

Biodiversity Recording Mentoring Scheme in South East Wales (Phase 1)

Final Report

**Following the SEWBRc-Wales Biodiversity Partnership
Memorandum of Agreement (February 2013)**



SEWBR^eC

SOUTH EAST WALES BIODIVERSITY RECORDS CENTRE
CANOLFAN GOFNODION BIOAMRYWIAETH DE DDWYRAIN CYMRU

Adam Rowe and Elaine Wright

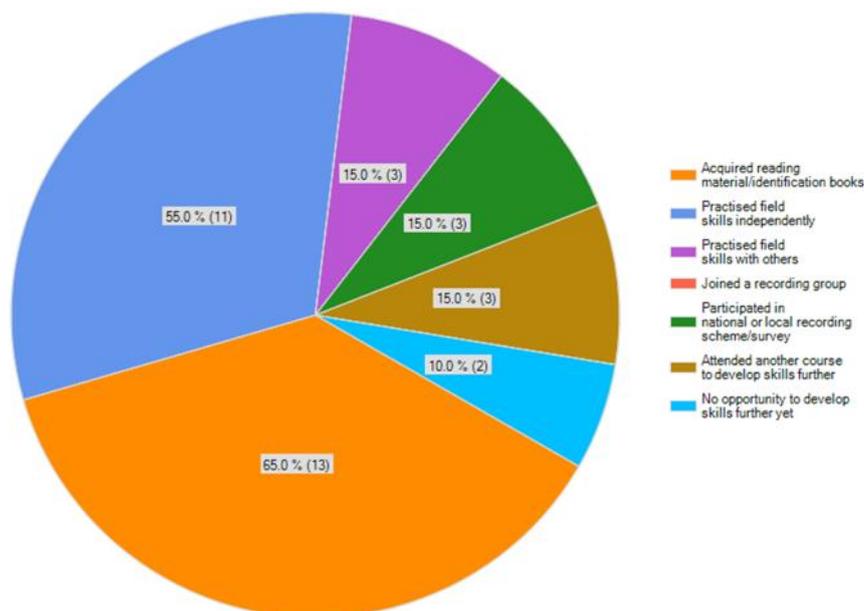
10 April 2013

Background and Introduction

One of SEWBRc's key roles is to provide support to the voluntary biodiversity recording community. For almost a decade since SEWBRc's establishment, this support has taken the form of producing Recorders' Newsletters, organising annual Recorders' Forum meetings, arranging and running biodiversity recording days and (since 2009, with the kind support of Wales Biodiversity Partnership) providing an annual programme of species identification and recording training events.

These latter training events have always been enormously popular and well-received and are almost always over-subscribed. We have always sought feedback from those attending these courses and in late 2012 we undertook a brief online questionnaire survey which targeted all who attended one of the four courses held in 2012 to evaluate their success in terms of how many people have gone on to make and submit records as a result of these courses. The results were perhaps a little disappointing with only 32% of participants having gone onto submit records to SEWBRc (with several others promising that data was on its way!) Results did show however that the majority had taken steps to further improve their knowledge, such as acquiring reading material or identification books (65%) or practising field skills independently (55%). The chart below shows the response to the question 'How have you developed your recording skills further'.

How have you developed your identification skills further?



A further question asked respondents 'How can SEWBRc improve the courses, or help you develop your species identification skills further?' This question yielded many supportive comments about the continuation of courses, but several made suggestions such as further refresher or follow-up courses to hone skills, or the opportunity to form a small team led by the course mentor at a biodiversity blitz event.

These responses, along with SEWBRc's wish to look at new ways of nurturing the next generation of voluntary biological recorders led to the idea of organising some form of mentoring scheme, to match those who wanted to develop those skills to those who are able to share their knowledge with others (including those experts who may not wish to lead a formal training course).

In January 2013 Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) contacted the Welsh Local Records Centres (LRCs) seeking expressions of interest for small-scale funding of strategic projects to advance the work of the LRCs. The timing could

not have been better from SEWBRc's point of view and a proposal was developed and submitted to plan (and later implement) a Biodiversity Recording Mentoring Scheme for the South East Wales region. This proposal was submitted to WBP and approved in February 2013, resulting in the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement, the text of which is attached as Annex 1.

Methodology

An internet-based search was undertaken for examples of similar mentoring schemes around the UK (including the BSBI Identiplant scheme and two FSC schemes, Invertebrate Challenge and Bio.FeLL). A request for similar LRC-run schemes (via the ALERC forum) drew a blank, suggesting that we may be the first LRC to embark on such a scheme. Several LRCs suggested they would be keen to hear how we get on!

It was found that most other schemes require significant funding, as they run using paid mentors. Often mentees also have to pay to participate. As a result, such schemes are much more structured than that which SEWBRc is proposing, with a commitment to a minimum amount of time from mentors and mentees.

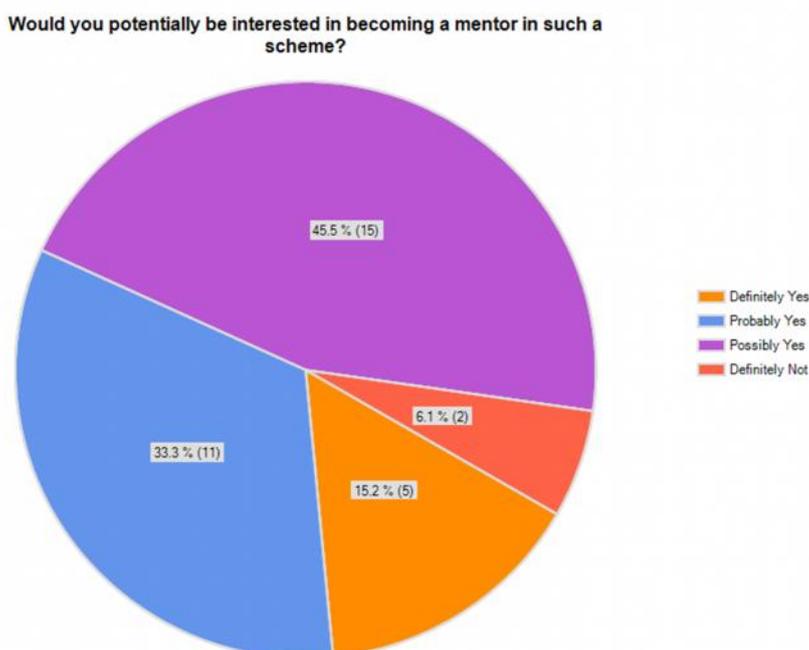
Potential Mentors Questionnaire

After taking on board our own considerations for what we wanted from the Mentoring scheme, as well as lessons learned from other schemes, a set of questions was drafted and refined to be targeted at potential mentors. The finalised questions are given in Annex 2.

This questionnaire was circulated via email to a targeted distribution list of local recorders and experts, drawn from SEWBRc's extensive contacts directory. The questionnaire was launched on 11/03/2013 and a reminder was sent on 20/03/2013. By the time the survey was closed we had received 33 responses.

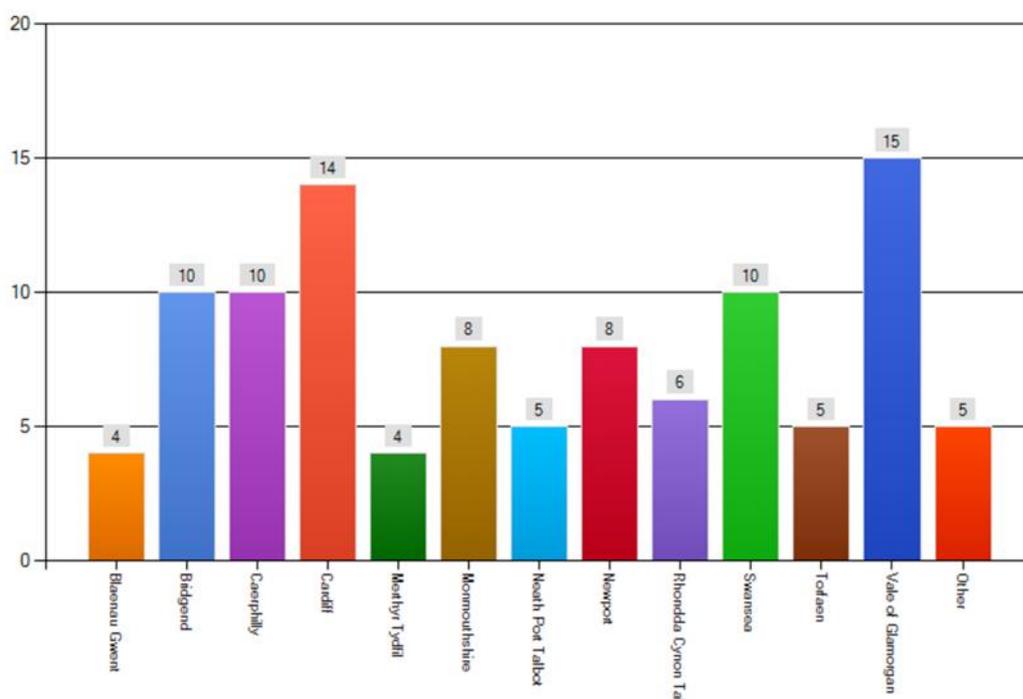
Mentors Questionnaire Results

- 97% of respondents agreed that the outline of the proposed scheme sounded like a suitable format (Q2)
- 94% of respondents said they would possibly, probably or definitely be interested in becoming a mentor (Q3) [see pie chart below]



- Of the 2 respondents who were definitely not prepared to be mentors, 1 cited time commitment as their key issue, whilst the other lives outside SE Wales and felt it was unsustainable to take on a mentee here.
- 31 respondents provided details of the taxonomic groups that they would be prepared to mentor in. (Q4)
- The vast majority of respondents would like to take on either 1 or 2 mentees. (Q5)
- 93.5% of potential mentors would prefer a completely flexible arrangement rather than agreeing a fixed number of days of mentoring. (Q6)
- The majority of potential mentors don't mind what level of expertise their mentees have, but of those that expressed a preference, everyone would prefer to take on a 'beginner' or 'intermediate', compared to a 'semi-expert'. (Q7)
- All unitary areas had at least 4 active potential mentors, with some areas having up to 15 potential active mentors. (Q9) [see chart below]

Which geographical areas do you generally carry out field visits in? (tick as many as you like)



- 100% of potential mentors agreed that they would be happy to participate in annual reporting to SEWBRc on how mentoring was progressing. (Q10)
- 81% of respondents indicated that they would either definitely or possibly be able to lead future formal taxonomic training days. (Q13)

Potential Mentees Questionnaire

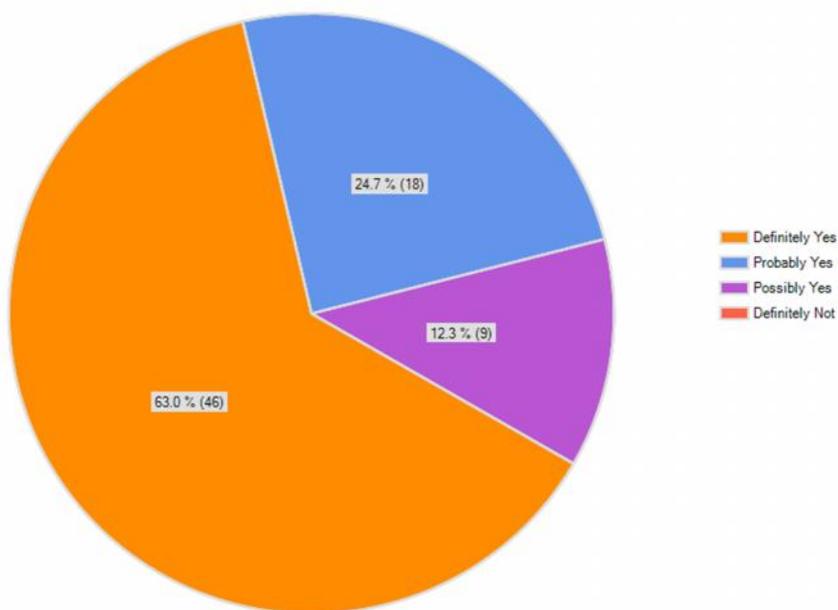
Having completed and launched the mentor questionnaire, a complimentary set of questions was drafted and refined for potential mentees. The finalised questions are given in Annex 3.

The mentees questionnaire was circulated via email to everybody on SEWBRc's contacts directory. The initial plan to target this questionnaire was dropped after careful consideration of a number of issues, including the fact that those who had already offered to be mentors for one particular taxonomic group may also wish to be a mentee for another group. The questionnaire was launched on 21/03/2013 and a reminder was sent on 04/04/2013. By the time the survey was closed we had received 74 responses.

Mentees Questionnaire Results

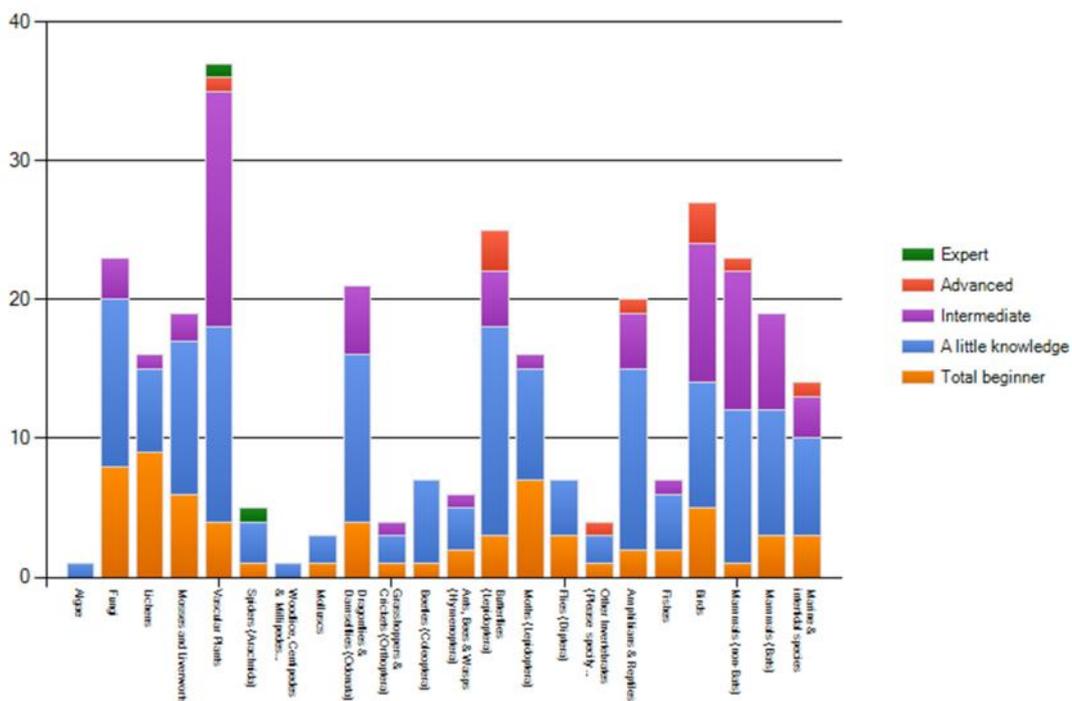
- 100% of respondents agreed that the outline of the proposed scheme sounded like a suitable format (Q2)
- 100% of respondents indicated that they would possibly, probably or definitely be interested in becoming a mentee. (Q3) [see pie chart below]

Would you potentially be interested in becoming a mentee in such a scheme?



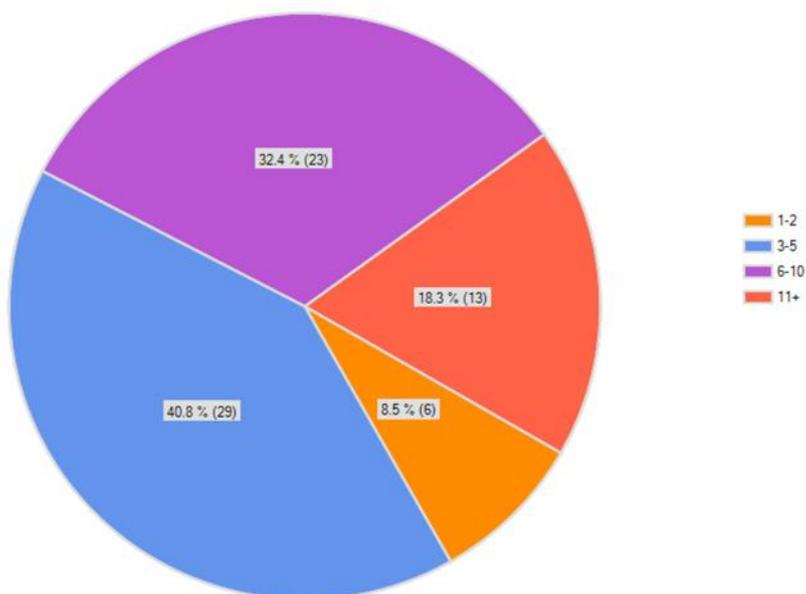
- The following chart shows all responses to the question regarding taxonomic groups of interest and levels of current expertise. (Q4) [Apologies that downloaded image resolution is poor – a better version will be provided later].

Please list the taxonomic group(s) in which you are most interested as a potential mentee. In each case please indicate your current level of expertise. You may select up to FIVE choices.

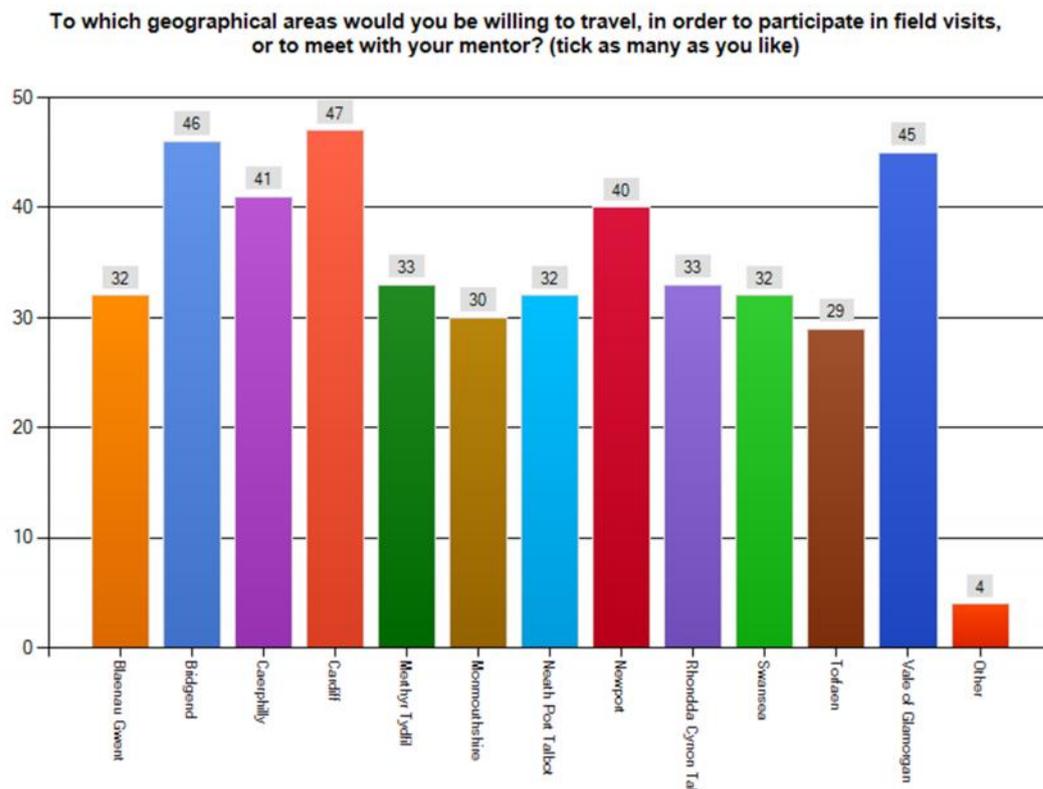


- Results show that the following groups made up the top ten most popular for potential mentees:
 - 1st - Vascular plants (37)
 - 2nd - Birds (27)
 - 3rd - Butterflies (25)
 - 4th - Fungi (23)
 - 4th - Mammals (non-Bats) (23)
 - 6th - Dragonflies & Damselflies (21)
 - 7th - Amphibians & Reptiles (20)
 - 8th - Mosses & Liverworts (19)
 - 9th - Mammals (Bats) (19)
 - 10th - Lichens (16)
 - 10th - Moths (16)
- 73% of respondents would like between 3 and 10 days contact days with their mentor per year. (Q5) [See pie chart below]

Please give an indication of the number of contact days (field visits or identification sessions) that you feel you would ideally have with your mentor during the course of a year?



- 88.7% of respondents would prefer a completely flexible arrangement rather than agreeing a fixed number of days of mentoring. (Q6)
- 100% of respondents would be prepared to participate in a simple application process, to allow us to assess their suitability as a mentee and to enable us to match them with a suitable mentor. (Q9)
- Potential mentees are well spread across the region with potential mentees being willing to travel widely across the region for mentoring sessions. The chart overleaf shows that there are at between 29 and 47 people who are prepared to be mentored in each Unitary authority area.



Project experiences and lessons learnt

It is clear from the responses that there is a great appetite and indeed demand for a Biological Recording Mentoring scheme in South East Wales. This has been an incredibly useful exercise to assess and analyse that demand and leads to the clear conclusion that we must press on and implement a Mentoring Scheme as soon as possible. The methods used (Survey Monkey online questionnaires) have been incredibly efficient and we are delighted in both cases at the response rates that were achieved.

Adam Rowe
 Elaine Wright
 SEWBRc, Cardiff. 10 April 2013.

Hours used

Annex 4 shows a breakdown of all time spent on this project within SEWBRc. We have exceeded the 31.5 hours allowed for in the project plan and therefore we have legitimately claimed all expenses due to us for this project.

Acknowledgements

SEWBRc staff and Directors would like to thank Sean McHugh and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership for funding this work and facilitating its completion. We look forward to working with you on future projects.

ANNEX 1 – Text of the Memorandum of Agreement

(signed by both parties on 19/02/2013)

Project

Biodiversity Recording Mentoring Scheme in south east Wales (phase 1)

Nature of Agreement

The Partners enter into this Agreement in good faith and in the spirit of co-operation in order to achieve common aims. The Agreement is between South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP). The agreement does not constitute a legal agreement.

Partners

South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) & Wales Biodiversity Partnership.

Project Outline

PHASE 1: INFORMATION GATHERING AND REPORTING	Days	Day rate	Total exc. VAT	VAT (@20%)	Total inc. VAT
Research into existing and proposed similar/related schemes around the UK and beyond	0.5	£157.50	£78.75	£15.75	£94.50
Potential mentors: designing questionnaire covering key issues (time commitment, preferred approaches, number of mentees), building contact list (Vice County Recorders, local experts) and circulating questionnaire.	1.5		£236.25	£47.25	£283.50
Potential mentees: designing questionnaire covering key issues (time commitment, preferred approaches, evidence of suitability), building contact list (those applying for places at SEWBRc courses and events, social media followers) and circulating questionnaire.	1.5		£236.25	£47.25	£283.50
Collating, summarising and reporting findings, including broad recommendations for way forward	1		£157.50	£31.50	£189.00
Totals	4.5		£708.75	£141.75	£850.50

Actions

Research and information gathering relating to biodiversity mentoring schemes in the UK & beyond
 Develop questionnaire
 Identify mentors and mentees and undertake preliminary matching
 Project publicity
 Project report detailing recommendations

Costs

Data mobilisation: £850 total; WBP are not responsible for additional costs incurred by SEWBRc or any third parties.

Funding

Wales Biodiversity Partnership will provide project funding. Due to funding criteria, WBP funding cannot be used if any part of the project is funded by Welsh Government or statutory agency funds (CCW, FC, EA). An invoice from SEWBRc is required by March 25th 2013 at the latest.

Publicity

Wales Biodiversity Partnership expects the project to be publicised by SEWBRc by appropriate mechanisms (e.g. SEWBRc newsletter, WEIF, NBN news etc).

Reporting

A final report for the mentoring scheme is required from SEWBRc. Project experiences (ways of working, partnerships etc) and lessons learnt would also be useful to include in the report. The report is required to be completed by 10th April 2013 at the latest.

ANNEX 2 – SEWBRc Proposed Mentoring Scheme: POTENTIAL MENTORS Survey

INTRODUCTION

SEWBRc is proposing to establish a Mentoring Scheme in South East Wales as a means of training, nurturing and encouraging people who would like to increase their species identification and recording skills and knowledge.

We envisage a scheme which matches those who are willing to share their expertise, with those who are keen to learn and develop themselves as potential future experts.

Mentoring is all about informal, experiential learning and, as such, the proposed scheme offers a means of taking skills picked up in more formal training courses (offered by SEWBRc and others) a step further.

As a local expert, we have selected you as a POTENTIAL MENTOR who may be willing to share your skills through this scheme. We would be very grateful if you could complete this online survey to help us to gauge interest in the proposed scheme. Please note however, that completing this survey will not commit you to becoming a mentor, as we are merely at the fact-finding stage of this project.

As a mentor you will determine your own approach to supporting your mentee(s). It may involve inviting your mentee to accompany you on a planned day out recording, or allowing them to bring or send specimens to you for identification or confirmation. It may involve being in touch only a handful of days each year, or it may involve more frequent contact, especially during field seasons.

Please feel free to pass this survey on to any other local experts or colleagues you feel may be interested.

1. Please provide your full contact details.

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Home Phone	<input type="text"/>
Mobile Phone	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

Please note, your contact details will be responsibly stored by SEWBRc and will not be shared with any Third Parties, except, subject to your specific approval, with potential mentees at a later stage of this project.

This survey has been funded by Wales Biodiversity Partnership.

THE PROPOSED MENTORING SCHEME

2. Our vision for the scheme will involve SEWBRc holding a database of mentors and mentees, and providing mentors with details of potential mentees to choose from. Once the mentor and mentee(s) are matched up, contact details will be exchanged and the pair will be free to make arrangements to initially meet up and to plan their activities.

Do you think this sounds like a suitable format?

- Yes
 No

Please add any comments

3. Would you potentially be interested in becoming a mentor in such a scheme?

- Definitely Yes
- Probably Yes
- Possibly Yes
- Definitely Not

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL MENTORS

4. Please list the taxonomic group(s) in which your expertise lies.

5. How many mentees would you be willing to take on?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

Comments

6. Would you prefer that a mentee commits to an agreed number of contact days during the year, or are you happy to leave things more flexible for both parties?

- I would prefer commitment to an agreed number of days together
- I would prefer complete flexibility for both parties

Other comments

7. What level of experience would you prefer mentees to have?

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Semi-expert
- Any level

Comments

8. Would you prefer for a SEWBRc representative to be present at the initial face-to-face contact between mentor and mentee?

- Yes
- No

Possibly

Other comments

9. Which geographical areas do you generally carry out field visits in? (tick as many as you like)

- Blaenau Gwent
- Bridgend
- Caerphilly
- Cardiff
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Monmouthshire
- Neath Port Talbot
- Newport
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Swansea
- Torfaen
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Other

Please specify

REPORTING

10. Would you be prepared to respond to an annual request from SEWBRc for an update on how mentoring is progressing? This will include briefly reporting back on number of meetings, types of support given and whether you have capacity for new/additional mentees.

- Yes
- No

NON-PARTICIPANTS

11. As you answered 'Definitely Not', please could you give your reasons? (either tick those that apply from the list or enter your comments in the box below).

- Time commitment
- Concerns about safety
- Would expect payment for this type of work
- Mentoring already available in my area of expertise
- Other Reasons/Comments

CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

12. Could you suggest any changes to the proposed scheme that may persuade you to become involved?

TRAINING COURSES

13. Would you be interested in leading one of SEWBRc's taxonomic training days in future years, as part of our established annual programme of events?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly

Comments

14. If you answered 'Yes' or 'Possibly', which groups are you able to provide expert training in?

MENTORING ALREADY AVAILABLE

15. As you answered that mentoring was already available in your area of expertise, please could you elaborate? For example, is mentoring formally available through a group which you know of? If so, please provide details which we can pass onto potential matched mentees.

THANK YOU

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your views are very important to us. We will be in touch again with those who have indicated an interest in the proposed scheme.

ANNEX 3 – SEWBRc Proposed Mentoring Scheme: POTENTIAL MENTEES Survey

INTRODUCTION

SEWBRc is proposing to establish a Mentoring Scheme in South East Wales as a means of training, nurturing and encouraging people who would like to increase their species identification and recording skills and knowledge.

We envisage a scheme which matches those who are willing to share their expertise, with those who are keen to learn and develop themselves as potential future experts.

Mentoring is all about informal, experiential learning and, as such, the proposed scheme offers a means of taking skills picked up in more formal training courses (offered by SEWBRc and others) a step further.

As someone who has had previous contact with SEWBRc, we have selected you as a POTENTIAL MENTEE who may benefit from this scheme. We would be very grateful if you could complete this online survey to help us to gauge interest in the proposed scheme.

Please note this survey is merely a fact-finding questionnaire, and does not guarantee that you will be matched to a mentor.

The approach to the Mentor Scheme is not yet set, and is likely to vary depending on the Mentor and taxonomic group. It may involve accompanying your Mentor on a planned day out recording, or providing them with specimens for identification or confirmation. It may involve contact on only a handful of days each year, or it may involve more frequent interaction, especially during field seasons.

SEWBRc acknowledges the financial support provided by Wales Biodiversity Partnership which has enabled this survey to take place.

1. Please provide your full contact details.

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Home Phone	<input type="text"/>
Mobile Phone	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

Please note, your contact details will be responsibly stored by SEWBRc and will not be shared with any Third Parties, except, subject to your specific approval, with potential mentors at a later stage of this project.

THE PROPOSED MENTORING SCHEME

2. Our vision for the scheme will involve SEWBRc holding a database of mentors and mentees, and providing mentors with details of potential mentees to choose from. Once the mentor and mentee(s) are matched up, contact details will be exchanged and the pair will be free to make arrangements to initially meet up and to plan their activities.

Do you think this sounds like a suitable format?

- Yes
- No

Please add any comments

3. Would you potentially be interested in becoming a mentee in such a scheme?

- Definitely Yes

- Probably Yes
- Possibly Yes
- Definitely Not

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL MENTEES

4. Please list the taxonomic group(s) in which you are most interested as a potential mentee. In each case please indicate your current level of expertise. You may select up to FIVE choices.

	Total beginner	A little knowledge	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Algae	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fungi	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lichens	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Mosses and Liverworts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Vascular Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Spiders (Arachnida)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Woodlice, Centipedes & Millipedes (Isopoda & Myriapoda)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Molluscs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Dragonflies & Damselflies (Odonata)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Grasshoppers & Crickets (Orthoptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Beetles (Coleoptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Ants, Bees & Wasps (Hymenoptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Butterflies (Lepidoptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Moths (Lepidoptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Flies (Diptera)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other Invertebrates (Please specify below in 'Other')	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Amphibians & Reptiles	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fishes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Birds	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Mammals (non-Bats)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Mammals (Bats)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marine & intertidal species	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Other (please specify taxonomic group and state level of current expertise)

5. Please give an indication of the number of contact days (field visits or identification sessions) that you feel you would ideally have with your mentor during the course of a year?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11+

Comments

6. Would you prefer that a mentor commits to an agreed number of contact days during the year, or are you happy to leave things more flexible for both parties?

- I would prefer commitment to an agreed number of days together

I would prefer complete flexibility for both parties

Other comments

7. Would you prefer for a SEWBRc representative to be present at the initial face-to-face contact between mentor and mentee?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly

Other comments

8. To which geographical areas would you be willing to travel, in order to participate in field visits, or to meet with your mentor? (tick as many as you like)

- Blaenau Gwent
- Bridgend
- Caerphilly
- Cardiff
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Monmouthshire
- Neath Port Talbot
- Newport
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Swansea
- Torfaen
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Other

Please specify

APPLICATION PROCESS

9. Would you be prepared to participate in a simple application process, to allow us to assess your suitability as a mentee and to enable us to match you with a suitable mentor?

- Yes
- No

NON-PARTICIPANTS

10. As you answered 'Definitely Not', please could you give your reasons? (either tick those that apply from the list or enter your comments in the box below).

- Time commitment
- Concerns about safety
- I am already participating in another mentoring scheme
- A local group to which I belong already offers a mentoring scheme
- I am not interested in increasing my knowledge in this way
- Other Reasons/Comments

▲
□
▼

◀ □ ▶

MENTORING ALREADY AVAILABLE

11. As you answered that you were already being mentored, or that mentoring was already available via a group to which you belong, please could you provide details of existing schemes you know of, so that we can pass them onto other potential mentees (if appropriate)?

▲
□
▼

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CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

12. Could you suggest any changes to the proposed scheme that may persuade you to become involved?

▲
□
▼

◀ □ ▶

THANK YOU

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your views are very important to us. We hope to be in touch again with those who have indicated an interest in the proposed scheme.

ANNEX 4 - ACTUAL TIME SPENT

Date	Officer	Hours spent	Task
06/03/2013	EW	3.5	Gathering information on existing mentor schemes
08/03/2013	EW	4.5	First draft of mentor questionnaire, creating list of potential mentors
11/03/2013	EW	2.5	Creating email list for mentors, proof reading Survey Monkey draft of mentor survey, sending out finalised version of mentor questionnaire
11/03/2013	AR	3.5	Editing draft mentor questionnaire, preparing online survey via Survey Monkey, testing, refining and signing off for launch.
12/03/2013	AR	1.0	Reviewing initial responses to mentor questionnaire
12/03	AR/EW	1.0	Progress meeting [0.5 hours for both AR & EW]
18/03/2013	EW	1	Reading through mentor responses
19/03/2013	EW	3.5	First draft of mentee questionnaire
20/03/2013	EW	0.5	Sending reminder to mentors
21/03/2013	AR	3.0	Editing draft mentee questionnaire, preparing online survey via Survey Monkey, testing, refining and signing off for launch.
21/03/2013	EW	1	Proof reading Survey Monkey draft of mentee survey, sending out finalised version of mentee questionnaire
21/03/2013	AR	1.5	Reviewing mentor responses and initial responses to mentee questionnaire
03/04/2013	EW	0.5	Sending reminder to mentees
08/04/2013	EW	3.0	Analysing responses, mapping report contents
10/04/2013	AR	4.0	Analysing responses, drafting, completion and submission of final report
TOTAL	-	34	-