



Hampshire Biodiversity
Information Centre

HBIC BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2024

[Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre \(HBIC\)](#)

The HBIC Partnership

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre is grateful for the support, funding and data it receives from the following partner organisations. It particularly wishes to acknowledge the support and time given by members and officers of these organisations on the HBIC Steering Group, at Advisory Group meetings and at the annual HBIC Recorders Forum.

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland
Butterfly Conservation
East Hampshire District Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Natural England
Environment Agency
Fareham Borough Council,
Gosport Borough Council
Hampshire Amphibian & Reptile Recording Group
Hampshire Bat Group
Hampshire County Council Economy, Transport & Environment Department (ETE)
Hampshire County Council Countryside Service
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Hampshire Mammal Group
Hampshire Ornithological Society
Hart District Council
Havant Borough Council
New Forest District Council
New Forest National Park Authority
Portsmouth City Council
Rushmoor Borough Council
Southampton City Council
South Downs National Park Authority
Test Valley Borough Council
Winchester City Council

Other regular data users:

Forestry Commission
Portsmouth Water
Southern Water
Thames Water
Wessex Water

Other data suppliers:

British Bryological Society
British Dragonfly Society
Bees, Wasps and Ants Society
Hoverflies
Hampshire Swifts
Weevil & Bark Beetle Recording Scheme
Peoples Trust for Endangered Species

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ACHIEVEMENTS 2002 TO 2021

Local environmental records centres differ, not only in their structure, size, funding and hosting arrangements, but also in the services they carry out and the products they deliver. The following summary of HBIC's key **achievements and outputs** during the **2002-2021** period since its establishment provides an overview of its primary areas of work and service delivery.

HBIC has maintained **Service Level Agreements** with **25** funding partners. On behalf of those funding partners HBIC has, over the **past nineteen years** since it was established:

- Carried out **detailed ecological surveys** of over **6,000 sites**, averaging **320 sites/year** using in-house field ecologists, and occasionally consultant ecologists where funding allows.
- Re-evaluated over **2,619 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation** and identified a further **842** SINCs from a review of surveys carried out during that period, plus recommended **76** SINCs for deletion – bringing the total number of SINCs in Hampshire to **4,114** - for which HBIC has responsibility for monitoring & reviewing.
- Maintained and updated a detailed seamless GIS **habitat/land use map** of Hampshire from which **UK Priority habitats** can be extracted. This GIS dataset has now been translated into the OS MasterMap framework, increasing the number of habitat polygons from 80,000 to **656,545 Broad habitat polygons** from which **163,925 Priority habitat polygons** can be extracted¹.
- Responded to **10,859 data enquiries** from consultants, developers, land managers, community groups, students etc., **now averaging around 715 requests per year**
- Screened over **178,000 planning applications** to flag potential impact on designated sites, priority habitats and notable species, **now averaging 12,800 applications per year**
- Maintained a **Recorder 6** database which now holds details of over 1.9 million **species records** and **over 47,000 detailed habitat observations** from the Habitat Survey Programme
- Obtained agreement of the species recording groups to hold copies of their data on **MapMate & Recorder**, covering an additional **6.5 million** species records, of which **19%** are **notable species records**.
- Held a successful **HBIC Recorders Forum annually for 19 years** (including on-line in 2020 due to Covid), and contributed to a number of **workshops, training days, conferences**, and **BioBlitzs** benefiting recording groups, environmental professionals, naturalists, community groups and the wider public.

Data is provided to funding partners on an annual or biannual basis in the form of GIS layers covering:

- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Road Verges of Ecological Importance
- Priority Habitats/Broad Habitats
- Notable species records
- Non-Native Invasive species records
- Ecological network mapping
- Swift hotspots

¹ Based on the June 2019 habitat layers

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Hampshire is a county of great biodiversity interest with more than 22% of its area covered by nature conservation designations, and 38% as Protected Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs)

There is a large body of UK and (previous) European legislation² and planning guidance that requires local authorities and other organisations to take account of biodiversity in order to satisfy a range of statutory and non-statutory duties. These include the National Planning Policy Framework, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and the evolving Environment Bill. Support for local environmental records centres is the most effective way of integrating biodiversity into local authority services as reliable up-to-date biodiversity information is essential to underpin and inform these services.

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) was established in April 2002. It is hosted by Hampshire County Council (as Lead partner) and is supported by a Partnership of organisations supplying and requiring data. A Steering Group representing the key Partners sets the aims and priorities of the Centre and agrees the Business Plan.

We have many knowledgeable individuals and organisations actively recording Hampshire's wildlife and their combined expertise and data holdings contribute towards the sound foundation upon which HBIC is based. Several of the key recording groups are represented on the Steering Group

The benefits gained from a partnership approach to maintaining & supporting HBIC include economies of scale, a 'one-stop shop', improved data acquisition, and reduced duplication of effort, leading to a greater availability and range of data that can be used by many different audiences.

HBIC acts as a local 'node' within the National Biodiversity Network (www.nbn.org.uk), and whilst the NBN Atlas has become an important means of gaining access to nationally held datasets it is essential that data about wildlife in Hampshire is collated and made available locally to support local decisions at a more detailed and finer resolution than the NBN Atlas.

1.2 Purpose of the Business Plan

A business plan is a formal statement of business goals and plans for reaching them. It also contains background information about the organisation attempting to reach those goals. It should focus on strategy, milestones to track tasks and responsibilities, and basic financial projections needed to plan cash flow budget expenses and viability.

The HBIC Business Plan has been written to:

- Guide the running of the Centre between April 2021 and March 2024
- Set out the management structure and operational framework for the Centre
- Set out the work programme of the Centre
- Demonstrate the viability and long term financial security of the Centre
- Inform and encourage new partners to enter into Agreements; and to generate new sources of income and data to support the work of the Centre and expand the services provided.

² The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 The Role of HBIC

The definition of a local environmental records centre (LERC) as agreed by the Association of Local Environmental Records Centre (ALERC) is that “LERCs are not-for-profit organisations that collect, collate and manage information on the natural environment for a defined geographic area. LERCs support and collaborate with a network of experts to ensure information is robust and make information products and services accessible to a range of audiences, including decision-makers, the public, and researchers.”

Reflecting this definition, the role of HBIC is:

To collect, collate, manage and disseminate information of known quality on Hampshire’s biodiversity to those who require it, to increase knowledge and understanding, and to enable informed decisions to be made about factors affecting the environment

2.2 Guiding principles for HBIC (agreed on establishment in 2002) are to:

- be the focus of a local partnership represented by a Steering Group
- be independent from the undue influence of any one partner
- be a non-profit making, service-providing business
- be an independent, authoritative and impartial source of biological data
- conform to NBN & ALERC standards through agreed policies and procedures
- be responsive to user needs and data suppliers
- be able to enter into contracts with its partners through service level agreements and data supply or exchange agreements
- be soundly managed, accountable and transparent in its business and financial performance

2.3 Key functions

For the Centre to meet the needs of its partners it needs to:

- act as a focus for biodiversity & geodiversity records management in the area
- act as a contact point for access to datasets by local and national users
- manage specified key datasets on behalf of participating organisations and individuals and support the collection, validation and maintenance of other key datasets
- provide support and guidance for recorders
- co-ordinate and manage a habitat survey and monitoring programme
- make data available to all those that require it including local authorities, government and non-government bodies, consultants, students and the public, subject to agreed policies on charging and access and in accordance with data protection.
- encourage people to gain enjoyment from, and understanding of, biological recording be accredited by the Association of Environmental Records centres (ALERC) to comply with standards for data management and access. This was achieved in 2016 and is being refreshed in 2021. See <http://www.alerc.org.uk/accreditation.html>

3. Governance

3.1 The Partnership

Hampshire County Council and those organisations representing key data users and suppliers have formed a partnership known as the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre Partnership. A HBIC Partner is defined as an organisation, group or individual who contributes essential services, funding or useful data to the Centre set through Service Level Agreements or Data Exchange Agreements. The Partnership is listed on Page 2. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up which defines the roles and responsibilities of the key Partners and has been signed by all Partners.

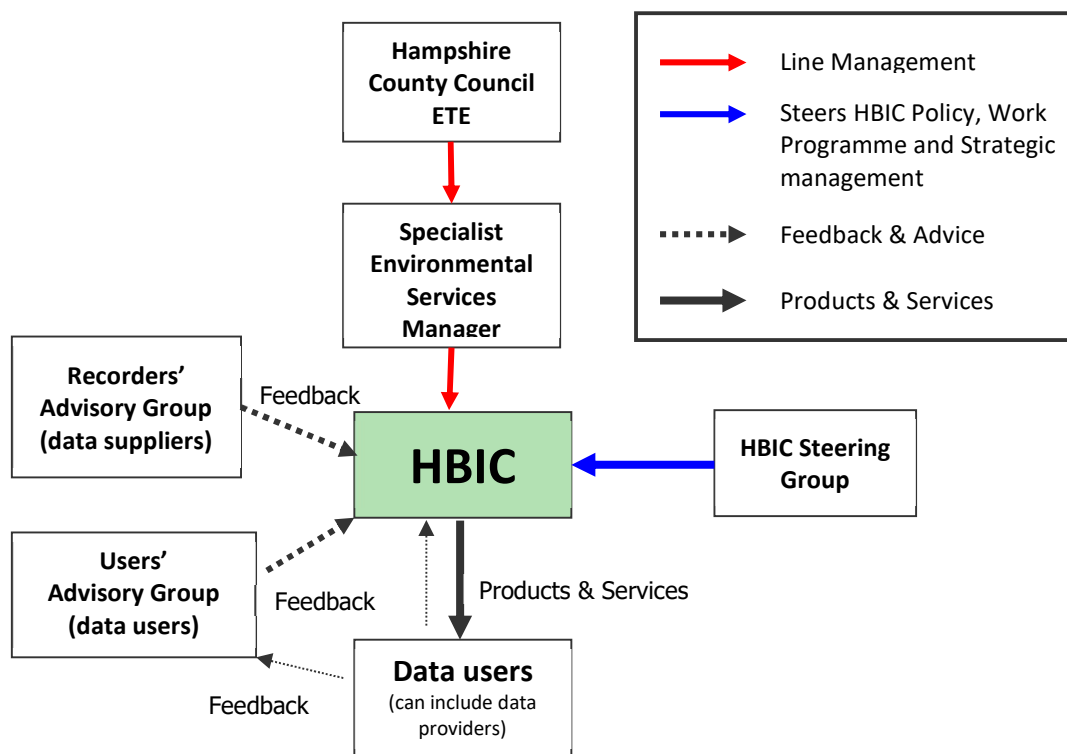
3.2 The Management Framework

HBIC is hosted by Hampshire County Council (Lead Partner), and sits within the Economy, Transport & Environment Department (ETE) within the Specialist Environmental Services Team. It is steered by the HBIC Steering Group who has the task of agreeing the overall aims, policies and priorities of the Centre, set within the context of the priorities of the funding partners and their service level agreements.

The Centre Manager is accountable to both Hampshire County Council and the HBIC Partnership for delivering the services of the Centre. The Strategic Manager for Environment at HCC provides line management support.

Advisory groups for recorders and users have been set up to enable them to provide input and receive feedback from the Centre, and to ensure the Centre serves the needs of all those involved in the collection and use of biological data.

Figure 1 The management framework



3.3 Hosting arrangements

HBIC is hosted by Hampshire County Council and embedded within the Specialist Environmental Services (SES) Team within the ETE Department. The SES Team includes Ecology, Archaeology and Environmental Impact Assessment teams. Approximately 40% of county biological records centres are based within local authorities, 32% within Wildlife Trusts and 28% are independent not for profit CICs or Charities. The benefits of working within a local authority include close working relationships with LA ecologists, and invaluable IT and business support.

Hampshire County Council will:

- Continue to employ the staff and provide payroll and other financial and administration services (including a separate accounting stream), personnel and recruitment services, legal services, and provision of some relevant in-house training.
- Continue to provide office space and equipment although post-Covid this is likely to involve a hybrid office/home working arrangement with one day a week in the office
- Continue to provide IT technical support in accordance with HCC IT protocols. Any development work will be subject to the usual bids for internal or external funding.
- Provide line management and administrative support to the Centre Manager.

A significant proportion of the cost of these services will be expected to be covered by HBIC during the Plan period. However, it is possible, given the continued significant uncertainty surrounding future public finances that HBIC may have to consider alternative delivery models during this Plan period.

3.4 The HBIC Steering Group

The Steering Group comprises up to 11 representatives drawn from the following partners³,: HCC ETE Department, District Councils/Unitary Authorities(3), New Forest National Park Authority, South Downs National Park Authority, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Hampshire Ornithological Society, Butterfly Conservation Hampshire Branch, and Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (1). All members are required to have SLAs or data exchange agreements with HBIC.

The Group meets twice a year in January and July and the Chair changes annually as agreed by the Group. The HBIC Manager is not part of the Steering Group but administers and reports to the Group.

Each organisation on the Group selects its own representative although the 3/4 District/ Unitary Council representatives will rotate yearly to represent the views of all District and Unitary Councils. All local Authorities with service level agreements with HBIC are also represented on the Users Advisory Group which meets twice a year in May and October.

The remit of the Steering Group is to:

- Agree the Memorandum of Understanding which defines the roles and responsibilities of the Partner organisations
- Agree the Business Plan for the Centre
- Support the Centre Manager in securing finances for the Centre
- Agree, monitor and develop the Centre's Work Programme in line with products and services required of the service agreements.
- In the light of the above & the work programme (Section 6) agree the staff numbers & roles

³ Natural England remain on the Users Advisory Group as they request data and provide funding for occasional projects

- Agree a set of policies and standards, in accordance with HCC policies and ALERC Accreditation criteria <http://www.alerc.org.uk/alerc-accreditation.html>
- Agree data exchange agreements with data custodians and data producers
- Agree, monitor and keep under review budgets and other resources.
- Assess and approve applications to the HBIC Local Recording Fund
- Promote the Centre and its activities

3.5 The Role of the Centre Manager is to:

- Prepare and implement the Centre's Business Plan and Work Programme
- Secure finances for the centre to enable HBIC to be self-funding
- Report to the Steering Group and be accountable to them for the implementation and delivery of the Work Programme.
- Recruit and manage staff and resources in line with the Business Plan, Work Programme and financial situation.
- Establish and sustain Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with funding partners (data users)
- Establish and sustain agreements with data suppliers and data custodians
- Service the HBIC Users Advisory Group and HBIC Recorders Advisory Group
- Develop & and maintain the Centre's IT systems, network and website in line with the agreed operational framework, policies & standards and HCC IT protocols.
- Implement a personal development programme for staff including annual performance appraisals as part of the County Council's Valuing Performance programme
- Maintain and refresh ALERC accreditation in 2021

3.6 The HBIC Users and Recorders Advisory Groups

Two bodies have been set up to represent the interests and needs of the key funders/data users and those contributing data to the centre. These groups play an important part in the on-going development of the Centre and provide vital feedback to the Centre on how well it is performing. Both Groups are represented on the Steering Group.

The HBIC Users Advisory Group (UAG) comprises those organisations with service level agreements with the Centre. The Group meets twice a year to enable them to track progress of the agreements and to contribute to the Centre work programme, policies, priorities etc.

The HBIC Recorders Advisory Group comprises representatives from the key recording Groups or Societies plus a range of recorders drawn from the national schemes operating in Hampshire, all of whom are willing to contribute data or services to the Centre. It meets on an ad hoc basis or by email to discuss Centre policies, data exchange agreements, software needs, data flow etc. and more formally as a much wider annual "Forum" open to all, to promote the activities of recorders and to share experiences and ideas.

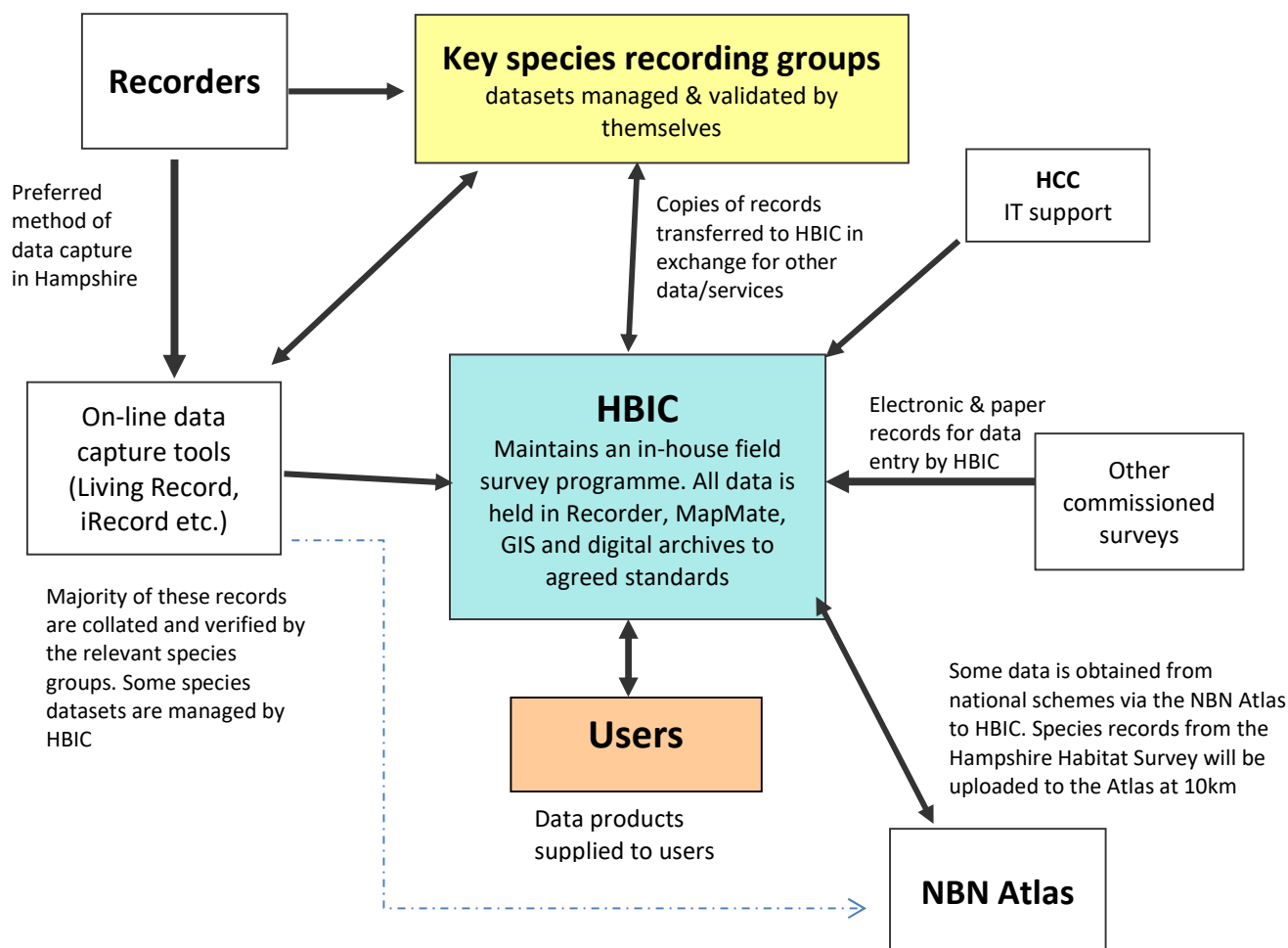
3.7 The Operational Framework

Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre is not the sole custodian of biological data in the County. The species recording groups continue to own & manage their own datasets, and through agreed data exchange agreements they pass on non-editable copies of their data to HBIC on a regular basis to enable the data to be used in decision making.

The following applies to the operational model in Hampshire:

- HBIC maintains two main databases (Recorder 6 and MapMate) and various GIS datasets on behalf of its partners. It services the data and information requirements of the funding partners set through Service Level Agreements and provides a biodiversity information service to many other data requesters, working to agreed standards and policies.
- All species recording groups & individuals (data custodians) are responsible for ensuring the validation of their own datasets before passing copies on to HBIC. Co-ordination of the supply of data and data flow network is managed between HBIC and the Species Groups, with data exchange agreements being used to control use of data by HBIC and to enable HBIC to offer a range of services to the Groups to support their recording activities.
- Records passed to HBIC from volunteer recorders, consultants etc. are re-directed to the species groups for validation and input, and to prevent duplication of records on databases.
- The Hampshire Cultural Trust provides for the care and preservation of voucher specimens as well as a biological identification and public enquiry service and provision of specialist library resources.
- For an effective operational model it is important that data custodians and data suppliers use, wherever possible, compatible software capable of seamless data exchange. HBIC uses Recorder 6 for its own site/habitat/species data alongside MapMate, Living Record and other online recording systems for data exchange with the species groups. Data is then exported into GIS for data searches and analysis with other datasets (such as habitats, site designations etc.) HBIC will support species groups with the management of their data where resources allow.

Figure 2 Data Flow in Hampshire - the relationship between recorders, data custodians, HBIC and users



3.8 Arrangements with stakeholders: Data users and suppliers

All major stakeholders in the Centre, from local authorities, government agencies through to the voluntary sector, are partners in the Centre and have signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding which is a collaborative agreement enabling them to have a say on the running of the Centre. To do this they must have signed up to Service Level Agreements, Data Exchange Agreements or data licenses with HBIC

Key data users entering into Service Level Agreements with the Centre comprise all Hampshire's local planning authorities including the two National Park Authorities, the Environment Agency and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

HBIC has negotiated Data Exchange Agreements with many of the key species recording groups including the Hampshire Mammal Group and the Hampshire Amphibian & Reptile Recording Network under the 'umbrella' of a Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust agreement, the Hampshire Ornithological Society, the Hampshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation, the Hampshire Bat Group and the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. These agreements involve 'data for data', support in other ways to assist their recording activities and a small % of the income derived from commercial data requests handled by HBIC as a contribution towards their recording activities.

Smaller data users such as the water companies and the Forestry Commission have data licence agreements.

3.9 Staffing

Together the Centre manager and staff encompass a range of skills including ecological knowledge, vegetation surveys, conservation management, taxonomic expertise, biodiversity data management, and use of GIS, database and other IT systems. The minimum staffing level for the Centre was set at 7.5 in 2002 and this has been maintained until cutbacks in 2011 resulted in the loss of 1 FTE. This included a 0.5FTE admin support post which is now provided by HCC. In 2015 the HBIC manager took on the role of Specialist Environmental Services Manager which oversees other services including Ecology Team and Archaeology. The current 6.35 staff now comprises 0.5 dedicated HBIC manager, 2 field ecologists and 3.85 ecologists responsible for all aspects of data collation, validation & evaluation, the servicing of enquiries, IT development, management of the SINCS system and community engagement. HBIC also take on several volunteers throughout the year to help with data management tasks, giving them valuable skills in ecological data handling and GIS. Estimated value of volunteers is around £10,000/year at grade D (technical assistant level)

Section 5 gives a summary of the work programme and a breakdown of the main tasks.

3.10 Funding - See Section 6 for detailed financial projections

The approximate running costs of the Centre are around £270,000 for 2021-22 for salaries/on-costs, (including 0.5 FTE manager) travel, training and equipment. These costs are comparable to those of other Record Centres of a similar size. Office overheads add an additional £90,000.

Data users are expected to fully contribute towards the costs of data collection, management, verification, dissemination, and investment, and not just the 'end product'.

SLAs mostly run for three years at a time with each agreement specifying a number of survey days and number of hours to be spent on a variety of tasks and outputs. The SLAs also set out the response times

and mechanisms for service delivery.

For public sector organisations not entering into SLAs with HBIC then any request for data is charged on a 'pay-as-you go' basis, similar to commercial data requestors. Requests for additional habitat survey outside SLAs are also charged at full cost recovery. Such requests will be given lower priority than requests set through service agreements and will be subject to available time and capacity.

Since 2008, with the County Council having to continue to make unprecedented savings, HBIC has been required to become self-financing.

3.11 Accommodation and access to HBIC services

HBIC staff are based within the County Council HQ in Winchester although since Covid staff have been working from home and expect to return to the office on a hybrid basis. The data collected and managed by HBIC supports the work of the County Council and can be readily accessible digitally by HCC ecologists who provide advice to the District Councils as well as to HCC.

HBIC's paper (survey) records have now been scanned to enable 100% digital dissemination of data. Original copies of all survey data are archived on a regular basis and all digital data is backed up daily.

It is important that the data and staff are accessible to as wide an audience as possible. With email and the internet physical access has become much less essential but visitors (including the public, students, recorders, consultants etc.) are able to visit the offices if they wish by appointment. The office in Winchester is centrally located with easy access to road and rail.

A letterhead, logo and web pages give HBIC a clear identity so that people with no previous knowledge of biological recording know where to come for information. Most people prefer to contact HBIC by phone, letter, or email, or via the on-line data request form. A twitter account (@Hants_BIC) provides HBIC with a social media platform for informing its partners, recorders, clients etc. on up-and-coming events or interesting sightings etc.

3.12 IT Support

IT support is essential for the smooth running of the Centre, particularly for the development and maintenance of the biological databases and geographic information system (GIS) datasets. For the Centre to be an effective node in the National Biodiversity Network it is important that it uses databases which are compatible with software being used nationally and by other records centres. For that reason, HBIC's main database is Recorder 6. The Centre also exchanges data regularly with the species recording groups via MapMate although there is now a move towards use of Recorder 6 by some of the species groups as MapMate becomes more outdated.

IT support for database & GIS maintenance and access to other software is provided by IT Services (HCC) although much of the maintenance and development of HBIC's databases and interface with the GIS is now done by HBIC. Issues arising over the plan period which will need addressing include:

- A national review of Recorder 6 and its likely successor now that JNCC have withdrawn its support. Current support and licensing have been taken over by ALERC working with the original developers and the Natural History Museum (who maintain/update the species dictionaries for JNCC & ALERC)
- HCC's withdrawal of support for Microsoft Access which HBIC use to manage data requests, SINCS, RVEIs, the Survey Programme, Contacts etc. Currently no alternative solution has been identified.

4. Products and Services

The services required of HBIC go beyond simply collecting and providing raw habitat & species data. Most of the data is filtered, aggregated, or interpreted to provide products that focus on the notable species, the priority habitats, and the designated sites, making the data easily digestible and relevant.

The following list summarises the main services and products which the Centre provides to help partners & others meet their information needs:

- **Provision of habitat, species and designations data** and other supportive material for use when making decisions and giving advice, including use in development management, forward planning, land management schemes, and other projects.

Data is released in accordance with HBIC's Data Access Policy, with attention being paid to the release of sensitive species data and on-going use of the data. The Centre is also able to discharge the duties of its public authority partners under the Environmental Information Regulations by making data available to others on their behalf as part of its service.

- **Undertaking habitat survey and re-survey** to meet the needs of partner organisations including surveys of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) for condition assessment and monitoring purposes.
- **Evaluation of habitat and species data for the identification & review of SINCs** on behalf of the local planning authorities, for submission to the SINCs Advisory Panel and notification to landowners.
- **Assessment of the weekly planning lists** to flag any development proposal which may adversely affect a designated site, habitat or species of conservation value.
- **Survey and assessment of hedgerows** affected by Removal Notices under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and by development proposals
- **Provision and maintenance of various GIS layers** covering nature conservation designations, habitat/land use types, notable species records, invasive species records, surveyed sites etc. HBIC will provide all funding organisations with updated copies of these GIS layers at least once a year.
- **Production of the Annual Biodiversity Monitoring report** which highlights changes in extent and status of Priority habitats, species and designated sites on an annual basis.
- **Development, maintenance and refresh of ecological network mapping** on behalf of the Local Nature Partnership and local planning authorities
- **Validation and management of all habitat and species* data** in order to achieve the above and provide a secure archive for all original & copied survey material collected. *Working with the Species Recording Groups
- **Provision of data** to consultants, students, the public and others on behalf of the partners within a target of 10 working days.
- **Support for local volunteer recording groups and individuals** who provide valuable species data in support of all the above.

5. The Work Programme

The detailed and anticipated work programme of the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre for 2021-24 is set out below. Delivery of SLAs and support to the species recording groups continue to be the main priorities alongside a focus on new markets and emerging legislation, externally funded projects and collating data from other sources, in order to deliver an increased range of products and to maximise income generation.

Management & development of HBIC	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
1. Produce new 3-year Business Plan and secure new 3-year SLAs. Review annually	HBIC Manager & Steering Group (SG).	Sept 2021	No	Core
2. Service & Report to the HBIC Steering Group	HBIC Manager	Jan & July each year	No	Core
3. Service & report to the HBIC Users Advisory Group	HBIC Manager	May & Oct each year	No	Core
4. Maintain continuous update of policies and procedures in line with ALERC accreditation criteria. Refresh in 2021 with ALERC. Update Privacy Policy	HBIC Manager in consultation with SG & HBIC staff	Sept 2021	No	Core
5. Continue to develop HBIC's services to existing partners and to attract new partners & clients	HBIC Staff in consultation with SG	On-going	No (funding will follow)	Medium
6. Continue to maintain & update a web presence.	HBIC staff	On-going	No	Core
7. Continue to provide work experience for graduate volunteers subject to Covid restrictions/office use.	HBIC staff	On-going	No	High
8. Produce the HBIC Annual Report – revisit design to make more appealing	HBIC Manager/staff	By July each year	No	Core
9. Bid for funding for projects to increase income & data and develop staff skills.	HBIC Staff	When opportunities arise	Yes – external	Medium
Initiatives & Projects	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
10. Develop and maintain ecological network mapping on behalf of the Local Nature Partnership and local authorities. Progress with Nature Recovery Network once Defra guidance received	HBIC staff	2021/22	via SLAs and Defra/NE development funds	High*
11. Explore the mapping of ecosystem services to demonstrate the value of nature. Provide baseline for a Natural Capital Plan for Hampshire	HBIC staff & partners	2021	Yes – NE and Southern Water.	High*

12. Provide support to the development of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy	HBIC staff & Partners	2022/23	Yes	High*
13. Biodiversity Net Gain – develop skills using the Defra metric to assess proposals looking to achieve 10% BNG. Work with partners to set up monitoring system of biodiversity net gain sites. Input into the NE BNG digital trial for registering BNG sites	HBIC Manager	2021	No	High
14. Maintain the Solent Nitrates Mitigation sites register and develop a monitoring scheme	HBIC Manager and Solent Nitrates Partnership	2021/22	Yes (received for 2021/22)	High*
15. progress NE's 70% new funding to update the Ancient Woodland Inventory to include woods <2ha	HBIC and NE	2021/23	Yes 30% being sought from LPAs	High*
16. Provision of support to the Cluster Farm initiatives. Expectation that new records will flow back to HBIC – to follow up	HBIC staff	On-going	Yes or via SLAs	Medium
17. Investigate the usefulness of developing and maintaining mapping of green infrastructure and accessible greenspace as a useful product, using nationally agreed typology. Include SANGs	HBIC Staff	If thought desirable by the LPAs	Yes Would need to be factored into SLAs	Medium
18. Develop a Veteran Trees project with the LPAs, to validate existing records and to exchange data with the Woodland Trust/Ancient Tree Forum. Possibility of using Parish tree wardens	HBIC Staff	Needs funding & additional capacity	Yes by the LPAs & external funding streams.	High
19. Develop links with local universities to encourage greater use of HBIC data to inform research programmes. Feed into SDNP & HIWWT research initiatives	HBIC staff	2021/22	No	Medium
Working with Recorders	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
20. Update Data Exchange Agreements with key species groups and pursue with BWARS, HFRG, for Beetles etc. National schemes data from the NBN can be downloaded through on-line agreements	HBIC staff, County Recorders and National Scheme organisers	On-going	No	Core
21. Manage data flow and collation of species data in Hampshire	HBIC Staff & County Recorders	On-going	No	Core

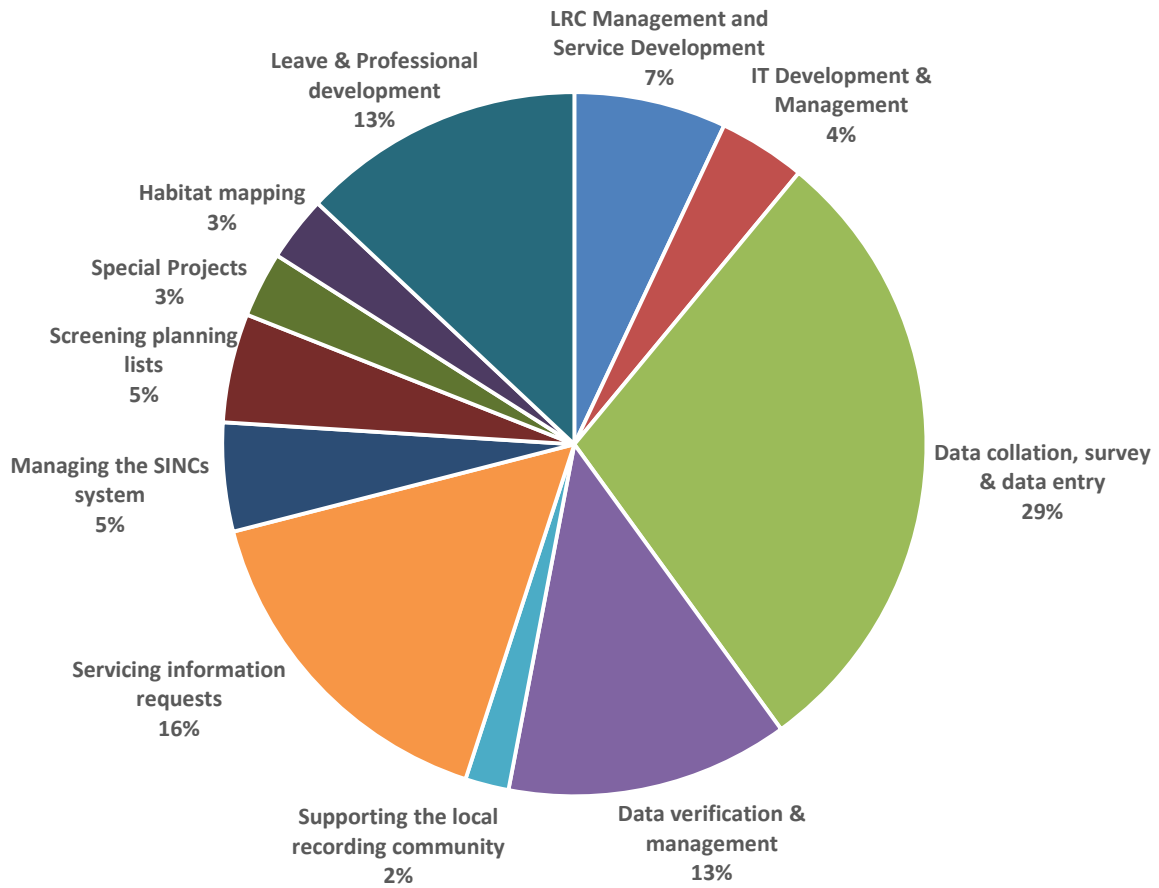
22. Assist recording groups with data capture systems compatible with national standards.	HBIC staff & County Recorders	On-going	Possibly	High
23. Organise the Annual HBIC Recorders Forum	HBIC Staff	March each year	Sponsorship	Core
24. Administer the HBIC Local Recording Fund to encourage new recorders & increase data collection.	HBIC staff in consultation with Steering Group	On-going	No	Core
Data Collation, management and output including SINC programme	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
25. Manage a programme of field survey & assessment to meet needs of funding partners.	HBIC Senior Ecologist	On-going	SLAs & external funding	Core
26. Continue to promote the simplified condition assessment methodology for priority habitats within SINC as and when requested. Will be important to assess condition using the Defra metric method when BNG becomes mandatory	HBIC staff	On-going	Yes	Medium
27. Input & validate data from survey programme. Clearing other backlogs will require additional capacity including volunteers	HBIC staff	On-going	Possibly	Core
28. Maintain SINC programme of survey, evaluation & notification on behalf of the local planning authorities. Provide an updated GIS layer to partners annually	HBIC Senior Ecologist & SINC's Advisory Panel	On-going	SLAs	Core
29. Complete review SINC criteria and publish	HBIC Manager & Partners	2021	Yes External consultant	High - Done
30. Maintain lists of notable species & non-native invasive species and provide GIS layers annually to funding partners	HBIC staff, JNCC and County Recorders	On-going	No	Core
31. Update the Habitat GIS layer from HBIC surveys and provide annually to funding Partners. Clear backlog over arising from project to update to latest OSMM	HBIC Staff	On-going	SLAs	Core
32. Provide data to all who require it, subject to access and charging policies. Expand range of products to meet the needs of various audiences. Requires NE/FC to encourage landowners to seek data	HBIC Staff	On-going	Charging commercial consultants & landowners	Core

to support agri-environment scheme applications				
33. Provide selected data to the NBN Atlas at 10km resolution & signpost to HBIC & local species group websites	HBIC Manager in consultation Partners	2021/22	No	Medium
34. Produce annual statistics for Local Authority Annual Monitoring Reports. Improve presentation of report	HBIC Data Manager	Deadline October	No	Core
Planning related activities	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
35. Screen planning lists & road works, and advise where they might impact on designated sites, notable species & priority habitats. Rushmoor and Portsmouth likely to request this service	HBIC staff	On-going	SLAs (10 LPAs)	Core
36. Provide support to HCC's Capital (Highways and development) schemes via Ecology Team to ensure early input into the planning & design process	HBIC Staff	On-going	Yes Levy charged per scheme to access HBIC data	Core
37. Update the Biodiversity checklist to include Biodiversity Net Gain requirements	HBIC Manager	2022	No	High
IT Development work	Responsibility	Timescale	Additional funding?	Priority
38. Continue to upgrade Recorder and input into national programme for re-development of Recorder and MapMate alternatives	HBIC Data Manager, ALERC and recording groups	On-going	Yes – for new development	High
39. Investigate alternatives to Access for all HBICs databases due to withdrawal of HCC support for Access. Continue to integrate and improve databases for increased efficiency	HBIC Data Manager	On-going	Possibly	High*
40. Investigate adding UKHab conversion into HLU tool or change HLU tool and survey method to only use UKHab instead of IHS	HBIC Data Manager	2021	Yes	High*

High* - of the highest priority

Fig 3 Breakdown of HBIC Work Programme by key task

(FTE = 6.35)



For detailed allocation of key tasks by staff member please see Appendix 1

6. Financial Information

6.1 Financial assumptions and requirements for 2021-24

HBIC is a partnership/collaboration where individual partners “get more out than they put in” through economies of scale and data sharing.

The requirement from Hampshire County Council is that HBIC is “self-funding”. This means it should cover departmental and corporate overheads as well as salaries and on-costs. Under the previous business plan periods the local authority SLA partners have been charged at a rate to cover the salaries/on-costs of the services they received plus a small % of the overheads. They have not been asked to contribute towards core data management costs as they were paying for new habitat surveys which other funding partners (HCC, government agencies, utilities etc.) have benefited from.

Instead the data management costs have been covered by HCC, the government agencies, utilities, and income from commercial data requests, although income from the central government has either been fixed for the past 4 years (Environment Agency) or has been cut to zero in the case of Natural England.

Under the 2015-2018 Business Plan HBIC had been making a ‘surplus’ of £25-£30K each year which has been covering some departmental overheads. From April 2018 the local authority partners were charged at a level which fully covered departmental overheads. This necessitated a rise in the hourly charge out rate for an E grade from £23.90/hr in 2017/18 to £30.00/hr in 2018/19. This was still below the £38/hour that HCC charged to fully recover all costs and overheads. Since then the hourly rate has increased by 3%/yr and the hours used by the local authority partners have been carefully logged and averaged out over the past 4 years to arrive at a new recommended level for each authority for 2021-24 which along with income from data requests and other projects is designed to ensure all overheads are covered as much as possible.

The cost of the ‘in-kind’ service which HBIC delivers to HCC ETE has been calculated at around £34,000/year, the same as the salary/on-costs of the 0.5FTE HBIC Manager. Services provided to ETE include habitat survey, screening HCC planning applications & road works, responding to data requests which are of a county/ strategic nature, some SINC work, the road verge project and a contribution towards core data management costs. HBIC data is also essential to the work of the HCC Ecology Team and the advice they provide to the County Council, and the local planning authorities through SLAs.

As mentioned, income from commercial data requests contributes to the costs of running the centre. HBIC encourages local authorities, where appropriate, to insist on developers coming to HBIC for a background data search before submitting their applications partly on the basis that an ‘NBN only’ data search is inadequate. It is also hoped that Natural England and Forestry Commission will be recommending that landowners request a data search before submitting applications under the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)

As previously, 10% of income from data requests is redirected to the species groups as a contribution towards their data gathering activities.

New potential areas of income include:

- Offering a BNG checking service and monitoring scheme
- Increase offer to landowners to support ELMS applications
- Offering a ‘premier’ service to regular consultancies through a data supply agreement
- Offering more formal training courses in habitat survey/species identification through for example CIEEM if there is spare capacity in the survey programme
- Seeking potential SLAs with other agencies such as the Highways England, Network Rail and other utilities

6.2 Projected Costs and Income

The following financial projections cover a three-year period starting on 1st April 2021 and ending on the 31st March 2024. The 2021/22 accounts are also shown for comparison/ completeness. The assumptions upon which the financial projections are based are summarised in 6.1

Both income & expenditure are summarised below. Salaries are based on a 2% pay award per year over the three-year period although an increase of 3% per year has been built into the SLAs to also cover pay increments and other costs subject to inflation. The projected SLA income for the 2021/22 is shown in detail in Appendix 1.

	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Projected	2022/23 Projected	2023/24 Projected
EXPENDITURE				
Staff salaries/NI/pension ⁴	£241,521 ⁵	£235,000	£242,000	£249,000
Travel/Training/Equipment/fees	£6,785	£7,500	£8,000	£9,500
Income to species groups	£13,800	£14,500	£15,000	£15,500
Total expenditure	£262,106	£255,000	£265,000	£274,000
INCOME				
From Partnership SLAs	£154,786	£160,000	£165,000	£170,000
Chargeable Data Requests	£140,937	£145,000	£150,000	£155,000
Internal HCC Client (Highways and Property Services)	£0	£2,400	£2,500	£2,600
Income from spare survey capacity	£23,309	£5,900*	£6,000*	£6,100*
Additional income(projects)	£882 ⁶	£15,000	£10,000*	£10,000*
Total income	£319,914	£328,300	£333,500	£343,700
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	+ £57,808	+£73,300	+£68,500	+£69,700
Other costs/in-kind				
Departmental/Corporate overheads	- £87,750	- £87,750		
Salary/on-costs 0.5FTE Manager	- £35,000	- £35,500		
Service provision to HCC ETE (0.7FTE)	+ £34,000	+ £35,000		
HBIC Reserve account ⁷				£227,566

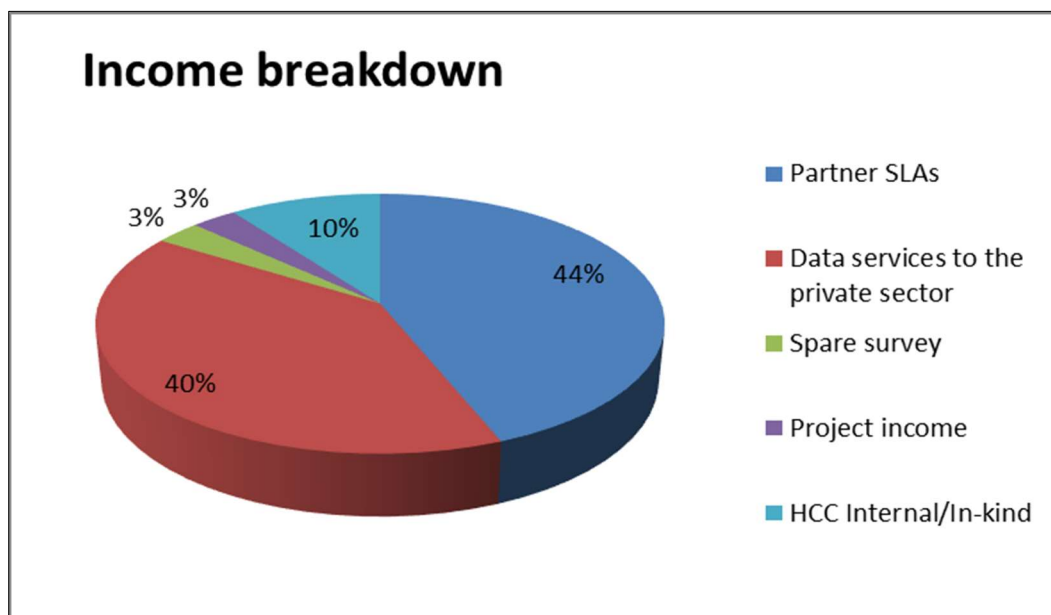
*could be higher based on previous years income

⁴ Excludes 0.5FTE Manager

⁵ Included additional maternity cover costs

⁶ Mostly included under spare survey capacity

⁷ Includes £20,000 ring fenced for development of habitat mapping software, £3,000 remaining from Ancient Woodland Inventory Review, and a contingency fund for a minimum 6 months running costs of c£165,000

Fig 4 Income breakdown for 2021/22

6.3 Summary

Given the direction of travel HBIC is projected to cover all its direct costs and 80% of its departmental and corporate overheads over the Business Plan period. This forecast is dependant on:

- All partners continuing with their SLAs including the 3% increase per year
- A continued modest increase in income from data requests and external projects
- HCC ETE continuing to meet the costs of the 0.5 FTE manager to cover the cost of direct service provision by HBIC

6.4 Contingency plan in the event of reduced funding

Most Partners with 3 year Service Level Agreements are required to give six months' notice before withdrawing from their SLA. In the event of a drop in funding from any of the partners (including host) or income from data requests, there will be a period of time to seek out new funding or revisit existing fees before deciding whether or not to reduce staff posts, reduce services or review set-up/host arrangements. HBIC has reached critical mass to provide the required service. Any drop in funding and potential loss in staff will undoubtedly have adverse implications on service delivery for the remaining funding partners and ultimately on the viability of the Centre to continue in its current form.

It continues to be important, given the significant uncertainty around future public finances and the ongoing and considerable savings that HCC has to make by 2023, for HBIC to contemplate and be mindful of alternative delivery models during this Plan period.

APPENDIX 1: Projected allocation of key tasks for 2021/22

Post	Primary tasks	% FTE
Centre Manager 0.5 FTE	Management of HBIC & Partnership	25
	SINCs & planning related	5
	Data output, analysis & reporting inc. correspondence	4
	Road Verge Project (data/evaluation)	3
	Community engagement/recorders	3
	Commissioned Projects	3
	Regional/national work/partnerships	2
	Leave, professional development etc.	5
		50%
Senior Ecologist/Data Manager 1.0 FTE	Centre Management/staff supervision	10
	IT Development work	25
	Data output, analysis & research	10
	Data validation & management	30
	Special projects	10
	Leave, professional development etc.	15
		100%
Senior Ecologist/SLA Lead 0.85 FTE	Centre management/SLA liaison	10
	Management of Survey Programme	20
	Evaluate SINCs, update datasets & notify owners	20
	Data validation & management	20
	Community engagement	4
	Data output, analysis and research	1
	Leave, professional development etc.	10
		85%
Field Ecologist 1.0 FTE x2	Field Survey/write up and data entry	60 x 2
	Organisation of survey programme	20 x 2
	SINC evaluation	5 x 2
	Leave, professional development etc.	15 x 2
		200%
Ecologist 1.0 FTE	Data output	35
	Data validation/Supervising volunteers	20
	Screening Planning lists	20
	Community engagement (Recorders/forum)	10
	Leave, professional development etc.	15
		100%
Assistant Ecologist 1.0 FTE	Data output	35
	Verification of survey reports	20
	Screening Planning lists	10
	Habitat mapping	20
	Leave, professional development etc.	15
		100%
Total		635%

20% = 1 day per week

APPENDIX 2: Glossary of acronyms

ALERC	Association of Local Environmental Records Centres
AONB	Areas of Outstanding Nature Beauty
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BWARS	The (UK) Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society
ELMS	Environmental Land Management Scheme
ETE	Economy, Transport & Environment Department (at HCC)
FTE	Full Time Employee
GIS	Geographic Information System
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HFRG	Hampshire Fungus Recording Group
IT	Information Technology support at HCC
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK)
LERC	Local Environmental Records Centre
LNP	Local Nature Partnership (for Hampshire & the Isle of Wight)
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
NBN	National Biodiversity Network
SANG	Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SDNP	South Downs National Park
SES	Specialist Environmental Services (team within ETE hosting HBIC)
SLA	Service level Agreement
UAG	(HBIC) Users Advisory Group