



**Biological
Records Centre**

C2- Data Entry Policy.

Last updated 13/05/19

Introduction.

One of the core remits of the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) is to collect and store biological records.

Due to the backlog of historic records in a paper format, coupled with limited resources, it is realised that the digitisation of these records must be conducted in a planned and systematic manner. However it must be noted that the setting of data capture priorities is not a science but more a judgement call based on a general philosophy which has to take into account a number of influential factors.

The general philosophy for data capture priority can be summed up as capture in order of:

- The most protected the species
- The more recent the record
- The most threatened locations

These and a number of other factors are outlined and considered below:

Principles:

Records of Species which enjoy some level of legal protection.

Those species which are the subject of legal protection are of a high priority, and the more protected the higher the priority for data capture. These are the records most sort after by all the record centre stakeholders.

Age of the records.

The general adopted philosophy is to preferential capture the most recent species records. In terms of guiding decision making, planning, land management and conservation most of the KMBRC stakeholders (both customers and the recording communities) will place a much greater value on those more recent species records.

However it is impossible to set hard and fast rules as there are many other factors to take into account and historic records are of crucial importance when considering the longevity of a species or habitat type at a particular site, the restoration of habitats based on historic information regarding previous wildlife presence and of course projects such as County atlases as just a few examples.

Records from areas recognised as Priority Areas.

In consultation with a number of the KMBRC partners and stakeholders, priority areas have been identified as those areas which are likely to be at most risk from development and of course those where the best possible evidence is required to inform and direct restoration efforts. Species records for these locations will be very important as they may well influence planning and development decisions of the future and will therefore be required by ecological consultants, Statutory Agencies, local planners, conservationists and local species interest groups.

The identification of priority areas can be elucidated from having a good working knowledge of the Local Development plans being drawn up by the local authorities in the County as well as keeping abreast of Living Landscape Partnership work, Local Nature Partnership focus areas, Biodiversity Opportunity areas and other areas of importance both in terms of future development plans and habitat restoration plans. It is important to remember that this is a dynamic situation and will require constant review.

Ease of data capture

In many cases it is not practical to comb through a data set and select records in order of species priority or record date. This will depend on how the original data set is structured, and it is often easier and more efficient to systematically capture the entire data set the first time. This is often a judgement call and may in fact only become apparent once the data set has been properly assessed.

Specific data requests from KMBRC partner organisations

The KMBRC has already been requested by various stakeholders to collect data sets as a matter of priority. These data sets do not always conform to the general philosophy of prioritisation and may relate to a specific piece of work commissioned by a funding partner or as part of a grant funded project.

Requests for data sets from contributing recorders and recording groups

One of the most important remits of the KMBRC is the support of the local recording community without whom there would be no Record Centre. It is therefore vital to react positively to any requests for the digital capture of specific species records from the recording community in order to maintain a good working relationship and provide a useful service. For example, in the last year the KMBRC has directed a considerable amount of its resources into The upcoming Kent Mammal Atlas to support Kent Mammal Group and Kent Bat Group who have themselves been very supportive of the KMBRC.

Volunteer and staff motivational considerations

The capture of records from paper data sets is very often time consuming and a repetitive boring task. As much of this data capture is reliant on the good auspices of volunteers it is important to consider the wishes, interests and well-being of these volunteers in order to sustain their interest and motivation. As volunteers arrive at the Record Centre they are asked to perform certain tasks and capture certain record sets that maybe available at that time. As skills are built up by the volunteers (hand writing recognition, species recognition) it makes sense to maintain consistency and allow volunteers to complete the tasks they have been set. The situation may arise that newer more important data sets that were not available when the volunteer started work may have wait for the completion of the first data capture project.

Skill Level

The skill level of volunteers is a variable factor which must be considered. New volunteers are given user friendly record data sets, certainly initially while their level of interpretative and input

skills is assessed. The skills levels of these volunteers must be considered when allocating data sets for digitisation. Unfortunately user friendly data sets do not always conform to the priority species records sets as identified above but it is also important to recognise that as a Centre we are also looking to help and support our volunteers to learn new skills and develop themselves and so it is important that they feel a sense of achievement and enjoyment from the work being asked of them.

When setting priorities for data capture each data set has to be considered individually against all the criteria discussed above.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the KMBRC Data Entry Protocol to ensure that data entry standards are adhered to at all times. By using Recorder 6 as our main database and following the KMBRC Protocol for data entry we are ensuring that National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Metadata standards are adhered to in all our species records.