

Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre

Quarterly Report

Area	Three Rivers	Quarter from	Oct 2008	to	Dec 2008
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Planning advice

Development control: We continued with our core role in giving advice to DC colleagues on planning applications, mostly in connection with protected species and wildlife sites. A good balance of work was achieved across sponsors.

We worked with Natural England and the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust on a joint agreement and position statement to clarify between us the scope and limits of the advice we give. This should help ensure that anyone reviewing advice from us is aware of other ecological concerns that may need to be taken into account. It should also address some problems we have experienced where developers have considered that our advice was conflicting with that of other bodies.

For fuller details of work in Three Rivers please refer to the appended printouts.

Time recorded as spent (Three Rivers)	73.5
Number of Planning Applications dealt with in Three Rivers	40
Number that threatened Wildlife Sites in Three Rivers	9

Strategic

Service Development: HBRC continued recruiting a Principal Ecological Officer (PEO) with the post being re-advertised in the Guardian online and through various free networks, achieving a better response.

We supported a significant new initiative, the development of an Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC), liaised with the Environment Agency at Hatfield and Reading over the potential for collaboration, and kept abreast of developments with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

Associated with the new Memorandum of Agreement that we have negotiated with Natural England (NE), we explored setting up a new data development group with the Hertfordshire Natural History Society (HNHS) and Hertfordshire County Council (as administrating sponsor).

Following recent developments in Bedfordshire, some of which have implications in Hertfordshire, we are collaborating with various Bedfordshire organisations.

Groups & Recorder Support: We supported the HNHS Recorder Committee meeting and networked with recorders, including presenting the draft Red Data Book.

...all of which are part of a programme of continuous service improvement.

Time recorded as spent (whole county)

128.75

Wildlife Sites Project (WSP)

WSP in general: We updated text, especially the grassland chapter, and revised all codes and appendices. Exploratory work with dragonfly data indicates scope to at least boost the justification for WS-identification, and potentially to identify new WS based on dragonfly criteria. Another major initiative was to continue working with partners on developing a realistic way of reporting on National Indicator 197, and co-ordinating with and influencing regional and national approaches.

WS Reports: A major activity this quarter was to prepare for the 2008 ratification meeting.

(As a whole Wildlife Sites figure substantially in our work, but inputs on project objectives were affected this quarter by the office moves.)

Time recorded as spent (whole county)

48.25

Data

Data flow: We agreed to share records with the Otter group.

Data "housekeeping": The most time-consuming activity was continuing the review of the site files (including Wildlife Site files) and their preparation for scanning. Numerically we are over halfway through this task although the remaining files are likely to be more complex.

We continued with a variety of other tasks including, updating Recorder with the latest information, updating metadata, processing miscellaneous records, and updating GIS layers.

Data networks (national): We have agreed to upload data on palmate newts, River Water Dropwort and our own farmland bird data to the NBN. This will take place in the next quarter. In the meantime we have provided significant information to NE on disc.

Time recorded as spent (whole county)

269.5

BAP work

Hertfordshire Orchards Initiative: We discussed and promoted various Apple Day events, the changes to TPOs and orchard trees and worked closely with volunteers on a programme of computerising survey data which will continue through the winter.

Stone curlew & farmland HAP: We briefed the Herts BAP officer on the Stone-curlew

SAP report.

Dormouse SAP: We investigated future information sharing opportunities with the Bedfordshire Dormouse Group (some of whose survey work is in Herts). [D/A/3.1; 3.3; 4.4].

Otter SAP: We supported the Otter SAP meeting [OT14].

River Water Dropwort SAP: The report from the 2008 re-survey is expected to be complete end-March.

Wet woodland: We contributed to and received the first draft final report on wet woodland. We also updated information on Recorder/GIS, including the creation of new sites to enable the data to become more readily available as required [WE/A/2.2].

Wetland: We supported the Wetland Inventory mapping project. Mapping should begin in January 2009.

Time recorded as spent (whole county)

182.75

Other

The HBRC made a second physical move as part of the County Council's office reorganisation. With the benefit of previous adjustments and continuing careful communications this was fairly stress-free, although it created significant misfiling which we are remedying.

As usual we prepared the chapter on Wildlife and Habitats for the 2008 Quality of Life Report - a major and important item of work on behalf of all sponsors.

We reviewed and assessed the revised ES-HLS scheme and publications from NE and what they will mean for Hertfordshire schemes.

Under SLAs we provided information to the Environment Agency, British Waterways and Natural England.

There was a lot of other work. For more details relevant to Three Rivers please refer to the appended printout.

Number of enquiries dealt with – specific to Three Rivers

7

Time recorded as spent (whole county)

397.75

Future Working

Planning Casework and responding to enquiries.

A second recruitment process for a Principal Ecology Officer role is underway with interviews planned mid-January. (For more information please contact Simon Odell).

New National Indicator 197 - Biodiversity