

Appendix: WEIF 2009 article

Collaboration for Environmental Data Flow in Wales SECOND WALES ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION FORUM 11 March 2009

Helen Wilkinson – Countryside Council Wales

Following the success of last year's Wales Environmental Information Forum (WEIF), delegates returned to the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth in March for a second event that again involved representatives from a wide range of sectors (including the NBN) involved in the supply and use of environmental data.

The focus of this year's forum was to address specific constraints to the 'flow' of vital environmental data and information in Wales. The discussions of the day:

- worked through the major problems regarding data flow in Wales,
- explored what a good basis for the ideal data flow model would look like,
- matched solutions to problems,
- explored what principles should be adopted for data flow

and condensed and prioritised the solutions and principles into two practical projects for action by the Wales Environmental Information Steering Group (WEISG). Although the remit of the Forum is environmental data, participants focussed on the flow of biodiversity data.

Diana Reynolds (Welsh Assembly Government) opened the day with an update on progress with the Wales Environmental information Steering Group since last year's event. The main points were:

- The ambitions of the first Forum (March 08) have been crystallised into 6 main workstreams – data flow, data quality, skills, technology, resources & governance
- The steering group has established a wide range of reporting connections and ensures that all its papers are available on www.biodiversitywales.org.uk
- It has prioritised work on data flow and data quality as they seem to be the most pressing issues. Additional work is proceeding on all workstreams through specialist groups where resources are available.

Awareness raising/update presentations were delivered on the following subjects:

- Data and Consultants: What we do, what we don't do and what we should do
- The Marine Environmental Data and Information Network – working together to improve the management of our marine data resources
- An outline of data flow issues based on experience from the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park
- Using remote sensed data to update Phase 1 habitat maps in Wales and future uses of remote sensed data
- RSPBs new online data services

The resulting actions for the Wales Environmental Information Steering Group are to:

- Develop a data sharing charter for partners in Wales to sign up to (particularly public sector organisations).
- Define and agree roles and responsibilities for all partners involved in the flow of data for specified taxonomic groups

These will be progressed with relevant partners between now and the next forum.

Feedback received through event evaluation forms was very positive and we look forward to developments between this and the next forum. Working collaboratively through these issues with partners in Wales has developed an excellent forum for communication, collaboration, support, agreement and action to help resolve the issues that constrain the flow of environmental data from the point of collection to the point of use in Wales.

All notes, presentations and information recorded at the forum are published on the Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) website along with all Steering Group papers. See

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/sg_meetings-130.aspx and scroll to the bottom of the page for the link to WEIF/WEISG