

BSBI Data Access Questionnaire

The Scottish Results

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Background

- Previously BSBI data to went to the NBN Gateway via Biological Records Centre (BRC)
- We forwarded completed datasets periodically
- Records were made publicly available at 10km resolution
- No data has been sent to the NBN for > two years
- Also, we have agreed that in future, we will be responsible for uploading BSBI data to the NBN.

BSBI position on data access

We strongly believe that BSBI data should be used in the interest of the plants themselves and that, specifically, increasing access to our data will lead to:

- Better management and conservation decisions due to greater awareness of land-managers of the plant interests on their land
- Improved understanding of our flora due greater scientific and research use
- Promotion of the BSBI and plant recording more generally

Benefits & Risks

- We believe that the benefits of greater disclosure far outweigh the risk of accidental or intentional damage.
- The NBN has mechanisms in place to reduce the risk of such damage to particularly ‘sensitive species’
- We have published such a risk assessed list (handout)
- Recorders would ‘flag’ any other species or records that are thought to be under threat locally from disclosure.
- They could either be marked as ‘not to be passed on’ or have their details blurred when forwarded to the NBN.

Policy on Data Access

Recording and Research Committee agreed that:

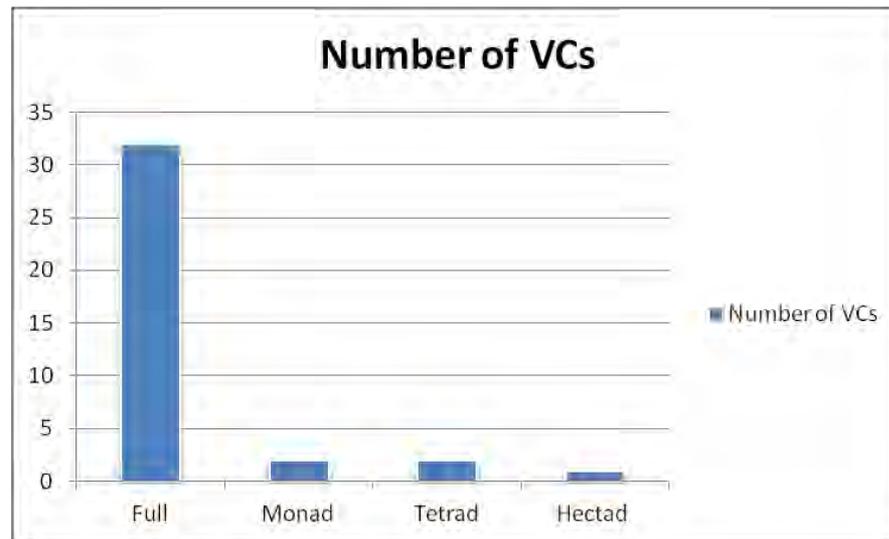
- Each VC would decide its own resolution of public access (full, monad or tetrad) on the NBN
- But the BSBI's default recommendation would be full resolution (except for sensitive species).
- The proposal is that we would continue to omit, for the moment at least, site and recorder names.
- However the NBN's ability to control mass downloading of data is not clear, and so we will not start uploading data until we are clear how they intend to deal with this.

Questionnaire

- The lead recorder in the 41 Scottish Vice-counties was asked to respond to the questionnaire.
- There are 39 such lead recorders.
- One recorder didn't manage to respond before going on holiday and another sent an annual report but did not respond to the questionnaire. So 37 responses in total...

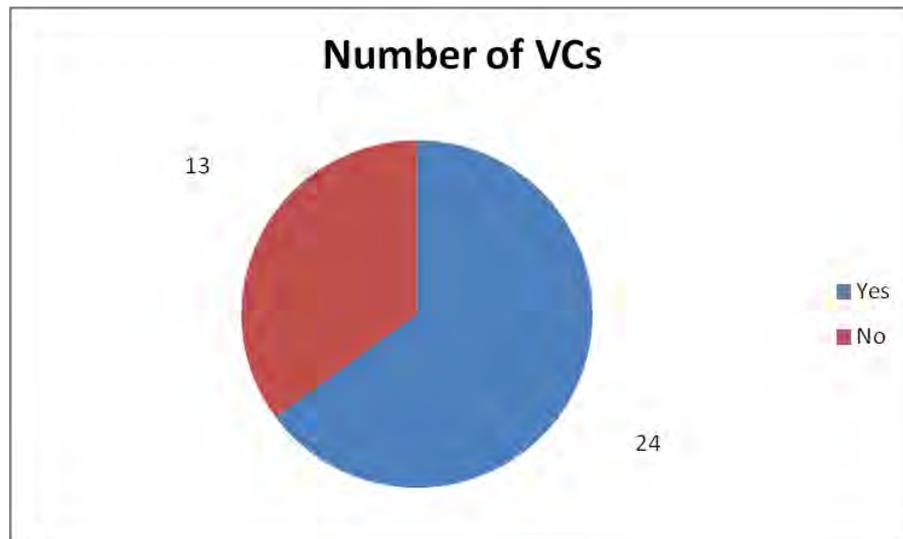
Q1: Resolution

What resolution would you prefer records for your vice-county to be made available on the NBN?



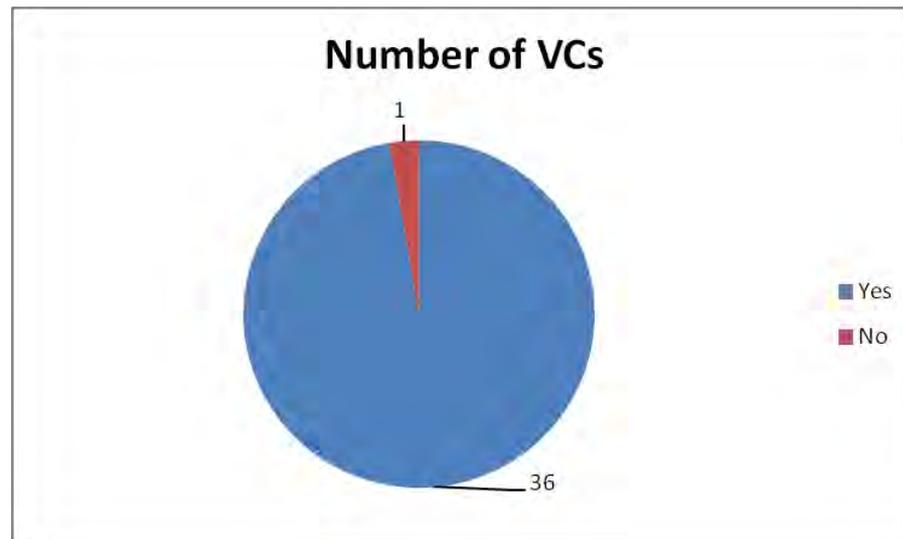
Q2: Flagging locally sensitive populations?

Regardless of the resolution you have chosen are there species or individual records that you would want to flag as sensitive/confidential before they are forwarded to the NBN Gateway?



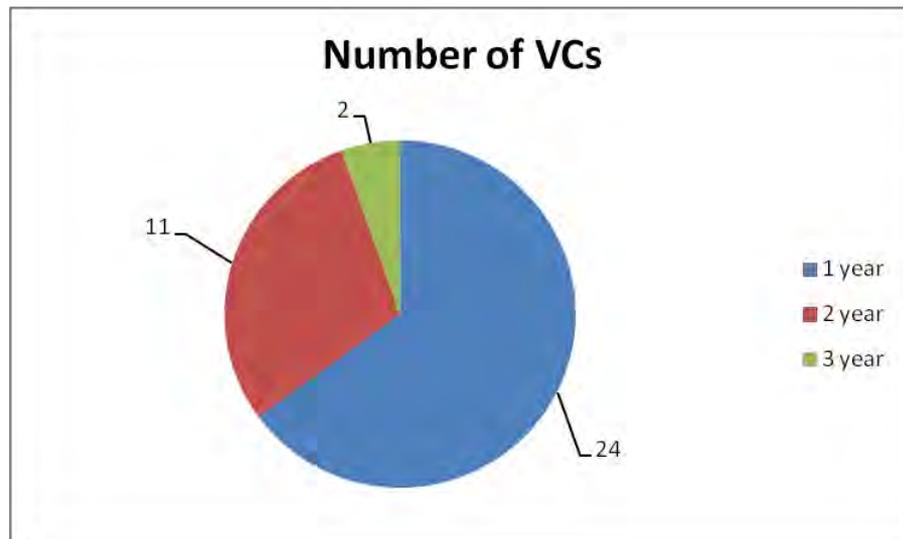
Q3: Historic records released in full?

Would you be happy for non-sensitive historic records, collected before 2000, to be released at full resolution?



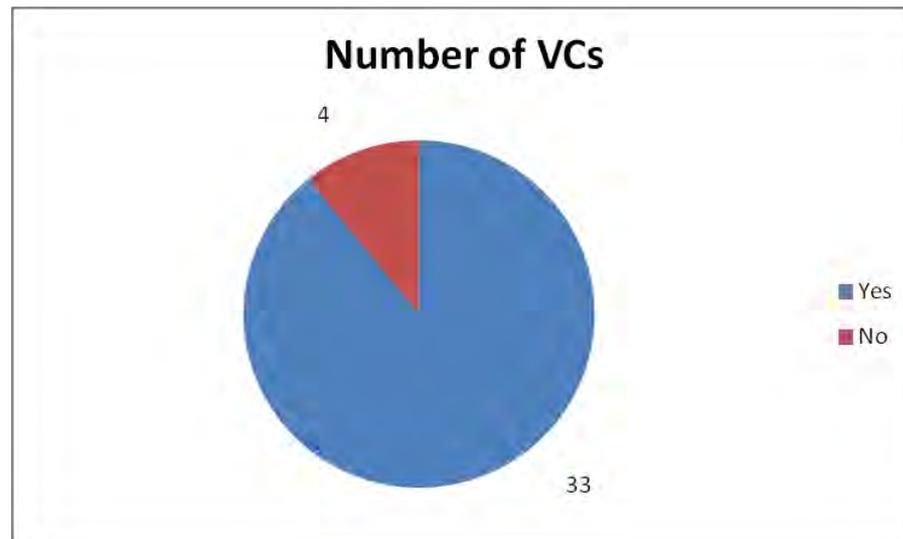
Q4: Delay for validation?

To allow time for editing (validating) records the BSBI would not release the most recent data for a period after arrival at the DDB. What delay would you prefer for your county?



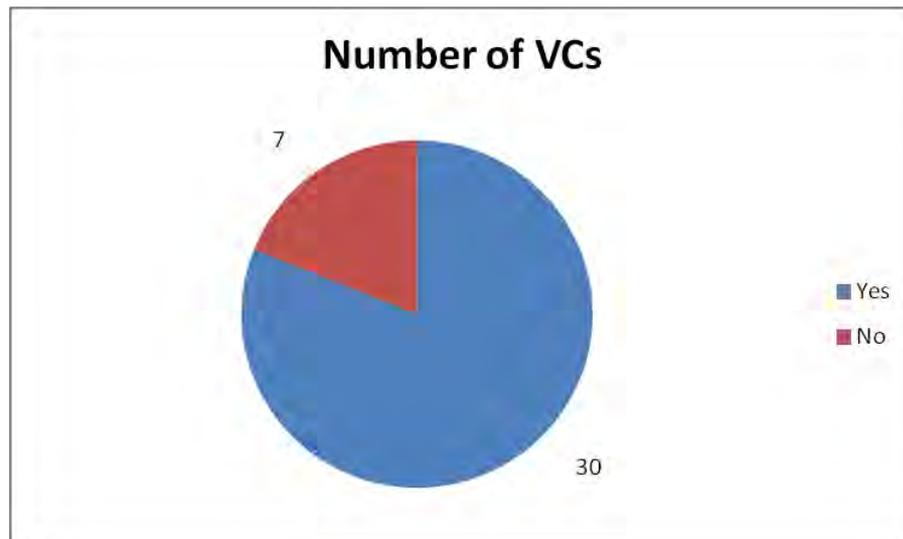
Q5: Publish site names?

Would you be happy for site names to be included in non-sensitive records made available at full or monad resolution?



Q6: Publish recorders' names?

Would you be happy for recorders' names to be included in non-sensitive records made available at full or monad resolution?



Discussion: Site & recorder names

- Chris Metherell pointed out that publishing site names and recorders' names is a more sensitive issue in England than in Scotland due to the difference in land access law.
- And the lack of an access code as we have in Scotland means that recorders need to ask for access to land.
- Recorders might feel vulnerable if landowners do not understand why recording is taking place and what happens to the records.
- From a legal perspective, recorders are anxious that they may, in the case of planning or development proposals, be asked to give evidence in court although this is not the case in reality.

Discussion: Site & recorder names

- Scottish site names and recorder names – some site owners or managers may not wish to publicise a site name because they fear disturbance to e.g. a sensitive population of breeding birds by visitors to the plants.
- Andy Amphlett pointed out that the Scottish Access code gives right of ‘responsible’ access, recorders should not ‘own’ the problems of others in this respect.
- Recorders who contribute records to VC Recorders might be (justifiably) very upset if they are not credited.
- The NBN advises, from a Data Protection point of view, that names of recorders can be published but (ideally) recorders will have been warned first.

Discussion: Data ownership

- The question was raised - does the VC recorder 'own' the records?
- VC recorders are custodians of data – records do not (all) belong to them but are part of the future heritage. Data should be published; then it is the responsibility of individuals / landowners / managers / developers to act responsibly with this knowledge eg RSPB, FC, etc.
- There should be a code of practice and procedures that newly appointed VC recorders agree to follow.

Discussion: General points

- Resolution of records – the highest possible is most desirable. However if a VC recorder has made an agreement with a landowner regarding resolution of records then honour this agreement and / or try to negotiate a better outcome.
- Validation – once people are up to speed with validation then checking the annual batch won't take long. It is the historical backlog that is likely to take the time. Automated DDb systems are needed to help with this.

Discussion: General points

- Money – data is a saleable resource but selling would probably need paid staff to manage – would this be cost effective? Morally questionable? Difference between selling raw data and selling data that has been processed or interpreted.
- BSBI data in publications should be cited. (Those accessing NBN data agree to Terms & conditions that require that.)
- Could there be a donation scheme whereby data accessed or downloaded could be donated or paid for?
- It would be great if a standard approach to publishing BSBI data on the NBN might be adopted.