information which is available and who collects it.
- Presentation of the project findings at a Solent Forum meeting to update Solent Forum members.

RESOURCES

The project can be coordinated by the Solent Forum but additional information may be needed from a number of other organisations.

- Hampshire Biodiversity Information centre (HBIC), the ecology team on the Isle of Wight, Sussex Biodiversity Information centre (SBIC) and the Channel Coast Observatory.
- English Nature, Environment Agency, the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, HOS, BTO etc will also be important as they have a large resource of biodiversity information.

TIMESCALE

3 months, with the work starting in October to be finished by Christmas.