



Annual Report for 2004

2004 was another busy year for BRISC, with most of our activities being carried out by Alan Cameron, **BRISC Development Officer**. Alan's three year post was made possible by generous financial support from The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Scottish Natural Heritage and is hosted by BTCV Scotland, at Balallan House, close to the centre of Stirling, where we have set up office. Regrettably, the funding for this post comes to an end in June 2005, and a subgroup of the committee has been formed to investigate all possible avenues of funding towards appointing a **Chief Officer** for BRISC, so we can continue and expand upon Alan's good work.

To support this task, a **business plan** for 2005-07 has been drawn up, and a new **strategic document** is being prepared, both of which will be presented to members for approval at the AGM on 9 April 2005. An **advocacy** paper has also been prepared, setting out a series of we hope compelling reasons for joining BRISC as well as the benefits of joining.

The **AGM** will, as usual, take place during the **annual conference**, which this time will be in St Andrews, Fife, in the Bute Building, the home of the University's School of Biology. Much work has gone into making this an interesting and worthwhile day. The programme with a booking form is included with the January 2005 mailing and will also be available on the website. This year we have added a **choice of three excursions** going to local places of interest, thus giving delegates the chance to see some real live biodiversity following on from the indoor event.

This report further summarises activities carried out during the year. They all relate to action points in our Strategic Plan for 2001-04, as approved by members.

The first quarter of the year continued to focus on **promoting a Scottish Network of Local Records Centres** and on drafting a national plan for LRCs, which sets out BRISC's proposals for how such a network could be established, based on existing LRC, some of which would be expanded, while some new centres would need to be established to fill the remaining substantial gaps. A further proposal to create a number of smaller supporting Satellite Centres would help to retain the critical local focus. A copy of BRISC's plan is available from our office at Stirling.

A **meeting of key LRC stakeholders with Scottish Natural Heritage** took place at Battleby on 31 March to investigate wider financial support for such a network. One outcome of this meeting was an agreement that SNH would promote the need for a **National Strategy for LRCs** to potential funding partners. It was agreed that this should preferably be spearheaded by a high ranking person within SNH, such as Dr Colin Galbraith, SNH's Chief Scientist. It was also agreed that there was a need for an advocacy paper for LRCs, and SNH offered to produce this. BRISC compiled a full report of this meeting, and copies can be requested from Alan Cameron.

For various reasons, internal to SNH, the agreed actions are yet to be taken forward. The advocacy paper was abandoned at an early stage, and although Dr. Galbraith declared his willingness to call a meeting with potential funding organisations, further

progress on this is awaiting SNH's own internal policy on LRCs, which is now promised for early 2005.

BRISC's **2004 Annual Conference and AGM** took place in Edinburgh in the Students Union, Teviot Row House, on 6 March. The turnout was rather disappointing with less than fifty delegates hearing the seven speakers focusing on very different aspects of "Secret Wildlife: Recording the Urban Environment". Summaries of talks were subsequently published in the April and July issues of *BRISC Recorder News*, as well as the minutes of the AGM, which took place during this event.

A feedback form was included in delegates' packs, and responses were generally very positive, barring some significant technical short-comings, such as inadequate heating and lack of blackouts for the slide show. These things are often outside the organisers control, but they obviously influence the success of an event and need to be taken into account when choosing future venues. Several responses suggested that short outings should be included in the programme, something which we have taken on board for the coming conference.

BRISC was invited to the launch of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy on 25 May at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, and our display here earned many complimentary comments. Especially popular was the bumblebee material.

The Committee organised a 'Recorders Day' on 19 June at Cullaloe, SWT's wildlife reserve in Fife. Sustained heavy rain did not encourage a great turn out, but those who did go very much enjoyed the day and a number of records, especially of invertebrates, were collected and passed onto FERN, Fife's Local Records Centre. The event is covered in *BRISC Recorder News* (No 54).

On 26 August, BRISC organised a well-attended **seminar** on the latest version of the **National Biodiversity Network Gateway** with Andrew Brewer, the NBN's Technical Liaison Officer. A report of this event is published in the October issue of *BRISC Recorder News* (No 55)

On 3 December, a workshop on **Recorder 6** was organised with Hannah Betts from JNCC, one of the key people in the development of this new version of the 'Recorder' software. The day was hosted by Lothian Wildlife Information Centre in Edinburgh, and a report of the day and the main software improvements can be found in the January issue of *BRISC Recorder News* (no 56)

Representation of the Scottish recording community's interests at the national and UK level is a top priority for BRISC. The task is shared between committee members and the Development Officer as follows:

- BRISC has two representatives on the NBN LRC Steering Group. This is by invitation only, but we have lobbied for a member of staff from an active Scottish LRC to be co-opted to the group (SNH sends a third representative). The group met twice during the year in London. Three subgroups (Network Development, Projects & Operations, and Professional Development) were formed during the

year, with Scotland having a representative on each. However, none of them has yet been convened.

- BRISC is co-opted member of the Council of the National Federation for Biological Recording (NFBR), our sister body in England, which meets four times a year in London. The NFBR also represents the interests of BRISC and LRCs at NBN Trust meetings.
- BRISC has a representative on the Scottish Biodiversity Forum LBAP working group.
- BRISC has a representative on the Scottish Squirrel Group.
- BRISC has a representative on PLINKS (Plantlife (Scotland) liaison meetings)

BRISC is an active partner in **Scottish Environment LINK**, and as an elected trustee, I attend board meetings, etc, while the Development Officer and other committee members represent BRISC on LINK 'Task Forces', namely:

- The Biodiversity Task Force, and BRISC has had substantial input into the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Plans, especially urban and cross-cutting issues, and had input into a UK wide Biodiversity Manifesto launched at Edinburgh Zoo in September
- The Agricultural Task Force, which has had significant input into the Scottish implementation of the new CAP
- BRISC is a corresponding member of other LINK task forces and BRISC signed up to a number of other SE consultations, including new legislation relating to planning, charities, and agricultural reform.

BRISC submitted a research proposal on LRCs to SNIFFER (Scottish and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research), which unfortunately was not accepted

LINK's 'everyone' Campaign in the running up to the European election was supported by encouraging members to visit the 'everyone' website and get help with writing to prospective candidates to express concern about the environment, all this with a view to pushing environmental issues up the political agenda and showing that there are many who care. EU directives provide 80% of environmental legislation in the UK.

BRISC submitted responses to the **Scottish Executive's consultation** on the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Bill, and on Invasive alien species, stressing the importance of monitoring and therefore the need for public support for data collection and management.

Four editions of 'Recorder News' were published and mailed out. The newsletter is our vehicle for keeping members informed about new initiatives and developments throughout the year, and the issues carried articles by national societies and recording schemes, raising awareness of their work and encouraging participation in particular surveys. For the first time, two issues of *BRISC Recorder News* were also published in electronic (.pdf) format and emailed out to members who previously had chosen to receive newsletters this way. This innovation was proposed at last year's AGM and has made significant savings to the rising cost of printing and postage. An advantage of getting the electronic version is that it comes

in colour. Copies of past and current newsletters can now be downloaded from our website.

BRISC's LRC email forum experienced a healthy and increasing amount of activities. More participants are now taking an active part with various requests and input into useful discussions. Alan Cameron manages this group.

Other email forums that came into operation during the year and which BRISC members are free to join, are the software 'Recorder' yahoo group and NFBR's LRC email group.

The Website was visited between 13 and 20 times each day through the year. The peak months were February to July with a maximum of 35 visits on 4th June. The vast majority of visitors arrive by directly accessing the home page while search engines provided most of the rest. Work on improving the website has not proceeded as quickly as planned, but the Members Only Area is now up and running and more work will be needed to complete the facilities and information provided (see *Recorder News* No 56 for passwords to this).

Wildlife Counts: Recruiting new Recorders is the name for a new project, and a lot of effort over the last four months has been directed towards preparing a concept plan for this two-year project, and to enlist the support and cooperation of local partners. Grant applications were prepared and submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and SNH. The proposal is to run 'Wildlife Counts' in cooperation with BTCV as a geographically targeted project, focusing on three areas within the Central Belt: Falkirk, Mid Lothian and North Lanarkshire. The project consists of organising a number of events, both indoor meetings and field outings to local sites where the participants will learn to identify and monitor the special biodiversity. The formation of local recording groups affiliated to BRISC will be encouraged.

Bumblebee Survey Packs continued to be popular. A workshop on bumblebees and their ID was organised with FERN at Lochore Meadows Country Park in June, as part of FERN's recording programme. FERN also helped by photocopying the contents of the survey pack and distributing these to local recorders with extra free copies to BRISC. The bumblebee pages on our website were improved and expanded, and it will shortly be possible to record on line from the 'Members Area'. BRISC was also approached by Buglife, the body that promotes conservation of invertebrates, and agreed to support a bid for running a nationwide survey of bumblebees, in preparation for a national atlas. In addition, BRISC leads on the recording aspect of the Action Plan for the Great Yellow Bumblebee *Bombus distinguendus* for the Outer Hebrides.

The Membership total in October stood at 114 paid-up members, of these 21 were corporate, 93 individual, and an additional 11 reciprocal letters sent out. 26 names were deleted at the end of 2004 from the membership list as no subscription had been received for 2003/4 in spite of several reminders. 26 members have signed standing order for the annual subscription, which has now been held at £10 for individuals and £25 for corporate memberships since 1998.

The Committee, which directs and oversees BRISC's work, met four times during the year, and my personal thanks goes to everyone for their commitment and invaluable contribution, without which BRISC could not operate.

I am happy to announce that we have at long last found a nomination for new treasurer in Allan W Brown, keen naturalist and experienced in keeping accounts. Allan was co-opted to the committee in October. Mark Simmons will stand down at the AGM in April 2005. I would like here to express my personal gratitude to Mark for all his time and efforts over the years since he took on this post. He has provided a most important service to BRISC with his careful keeping of the accounts and his always sound advice

As members will be aware, I am standing down as chair at the forthcoming AGM, but it is with great pleasure and relief that the committee can announce a nomination for the new chair. This is Patrick Milne Home, recently retired from being Operational Manager with SNH. A voting paper is included with this report, with the committee's nominations for these two honorary offices as well as spaces for any other nomination which members would like to make.

Anne-Marie Smout, Chair of BRISC
January 2005

Committee Members as of January 2005

Anne-Marie Smout, Chair elected since 1998
c/o Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3DZ
Tel. 01333 310 330 – fax 01333 311 193; email
AMSmout@aol.com
Also Newsletter editor; shares with AC representation on NBN LRC Steering Group, NFBR Council, and is a Trustee of Scottish Environment LINK

Alan Cameron, BRISC Development Officer, Secretariat
Co-opted 2002
BRISC c/o BTCV, Balallan House, Allan Park, Stirling, FK8 2QG
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Also Membership secretary; shares with AMS representation on NBN LRC Steering Group, NFBR Council, and Scottish Environment LINK Biodiversity Task Force.

Mark Simmons, Outgoing Treasurer elected since 1998
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mjsimmons@pkc.gov.uk (Mark Simmons)

Allan W. Brown, Nominated Treasurer co-opted Oct 2004
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Andy Wakelin, Website Manager co-opted August 2000
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Brian Boag elected since 2002
Birch Brae, Knap, Perth & Kinross, PH14 9SW
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Represents BRISC on Scottish Environment LINK Agricultural Task Force

Gill Calder co-opted Spring 2003
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Jennifer Davidson/ Alan McKirdy co-opted April 2004
SNH Natural Heritage Data Unit
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alan.mckirdy@snh.gov.uk

Paul Kirkland elected since 2001
Manager, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Balallan House,
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Represents BRISC on Scottish Biodiversity Forum's LBAP subgroup. Serves on the Management Team for the Development Officer

Craig Macadam elected since 2003
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Jon Mercer elected since 2001
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Patrick Milne Home Nominated for Chair and co-opted
January 2005
Craigow, By Milnathort, Kinross, KY13 0RP
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Patrick@milnehome.org

Jonathan Willet/ Jenny Storey Co-opted summer 2003
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storeyj@northlan.gov.uk
JW represents BRISC on the LBAP partnership group and on the Scottish Squirrel Group

Management Team for the Development Officer's post as of April 2004

Anne-Marie Smout – BRISC (Chair)
David Jamieson – BTCV
Jennifer Davidson – SNH
Mark Simmons – BRISC
Paul Kirkland – BRISC
Alan Cameron – BRISC (Secretary)

BRISC Office

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