



ANNUAL REPORT 2008



Scottish Charity No SC024418



**BRISC 2009 Annual General Meeting
To be held on Saturday 25 April 2009
At Chatelherault Country Park, Lanark
13.30 - 14.00**

Agenda:

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 29th March 2008
at the Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie**
- 3. Chairman's Report for 2008**
- 4. Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report for 2008**
- 5. Membership**
- 6. Election of Honorary Officers and Council for 2009/2010**
- 7. Any other business**

Minutes of BRISC 2008 Annual General Meeting

**Held on Saturday 29 March 2008
At the Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie
13.45 14.30**

Present

Chairman and 42 Committee and other Members

Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from three Members

Minutes of 2007 AGM

These had been circulated previously and copies were also tabled. They were proposed by Anne-Marie Smout, seconded Gordon Corbet and approved by the meeting without corrections.

Chairman's Report for 2007

The Chairman's Report had been circulated with the January mailing and was also included in the delegates' pack. The Chairman summarised the main points and took questions from the floor.

Wildlife Counts Report

The Chairman confirmed that continuing funding for the project had not been secured and that it was hoped that BTCV would take it forward under their auspices.

Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report

The accounts had been included with the annual report and were presented by the Treasurer, Duncan Davidson. They had been approved by Douglas Turner, Solicitor, of Drummond Cook and Macintosh. A significant donation of £10,000 had been received during the year from the Batchworth Trust to enable BRISC to take forward its Business Plan. As this had not all been expended it was resulting in an operating balance of £14,000.

Acceptance of the Accounts was proposed by Gill Calder, seconded by Keith Bland and approved by the Members.

Constitution

No amendments proposed.

Annual Subscriptions

Membership currently stood at 100 Individual Members and 33 Corporate Members. No proposals were made to increase the subscriptions.

Election of Honorary Officers and Committee for 2007/2008

The current Committee comprises eight elected and five co-opted Members. The Chairman extended an invitation for nominations to join the committee. Mark Simmons had been proposed by Anne-Marie Smout and seconded by Jonathan Willet and had confirmed that he was willing to stand; he was accordingly elected. No other names were received.

Any Other Business

Anne-Marie Smout tabled a proposed e-petition to be raised at the Scottish Parliament for support for 'local record centres'. This raised considerable debate on the wording, particularly the term Local Record Centre, and whether they were an effective way of being taken seriously. The consensus was that an e-petition was worth pursuing and that the wording should be more to encourage the gathering of biological data. The Committee was asked to take these matters into account and then to submit it.

The outline of a proposed Data Scoping Project, to determine what and where biological data exists which still need computerisation, was tabled for information and views asked for. Members endorsed the project.

Members were advised that a visit to Dundee Museum had been arranged for Members on 15 April 2008.

The Meeting Closed with the Chair thanking all those who had attended the AGM and his Committee for their work over the last year.



Delegates gather for the 2008 Conference at Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie



2008 Conference excursion to Creag Bheag with Duncan Macdonald

Annual Report for 2008

The year commenced with a very successful **Conference** being held in Kingussie, on the 29th March 2008, with 37 attendees. With the very **generous support of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)** we had taken the ambitious step of running over two days. The main aspect of the Conference was related to the National Park so we were delighted that on the Saturday we were welcomed by Eric Baird, Deputy Convener of the CNPA Board. Dick Balharry opened the morning presentations, talking on a number of issues relating to the Park. Stephen Corcoran, Cairngorms Biodiversity Officer, followed with species recording in the Park, Glenn Roberts on the role that North East Scotland Biological Records Centre in the Park, Chris Ellis from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, with a talk around Aspen and lichens and finally Murdo Macdonald from Highland Biological Recording Group on the challenges of recording in the Highlands. In the afternoon there was the option of two field visits. Some twelve Members stayed overnight and on the Sunday had a fascinating walk, led by Dick Balharry, up Glenfeshie.

Your **Committee** has held three meetings this year but is likely to revert to four as the time lags become over long. Following the AGM the **e-petition** was re-worked to take on board comments from the last AGM and was subsequently launched on the 18th November and closes on the 9th January 2009. The petition '*called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish integrated local and national structures for collecting, analysing and sharing biological data to inform decision making processes to benefit biodiversity*'. At the time of writing there had been 711 signatories which I believe is quite creditable and should result in the petition being scrutinized further.

The **Data Scoping Project** was taken forward with a 50% grant from SNH, with BRISC carrying the balance. A Project Officer, Robert Scott, was appointed and he has been working between Dundee McManus Galleries and Museum and the University of Dundee Museum Collections. The lessons learnt through the pilot project will help hone the best future approach and provide an estimate of the time and costs involved in drawing up similar projects for other biological datasets held by Scottish Universities and Museums. The project is due to complete in February 2009.

We had considerable debate around the **BRISC Web Site** as we knew it needed updating. Andy Wakelin, Web Site Manager, has done a great deal of work on this and, on behalf of us all, I thank him. I consider that the site is now very much more open and user friendly with some particularly strong colours, which I find easy to read over, so I hope others will too! All sections of the site will be open to everyone, no passwords are needed, and I hope that it will shortly be rolled out to all.

As part of the website exercise we looked at both the *Source Book for Biological Recording in Scotland 1999* and the *Directory of Natural History Societies and Allied Groups 2002*, both of which had been produced by BRISC, to see how they can be incorporated. There is a considerable amount of information contained within them but, with the internet, the need for BRISC to provide that detail is deemed unnecessary and links from our site is probably the most that will be needed.

A few years ago BRISC produced a **pocket sized Grid Reference Reader** which has proved very popular. We have re-ordered a further batch with two small, but significant, changes; the BRISC Logo is in green and a hole has been punched in a corner so that a lanyard can be threaded through! Our thanks to Mark Simmons for

arranging for their production. The readers are available to individuals and organisations free of charge although if large numbers are asked for we hope that an appropriate donation might be made to BRISC to help defray the cost.

Another former BRISC initiative was the production of '*Guidelines for Biological Recorders*', which is both out of date and out of print. We feel that there is little point in re-producing the book, as there is so much information on line, but on the other hand some sort of central, collated information probably would be helpful. We are looking to see how we might best serve this need and in this context the Committee had noted a very useful Scottish Data Management Forum initiative that had been started by Gill Calder of SWT. The forum aims to help with organisations data management and data sharing, focussing on species, habitats, and site data.

Another Committee Member, Sara Hawkswell, has been working up a proposal for BRISC to run a *UK level conference in Scotland to discuss quality control in relation to identifications, transcribing data and taxonomic verification*. There is a general awareness of the problem of quality control of datasets and we believe that such a conference would be well supported by SNH, NBN, EN and other Data users, recorder universities etc.

In the past we did organize a number of external visits and training days for members and non-members. We did try this again in 2008 with visits to Dundee & Perth Museums. They were not very well attended but I suspect that unless one was relatively local it was never going to be very easy to attend.

The **Newsletter** continues to be produced by Anne-Marie Smout four times a year and we are extremely grateful to her for doing so. During the year we decided to print the Newsletter in colour - of course those of you receiving it by e-mail already did see it in colour - it adds to the expense, but I hope you feel that is worth while. I would very much like to see an 'assistant editor' as Anne-Marie is sometimes away at short notice and it would ease the burden on her if she knew it was still being progressed in her absence. The 'assistant editor' does not necessarily have to be on the Committee.

One of our prime remits has been the promotion of Local Record Centres and during the course of 2008 **the Association of Local Environmental Record Centres** (ALERC) came into being. They held their inaugural meeting in Bristol on the 28th November 2008. The Association represents their interests throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and accordingly BRISC will cease being the voice for them in Scotland but will, of course, continue to take an active interest in their well being and will provide any help that they might be asked for. Sara Hawkswell is the Scottish representative on the Association.

Our **Membership** remains pretty static at 97 individual and 32 Corporate. It is always an aim to try and increase on this and Members are urged to try and recruit new members. Judging by the projects we do undertake our activities are obviously approved of by the Members and are considered of considerable value to a number of organisations.

The **Treasurer**, Duncan Davidson, has done another years sterling work on our behalf and his **Report** is attached. There will be a draw down as the Data Scoping Project progresses but having the ability to take forward such a project does enable us to both obtain matching funds and to provide soundly based research to highlight areas of work that we believe others should be concentrating on. This is no mean achievement and I believe is very influential.

Anne-Marie Smout has been collating records and writing articles for The Scotsman Newspaper and the fee she receives for this has been donated to BRISC. Anne-Marie has suggested that these funds should be used as a **Bursary** to put an individual through a course at Kindrogan and the Committee hope to implement this shortly. Meanwhile if any of you know of someone who would be appropriate to receive such support please get in touch with any Member of the Committee and it will be considered.

I have represented BRISC on two southern Committees. Firstly, on the **National Federation for Biological Recording**, NFBR, and I try to attend two or three of their four meetings in London. They are of course our kindred society in the south and it is most useful having this direct link, so that we know what is happening down there, particularly as much of it is also applicable in Scotland and it is important that we do not work in isolation. Secondly, I did also sit on the **Local Records Centres Steering Group Committee**, part of the National Biodiversity Network Trust, but with the advent of ALERC this committee has now been disbanded and a new committee formed where ALERC members will, quite rightly, take the leading role.

For a very small organisation I do feel that our involvement in some very important areas of work is pretty influential and that we do achieve a great deal that is practical and helpful. All of our work is aimed at raising the profile of Recording and the importance that recording is to the environment. A huge thank you to all the Committee for their work in achieving this and to the Members for continuing to support and endorse our activities.

Patrick Milne Home
Chair of BRISC

January 2009

MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR 2008.

The membership year runs from the 1st of April to the 31st of March and so this is not a full year membership report but a snapshot of the position at the end of the calendar year.

We currently have 97 individual paying members, having lost four and gained one during the year. We also have 32 corporate members, the number unchanged through 2008.

Of these members, 57 currently pay through standing order, which is a small increase over previous years, but more would be better. 62 members now take advantage of Gift Aid to boost the value of their subscription and this is a welcome increase.

At the end of the year, around 20 members had not paid and reminder letters were sent to all of these in November.

Duncan Davidson,
Membership Secretary

January 2009



2008 Conference excursion to Invertromie, RSPB reserve in Insh Marshes, with Pete Moore

Treasurer's Final Report for 2008 (1 Jan - 31 Dec)			
Total Balance at 1st January 2008		£17,606.58	
BRISC Operating Balance at 1st January		£14,397.50	
	Income	£	Expenditure
			£
	Membership subscriptions	2385.00	Conference
	Conference Bookings	3622.63	Subscriptions
	Donations	15.00	Newsletter
	Sales	815.00	Members Expenses
	Interest	216.82	Tax deducted
			Website costs
			Grid Ref readers
			Metadata project
	Totals	7054.45	7054.79
BRISC Operating Balance at 31 December 2008		£14,397.16	
Funded Projects			
Wildlife Counts Balance at 1st January 2008		£3,209.08	
	Income	£	Expenditure
			£
	National lottery	4548.43	BTCV
	SNH Grant - Wildlife Counts	7893.81	
	Totals	12442.24	15651.32
Wildlife Counts Balance at 31 December 2008		£0.00	
Overall Current Balance, inc Projects		£14,397.16	

Receipts and Payments Accounts Comparison

	2005	2006	2007	2008
	£	£		
£				
£				
	<i>1. Receipts</i>			
Membership Subscriptions	2137.00	1821.25	1975.00	2385.00
Conference Bookings	710.00	621.00	1657.00	3622.63
Donations	156.50	340.00	10022.00	15.00
Sales	81.25	176.60	25.00	815.00
Project Administration			200.00	
Gift Aid			292.86	
Bank Account Interest	221.29	185.30	327.47	216.82
	3306.04	3144.15	14499.33	7054.45

2. Payments

Conference Costs	449.44	199.63	1142.98	3296.53
Subscriptions	127.00	296.00	5.00	
Newsletter	628.41	504.24	737.67	959.50
Members Expenses	523.01	466.00	410.76	353.58
Website Costs		56.38		56.38
Data Protection Registration	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
Miscellaneous	202.45		4109.00	2311.05
Bank Account Tax deducted	44.21	37.03	65.44	42.75
	2009.52	1594.28	6505.85	7054.79

3. Excess of Receipts over Payments **1296.52** **1549.87** **7993.48** **(0.34)**

Notes from 2008 – Conference bookings are higher than previous years due to the inclusion of accommodation. The Conference costs are also commensurately higher.

Sales figures include £800 receipts from the Scotsman newspaper for Wildlife Watch articles written by Anne-Marie Smout.

Misc. payments include the purchase of Grid Reference readers and initial costs of the self funded meta-data project detailed in the Business Plan.



2008 Conference excursion to Glenfeshie with Dick Balharry

BRISC Committee Members as of January 2009

Patrick Milne Home, Chair	<i>elected 2005</i>	Craig Macadam	<i>elected 2003</i>
Duncan Davidson, Treasurer and Membership Secretary	<i>elected 2005</i>	Murdo Macdonald	<i>co-opted 2006</i>
Mark Simmons, Enquiries Secretary	<i>elected 2008</i>	Sara Hawkswell	<i>co-opted 2006</i>
Anne-Marie Smout, Newsletter Editor	<i>Ex Officio</i>	David Lampard	<i>elected 2007</i>
Andy Wakelin, Website Manager	<i>elected 2002</i>	Richard Weddle	<i>elected 2007</i>
Brian Boag	<i>elected 2002</i>	Louisa Hancock	<i>co-opted 2007</i>
Gill Calder	<i>SWT rep - co-opted 2003</i>	Sharing duties with	
Claire Seymour	<i>SNH representative.</i>	Joanna Birkin	<i>co-opted 2007</i>

BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) is a voluntary body with Scottish Charity status. Our stated objectives are to advance the education of the public about biological diversity and to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the environment.

Specific objectives are

To promote the effective gathering and use of biological data and other related information as a means to develop an understanding of Scotland's biodiversity and contribute to the conservation of the natural heritage of Scotland.

To stimulate biological recording in Scotland through promotion of a network of area based local records centres and recording groups.

To represent the interests of those records centres, recording groups and individual recorders to other organisations.

To promote co-ordination/co-operation between and training of individuals and organisations with an interest in biological recording.

To promote the adoption of good practice and minimum standards of biological recording and the accreditation of records centres.



Glenfeshie, one of the conference excursion choices, March 30 2008