



NFBR

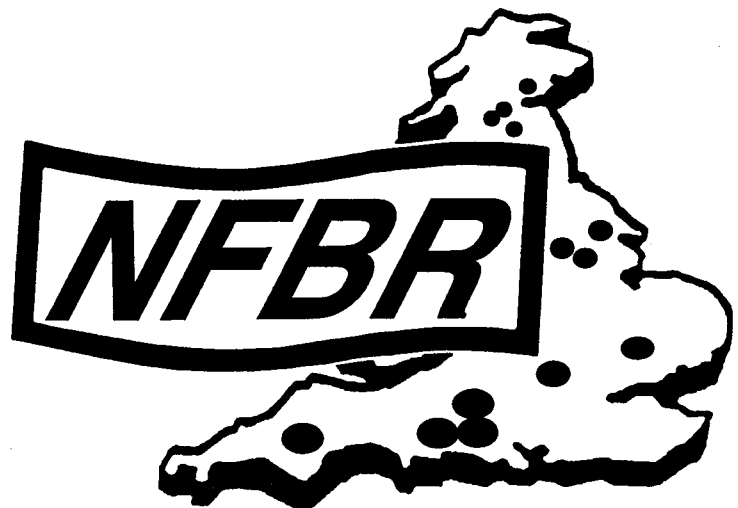
NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING

NEWSLETTER No. 24

March 1999

includes

**a selected number of papers presented at the
NFBR Annual Conference & AGM,
held at the National Museum for Wales, Cardiff,
November 1998**



**NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING
NEWSLETTER 24**

CONTENTS

Article	Page no.
Honorary Officers and Council Members	2
Minutes of the 1998 NFBR AGM	3
Chairman's Report for 1997/98	4
Treasurer's Report	5
Notes from the Chair *	5
Progress with <i>Recorder</i> 2000*	7
NBN news	10
All aboard!*	11
Advertising and finding biological records on the web – data catalogues and metadata *	12
Cornwall And The Isles Of Scilly Federation Of Biological Recorders	14
Biological recording in Shropshire, VC40	16
Using GIS for environmental and biological records: a brief tour *	17
Recorder 2000: have your say!	19
Appendix 1: Income and Expenditure for years ending 31 st December 1996 and 1997	20

* papers presented at the 1998 NFBR Annual Conference & AGM at Cardiff

NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING
Honorary Officers and Council Members 1999

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Minutes of the Twelfth Annual General Meeting held at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff on 17th November 1998 at 1:30pm.

Fifty-eight NFBR members were present.

1. Apologies for absence

Marie Moreau and Damian McFerran

2. Minutes of the 11th Annual General Meeting of 15th November 1997

Accepted without alteration as a true and accurate record, except for an amendment to Item 9(a) para 3, first sentence, which should read: 'James Williams indicated that he was the only BRISC committee member present and had been co-opted by BRISC to represent them at the AGM. The ALRC proposal had been discussed by BRISC and there were a variety of views.'

3. Matters arising from those minutes

None

4. Chairman's Report for 1997 - 1998

Attached

Proposed: Bill Ely **Seconded:** Bill Butcher

5. Treasurer's Report for 1998

Attached

Trevor James formally thanked Marie Moreau for all her hard work and dedication as NFBR Treasurer.

6. Membership Report for 1998

Membership currently stands at around 170, with another 20 renewals for 1998 still hoped for - a reminder sent out in the September newsletter is flushing out a few late payers. Members of NFBR now include most LRCs, many Wildlife Trusts and some National Schemes & Societies. There is still the need for a personalised, targeted membership drive, but this is likely to be time consuming. The subscription rate will remain at £6/year for the time being, representing excellent value for money -resulting in two newsletters a year, a discounted conference fee and a voice where it needs to be heard.

7. Election of Honorary Officers and Council

T James reminded members that the position of Treasurer was still vacant following the resignation of M. Moreau as Honorary Officer (Treasurer).

J Stafford pointed out an error in the list of 'Honorary Officers and Members of Council willing to be re-elected' in that he did not wish to be co-opted onto Council now that he has served a full term. He did, however, point out that someone should be on Council to represent the views of the local natural history societies. T James thanked J Stafford formally for the time and commitment he had given as a Member of Council and seconded his views that individual naturalists should be represented on Council

Three new nominations for Council had been received: Gillie Sargent, Dr Roger Key and Pamela Tompsett. T James, N Court, W Ely, M Moreau, P Harding, C Copp, Dr S Ball, B Butcher, A M Smout, D McFerran and S McWilliam were all willing to stand for re-election to Council. Patrick Cloughley to replace S Hawkswell as co-opted member representing the Wildlife Trusts on Council. Since the number of those willing to stand for election and re-election did not exceed the number of vacancies they were elected en-bloc.

Proposed: John Newbold **Seconded:** James Williams *Accepted nem. com*

8. Election of Honorary Auditor

T James proposed that Mrs Shirley Bell should continue as Honorary Auditor.

Proposed: Bill Ely **Seconded:** Nick Moyses.

9. Any other Business

Stuart Ball suggested that members should be encouraged to pay by standing order - aimed at those who forget to renew each year. This would be something for the new Treasurer to investigate. Although standing orders are easy to set up, it is difficult to raise subscription levels in the future.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.05pm.

Chairman's Report for 1997/98

It almost goes without saying that most of the year's activity has focused around the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), and NFBR's ongoing representation of the biological recording fraternity at various levels. We remain represented on the NBN's Executive Group through myself, and are still nominally representative of the Association of Local Government Ecologists, Biological Recording in Scotland and the Biology Curators Group. However, owing to the difficulties of inter-communication of all material with these bodies, the NBN has been keeping them informed of activities direct. Few representations of their views have been received for forwarding to the NBN Executive.

The year has focused around the NBN's submission of a complex bid for almost £4.6M to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which was finally submitted in August. This bid is aimed at developing a broad range of interlinked Projects as a "Demonstration" phase of the full NBN. It is, therefore, only a step towards the intended goals of the NBN. The most high profile Projects within the bid are the Local Recorders Centre Project, being led in the NBN by the Wildlife Trusts, and the *Recorder 2000* Project, being led by JNCC. Members of NFBR Council are heavily involved in the running of both these Projects. The LRC Project is being overseen by the Local Advisory Group to the NBN, and NFBR has been represented during the year on this by Steve McWilliam until recently, since when Bill Butcher of Somerset ERC has taken on this role. The bid also covers other key aspects, notably the setting up of data standards, the setting up of a taxonomic dictionary and identification standards, and establishing the protocols etc. necessary to allow the linking of both existing major national data sets (such as RSPB's "Griffin" database, and those held by institutions such as the Freshwater Biological Association) and the data holdings of national recording schemes and societies. The outcome of the bid will not finally be known until the New Year, following detailed examination by the HLF Trustees, which includes further rounds of meetings and discussions with their representatives.

An important event was the holding of a well-attended seminar on 19th March concerning "Working through Local Records Centres", held under the auspices of the NFBR at the

Linnean Society. This was aimed at trying to involve the vast variety of bodies involved in local biological recording in the thinking behind the NBN bid. It was very encouraging to find broad support, if some concern that the NBN would be slow to bring benefits. The message was clearly taken away that some relatively quick "successes" were necessary for the NBN to make a proper impact. In the meantime, the message was also that many existing LRC's were suffering from lack of support locally.

The LRC Project has gone forward since then by the development of its second tranche of "pilot" LRC's, this time involving a number of existing LRC's in developing recommended procedures etc. Most (but not all) of these LRC's are already NFBR members. A first round of meetings to plan the work is in hand.

The *Recorder 2000* Project suffered some delay during the summer, when it was discovered that Government rules meant that more rigorous analysis of cost-benefits was needed. Concern at the delay was expressed by a number of organisations, including NFBR. Since then, relatively speedy decisions have been taken to proceed. Work is now underway.

The NFBR has also, as a corollary to the *Recorder 2000* Project, been involved in discussions with JNCC regarding the necessary validation standards which will be required for the NBN to function properly and be seen as reliable. Not least amongst the issues involved has been the need to balance the demands for scientific credibility against the needs, aspirations and capabilities of the mass of volunteer recorders who form the workforce for most recording activities. The NFBR has sought to ensure that whatever system is put in place fully takes their interests on board.

The NBN is ultimately all about effective linkages between a broad array of organisations and people. The need for all these organisations to tailor their own activities to allow them to link together is central to the work. Communications are therefore also central, and so the NFBR has been involved in the first stages of developing NBN's Communications Strategy. However, at the moment we lack someone with the necessary time and skills to take this representation forward - any offers?

Apart from the NBN, the work of the NFBR has included the continued production of its own Newsletter. Damian McFerran of Ulster Museum has valiantly taken on the major part of this task from Phil Collins, and his first production has been much applauded. Papers from last year's annual conference at Liverpool are also about to be published.

Representation on NFBR Council from BRISC and CEDaR (Northern Ireland) has been maintained. BRISC has successfully overcome its financial and administrative crisis, and has reported on several new initiatives aimed at developing recording in Scotland.

Last year, I flagged up that the NFBR might need to re-examine its role and function in the light of the NBN. Further moves along this road have not so far been necessary, awaiting the outcome of the NBN bid. If the bid looks like being successful, even in part, there will need to be moves towards setting up the NBN Trust. NFBR's role in this will need to be examined. However, it seems

very likely that a strong "practitioners organisation" will very much be needed to focus discussion between all involved. The strength and influence of this organisation is crucially dependent on its members taking an active role. For this reason, I would strongly urge all those who are interested in biological recording to ensure they take an active part, and to be prepared to help. There are currently several jobs needing to be done, not least the job of Treasurer, as Marie Moreau has finally decided she must concentrate on family after serving on NFBR Council for many years. Further representation from the LRC and voluntary natural history society sectors is also being actively solicited. Meanwhile, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all those who have given of their time and energies this year to ensure NFBR continues to have a voice. We are getting nearer to achievement of what NFBR was set up to do. Let us hope that 1999 will see us continue successfully down that path.

Trevor J. James

Treasurer's Report for 1998 as of 31.10.98

NFBR has experienced another financially stable year. Subscriptions income has dropped from £1,200 per annum from the previous two years to about £700 this year although undoubtedly some belated subscriptions will arrive in the latter part of the year. Conference income is not yet in the account. However, conference income and expenditure are usually fairly well balanced. Bank interest payments account for about £130 of income and remain payable without tax deducted. No charges are levied by the bank for running the account. The cash assets remain carefully balanced between a current account and a high interest account.

Expenditure on administration, stationery, Council meetings and travel remains fairly low at about £250 so far for the year. Newsletter costs have been around \$450 for two editions. This is an increase of about 20% over the previous two years but is explained by the increased number of pages.

Thus income and expenditure remain well balanced. The assets currently stand at £4,300. NFBR is able to maintain the low subscription of £6 for another year.

The accounts for 1996 and 1997 (Appendix 1) have been audited and signed to be accurate and correct records by the auditor, Ms Bell. The accounts for 1998 will be sent to her at the close of the calendar year. Once again our thanks must go to Ms Bell who audits for NFBR without payment.

This is my last year as Treasurer for NFBR and indeed my last year as an Honorary Officer of Council after ten years' service. I shall however remain in touch with NFBR and committed to the purpose of enhancing the quality of biological recording in order to provide a sound basis for ecological decisions.

Marie Moreau

Notes from the Chair

The progress of biological recording activity in the UK often seems to occur despite any organised programme of action rather than because of it! This could well be said to be the case during 1998. The NFBR, as with

many organisations in the field, has been very much tied into the projects behind the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) proposals. Central to the activity has been the co-ordinated bid to the Heritage Lottery