

Shropshire Environmental Data Network Meeting, 15th January 2010

The only item on the agenda is consideration of the bids for 2010-2011.

Report on progress so far

This is the third year of SEDN. In our first year I was invited to set up SEDN and produce a strategy, study existing data arrangements, and come up with an axiophyte dataset that would form the start of the SEDN database.

The strategy was to train up county recorders to act as 'Data Tsars' and provide records for the growing SEDN database. Four tsars were appointed, and they agreed to come up with 50,000 records to add to the 50,000 already in the SEDN database. Mostly this has already been done very successfully. I am just waiting for the entomological records and then I shall send them all off to NBN and make sure the partners all have a copy of the SEDN data set. I think we will go well over the 100,000 record target.

This third year we are planning to let more contracts to an increasing number of Tsars to widen the scope of the SEDN data set. We have £15,000 to spend, which is very little on which to base a Local Records Centre. Most LRCs have two or three staff, and one or two fieldworkers, and even with such a budget (£150,000 a year?) there is no way they would expect to collect so many high quality records across such a wide taxonomic range. The Tsars approach is allowing us to collect very high quality records at something like 1/5th their normal cost.

A pattern is beginning to establish. At first, the Tsars make large bids to hand over their backlog of data. After that, they will have far fewer records to supply, but the new ones will be based on recent fieldwork and will hopefully be of much higher quality than the backlog. A Tsar who is fully computerised has two choices: bid a large amount to do lots of fieldwork, or bid a small sum to just keep things ticking over. Either is fine for SEDN, and presumably we will get periods of both.

This round of bids is to supply the backlog of mammal, amphibian and various entomological data sets, plus the remaining backlog of fungus records. Botanical recording is very active at the moment with a Flora on the way, and the bid is to complete geographical coverage of the county, so this is a bid for a high level of current field recording. The ornithological society again declined to bid.

If SEDN continues at this pace then it will have the entire backlog of data accumulated in a few years' time. This would leave us with the choice of promoting more active recording, or of spending more time on analysis and reporting. We should start developing this side of the LRC in the next year or so, because endless data collection is pointless unless we do something with it.

So that is my proposed strategy for now: focus on getting data in for now, and start turning our attention towards using it over the next year or so.

SEDN Bids 2010-2011

		N. records	£/record
Coordination	2000		
Shropshire Council	1000	0	
Amphibians	600	800	£0.75
Fungi	2500	20000	£0.13
Invertebrates	3840	15000	£0.26
Vascular Plants	4500	25000	£0.18
Bats	1040	200	£5.20
Butterflies	0	0	
Mammals	1500	2000	£0.75
Total	16980	63000	£0.27

SEDN Coordination (Alex Lockton)

Given the number of bids we have and the range of groups to work on, I've put in a minimal application for management this year. I don't propose to do any more open Mapmate training sessions, but I shall support the Tsars. I'm not entirely sure how sustainable this is – LRCs need outreach, publicity and fundraising in order to thrive. A normal LRC would dedicate at least 50% of its budget to management. Possibly Shropshire Council could take on some of those roles.

- To organise and train Tsars in provision of data to SEDN standards
- To provide the data to SEDN partners and NBN in suitable formats, bringing the total database to c. 200,000 records by March 2011.
- To provide reports and organise meetings for SEDN committee and Data Tsars. Organise 2011 round of applications if there is to be one.

Bid: £2,000

Amphibians Group (Fran Lancaster)

Shropshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARG) had been dormant for some years and reformed in 2009. The AGM is planned for February 2010 along with further training for members (19 members currently), support for volunteers during the 2010 survey season, and the generation of new records and validation of the existing database (held by SWT).

The Shropshire ARG is planning to undertake an active recording season in 2010 which we hope will generate in excess of 200 records.

Proposed actions for 2010 and costs:

1. Extraction of records from protected species surveys: 70 additional amphibian and reptile records and 150 or more additional records of other protected species.
2. Validation of existing records: 612 records of amphibians and reptiles in the protected species database held by Shropshire Wildlife Trust which are unvalidated.
3. Update of species status, trends and losses on BARS

Bid: £600

Bats (John Morgan)

So far the supply of records from others has been very, very disappointing and I am not in a position to promise anything more than my own records which I anticipate to be around 200.

- Two hours a week to update and refine the 'Bat database' as required.
- Supply update to SEDN.
- Travel and attendance at regular meetings (say quarterly.)

Bid: £1,040

Fungus Group (Roy Mantle)

- Provide approximately 20,000 records of fungi.
- The range is from 1725 to the present day.
- This will complete the dataset of fungi for the county.
- No records are withheld except those that are not currently in the Mapmate species list, (principally the Myxomycota).
- Draw up a list of indicator species which will highlight sites for possible protection in Shropshire.
- The records have been compiled and are owned by the Shropshire Fungus Group and we are happy to pass them on to SEDN.

Bid: £2,500

Future work – I would be willing to be part of a network of 'Tsars' to answer queries and give advice.

There will be ongoing surveys to evaluate both known and new sites to obtain as complete a picture as possible of Shropshire's Fungus Flora and to log any trends in order to highlight conservation needs.

Invertebrates (Pete Boardman)

I would like the group to consider my bid for further SEDN work during the period later summer 2010 to end of March 2011 for further invertebrate work. I would see the following pieces of work being compiled;

- 2010 hoverflies / other flies / aculeates – added to Mapmate database (estimated 3,000 records).
- Micro-lepidoptera database added to Mapmate database. These records are currently held by Godfrey Blunt who is keen to include them in the SEDN system. I propose to enable this to happen by working closely with Godfrey during the year (estimated 10,000 records).
- Additions to coleopteran database following launch of the Shropshire Beetle Recording Group and appeal for records (estimated 2,000 records).

I would seek to operate a similar funding process as during this last Tsar contract – where the SEDN pay the FSC for my time and I spent 1 day per week during the period working on the database as per the 2009 contract.

Bid: £3,840

Mammals (John Mackintosh)

- Taxonomic coverage: all Shropshire mammal species except bats.
- Number of records to be supplied in 2010 -2011: 2,000
- Date range of the data: Priority will be given to current records and most records transferred to MapMate hub will be post 1990.
- The data are held by: The Shropshire County Mammal Recorder.
- Work will be carried out through the SMG to increase the flow of mammal records and to develop the record validation process. The quality of the species distribution information provided by the records will be examined and actions for improvement prioritised.
- Costs will be incurred in supporting these activities under the following headings: software maintenance and update; help with the conversion of existing data into a form suitable for MapMate input; site visits for validating records; training in mammal identification; survey work specifically related to SEDN priorities; travel for necessary meetings.

Bid: £1,500, to be made to The Shropshire Mammal Group.

Vascular Plants (Sarah Whild)

Levels of botanical survey are very high at the moment, as we aim to complete the survey work for the planned Flora this year. In 2009 we managed 100 surveys of 1km squares, making about 200 records per square and noting detailed locations of rare plants. A dozen or so potential new Wildlife Sites were identified and reported to SWT and SCC. Each such survey takes about 4 hours fieldwork, 1 hour computerisation, and 10 miles of travel. Thus we did 500 hours of new fieldwork and 1,000 miles of travel to produce 20,000 new records.

In addition to this, data from other sources such as SWT, Botanical Society field trips, Natural England, University of Birmingham courses added some 5,000 records in 2009.

My bid here is to keep SEDN up to date by providing the entire year's output, plus fulfilling the Tsar's role of providing advice, attending meetings, commenting on applications, etc.

- Update the online Flora database to the end of 2009.
- Provide SEDN an updated table of axiophyte records.
- Continue with active survey of the county, including spending £2,000 on professional surveys of under-recorded areas (Paul & Ian Green), and working with organisations involved in botany to provide advice for BARS updating, etc.
- Provide 25,000 records from 2009 to SEDN.

Bid: £4,500.