

English Nature Research Report 617

### **The National Biodiversity Network Southwest Pilot Project**

Report Authors: Burke, M.J.w. & Totterdell, B.      Date: May 2005

Keywords: Biodiversity, Network, NBN, Data, Information, Recording, Habitat, Inventory

#### ***Introduction***

The Southwest Pilot project ran from April 2001-March 2004. It aimed to test whether the National Biodiversity Network partnership and its tools (including the NBN Gateway) were capable of delivering valuable products and services that could result in wildlife benefit.

#### ***What was done***

A partnership was established in the Southwest Government region with other government agencies, Local Record centres and voluntary recording groups. This partnership worked over three years to:

- Identify common information and data needs
- Share data focussed around these needs using the NBN as the mechanism
- LRCs were commissioned to develop BAP priority habitat inventories
- All partners were encouraged to use the data and documents their findings

We used this experience to:

- Evaluate the costs and benefits of the NBN tools, including the internet Gateway
- Evaluate the costs of collation of existing data from volunteers and other groups and develop recommended ways of working for the future
- Evaluate the benefits of investing in information to target and monitor outcomes associated with nature conservation activities

#### ***Results and conclusions***

We developed a methodology and set of habitat and species inventories for the Southwest region. These inventories have proven to be very important for targeting and monitoring

*continued >>>*

outcomes associated with Agri-environment schemes and other nature conservation activity. Providing a robust and viable service to support Agri-environment targeting should be given the highest priority by the NBN national partnership.

Lack of co-ordination and poor communication still hold back the NBN initiative. These problems can be addressed through a more focussed approach which is centred on the needs of a more limited number of users and contributors. Once NBN services have been secured to meet these key applications, the range of users and contributors should be expanded in a phased manner.

Many of the NBN tools (including the Gateway) can deliver real benefits to data users and contributors. They can be time-consuming to implement, so a targeted approach is required - identifying applications where the benefits of adoption are greatest.

Under-resourcing of data custodianship limits what can be achieved by NBN partners. We propose a regional approach to filling gaps in this capacity, and that voluntary recording groups and LRCs work closely together to maximise the contributions that each can make to the other. National users of this information must work together to support this vital custodianship activity in order to secure a regular supply of data that meets their needs.

### ***English Nature's viewpoint***

This report should mark a turning point in the NBN initiative. It makes 17 recommendations about how the NBN partnership needs to change, and in particular, focus its efforts based on experience of concerted 'on-the-ground' working with key data contributors and users. The NBN is still not a viable working tool for many who would like it to be so and the recommendations in this report must be acted upon if the NBN is to realise its undoubted potential to help target and inform nature conservation activity in the future.

#### ***Further information***

For the full report or other publications on this subject, please contact the Enquiry Service on 01733 455100/101/102 or email [enquiries@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@english-nature.org.uk)

The full report, including technical annexes is available online at: [www.nbn.org.uk/swpilot](http://www.nbn.org.uk/swpilot)

The NBN Gateway can be used to search for biodiversity data online: [www.searchnbn.net](http://www.searchnbn.net)

For further information about the work of English Nature, please visit our website at: [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)