



HIDDEN HEREFORDSHIRE

FINAL EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

HIDDEN HEREFORDSHIRE

The project aimed to empower the next generation of naturalists to go out and record the largely undiscovered natural heritage of the county, establish an online presence for HBRC and place biodiversity firmly on the map. Its focus was two-fold:

- to develop and increase Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC)'s digital capacity.
- to develop and equip audiences, both new and existing, to enable the natural heritage of Herefordshire to be far better recorded.

The project ran from June 2021 to September 2023. It was delivered by a partnership between HBRC and Cultivating Learning and Nature (CLaN) CIC.

Key project activities included:

- Recruiting and training a new generation of biological recorders, focussing on young people, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and other under-represented groups.
- Provision of training led by local experts, both online and face to face.
- Hosting a large closing event and run an accessible-for-all online garden wildlife survey.
- Develop an online presence to promote and communicate these activities.
- Launch a new HBRC website and establish a social media presence.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Hidden Herefordshire is funded by the National lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and as such requires its progress and outcomes to be evaluated by an independent third party. Resources for Change (www.r4c.org.uk) were commissioned in 2021 to develop an Evaluation Framework for the project and to evaluate both

progress and outcomes. This final evaluation, coming at the end of the delivery phase, aims to find out how the delivery of the project worked, what has helped or hindered that delivery, and identify the lessons that might be applicable for the future.

METHODOLOGY

The research undertaken to inform the final evaluation had two key components:

- Data analysis
 - Output data.
 - Feedback data – collected from participants at training courses and events.
- Stakeholder interviews – semi-structured conversations with people who had been involved in or benefited from different aspects of the projects.
- Analysis of biological records – this has been a difficult area to evaluate, little information being forthcoming from Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) relating to how many records were submitted annually, before the project started, compared to how many records are being submitted now.

KEY EVALUATION TOPICS

Key evaluation topics are the areas that the project partners would like to explore in more detail through the evaluation process. In the case of the Hidden Herefordshire project, these are as follows:

- Has the project met its outputs and outcomes?
- The success of the new website
- How have we improved the knowledge of biodiversity in the County?
- Has the project improved the profile and business of HBRC?
- What messaging/ activities have been best at attracting a new audience?
- Has biological recording helped to improve wellbeing?

DELIVERING PROJECT OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

In this section, we provide an overview of the project's achievements against its original output targets and outcomes.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

The project monitored its progress against a series of output targets. The measurement against these targets is shown below:

Category	Measurement	Project Target	Achieved
Events	Natural Heritage workshops run	65	65
	Learning workshops run	20	34
People	People involved in the project including:	2000	4,319
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People attending Natural Heritage workshops 	780	781
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People attending Learning workshops 	500	862
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers trained and gaining skills 	160	175
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People attending the closing event 	300	650
Biological records	Double the number of records received at the centre during the life of the project	50,000	54,646

Table 1: Project Outputs

The figures show that in the 'Events' and 'People' categories the project hit or exceeded the target set. Indeed, in the area of 'People involved' the project actually connected with 216% of the intended target. This suggests that there is a considerable level of interest in what the project had to offer, it was able to

enthusiase people to join its events and courses, and that the project's approach was able to respond to the demand it generated.

HBRC has not been able to supply us with accurate annual figures for how many records it received over the last five years, which would have allowed us to see the change in record submission over that period, including the COVID years. However, HBRC has been able to confirm the numbers of records held within its database at the start of the project and at the end. At the start, the database held 881,207 records. Now, the database holds 935,853 records. This is an increase of 54,646 records held by HBRC, 20,719 of which can be directly attributed to the project.

Throughout the rest of this report, we have used the following understanding of the biological record data:

Total number of biological records received by HBRC during the project period	54,646
Directly attributed to the project	20,719 which includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted through the new website 	138
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted directly to HBRC through email 	380
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted directly from project events within the community 	5,410

Table 2: Biological Records received by HBRC

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Outcome: A wider range of people will be involved in heritage – County-wide engagement by CLaN CIC, including in areas of deprivation, has shown that there is an appetite among many groups to get more involved with nature. We will achieve this by focusing on creating the new **HBRC website**, using social media and linking to contacts we already have established.

An overview of what the project has achieved – The new Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) website is up and running, this can be found at www.hbrc.org.uk. There have been more than 518 records submitted directly to HBRC electronically (138 through the website and 380 via email) by the end of the project.

HBRC now has a strong presence on social media, with some 2,232 followers across the three platforms HBRC has chosen to engage through:

Facebook	465 Followers
Instagram	1,298 Followers
Twitter	496 Followers

Table 3: Social Media Followers

The project has interacted with 30 new community groups and 26 schools HBRC did not previously have contact with.

Outcome: Heritage will be identified and better explained – Some taxa such as birds are adequately described but for others such as molluscs, spiders, alga, and bryophytes there is barely any up-to-date data at all. We will run specific training courses to cover these gaps, plus an inclusive garden wildlife survey that will map species over a large area. By engaging with a wide variety of people our understanding of species, both rare and common, will be increased.

An overview of what the project has achieved – Training was provided across a wide range of taxa, from amphibians to woodlice, fungi to flies. Following these training courses, there have been young naturalists discovering species previously not seen within Herefordshire and whole family groups conducting surveys in their own gardens.

Outcome: Heritage will be in better condition – Accurate, extensive, and up-to-date data is vital in order to understand the current condition of Herefordshire's natural heritage. From the improved data generated by the increase in recording, we will gain better insight into how our wildlife is faring.

An overview of what the project has achieved – The project held 99 successful events, both Natural Heritage workshops (65) and Learning events (34), informing more than 1,643 individuals of the importance of gathering and submitting accurate, extensive and up-to-date data on the wildlife within the County and beyond. From this interaction, the participants at the events have submitted 5,410 records related to the wildlife we have found at these events alone.

Outcome: People will have developed skills – The training the project was to provide would be free to the participants and of the same standard as that usually provided, often at prohibitively high cost, for professionals within the environmental field. The project also intended to hold courses online and at weekends to ensure the widest take up.

An overview of what the project has achieved – Through the project and with the support of Herefordshire Council, the project was able to secure the services of local and national specialists to provide training on various species, as well as venues to hold the courses, allowing the project to train more than 780 individuals.

Outcome: People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions – The increased awareness and understanding of the state of Herefordshire’s wildlife generated by our project’s activities will catalyse action for particular species and habitats.

An overview of what the project has achieved – As shown in Table 1 above, the project held 99 courses and events, which were attended by some 1,643 participants. These interactions have not only resulted in an increase of monitoring and recording of all wildlife but have also resulted in recording new species including earthworms, springtails and bees within the County.

Outcome: People will have greater wellbeing – The benefits to mental health of being outside in nature are well-documented. Many people during lockdown have noticed nature and the seasons more than they would usually. Our aim is to establish this connection between people and the environment they live in, even if it is just recording a chaffinch in their garden – we will show that the benefits to wellbeing derived from engaging with nature are accessible to all.

An overview of what the project has achieved – When asked, via feedback forms, more than 96% agreed that they had enjoyed the session (more than 86% strongly agreeing). More than 76% felt that the session they had attended motivated them to engage with nature and carry out more recording in the future.

Outcome: The funded organisation will be more resilient – At present the lack of a website and social media presence has meant that awareness of HBRC amongst the public is low. With a digital platform, increased data, more volunteers and participation from more diverse groups, the Centre will be more respected and able to provide higher quality data. In turn, this will give commercial clients accessing the data more confidence that it is credible, thus generating extra income and increasing the financial security of HBRC.

An overview of what the project has achieved – The development of the HBRC website and associated social media accounts has resulted in 138 records submitted directly through the new website, from a standing start, using the ‘Submit’ feature on the website, as well as a further 380 submitted directly to HBRC via email.

FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION RESEARCH

This section sets out what the evaluators have learnt about:

- What difference the project has made.
- How the project was delivered.
- Project Legacy.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

OVERVIEW

The Stakeholder interviews asked two questions about outcomes, the key points from their responses are summarised below.

1. What do you think the project has achieved? The key points were as follows:
 - Its given people an opportunity to improve their identification skills.
 - Lots more schools and community groups are getting involved with surveying.
 - The improvements to the Biological Records Centre website have made it easier to navigate and made it more appealing for people to use.
 - There has been quite significant improvement to the overall level of biological recording that's going on within Herefordshire.
 - A lot more people with the competence to submit records.

- There are groups of organisations, for instance, the Herefordshire Mammal Group, Herefordshire Bryology/Invertebrate Group, Herefordshire Pond Group, where the County's knowledge, or the knowledge of what exists in the County, has been increased considerably, as a direct result of the project.
- Raised the profile of the Records Centre and biological recording.

"We've added at least five new species of solitary Bee. Fantastic, and is a direct consequence of the course and how that stimulated people."

"People know that there's someone local who's interested now, and I don't think that was the case before with the wider community."

"I think generally it's just created this really nice atmosphere and environment about what we're doing."

2. What difference has the project made for heritage, people, and communities?

Heritage – key points

- The project will help to preserve the species that we have within the County.
- It will also help identify where there might be gaps in our knowledge or records of wildlife within Herefordshire.
- The project has been improving the profile of lesser-known species.
- People are more aware of what the County has and want to conserve it as well as record it.

"I think people are more aware of what there is, and actually they want to look after it and they want to know more about it. Especially the little things that you're not going to necessarily notice without taking a good look."

In the words of Keiron Brown, the National Recorder for Earthworms:

"The vice county of Herefordshire was extremely poorly recorded when it came to earthworms and the National Earthworm Recording Scheme held just 75 earthworm species occurrence records, 61 of which were a single species recorded by the Environment Agency over the decades."

In addition to engaging 62 volunteers across 5 courses and events, the project has significantly improved our understanding of earthworms within VC36 Herefordshire."

Of 163 records currently held [for Herefordshire] within the National Earthworm Recording Scheme, 82 were generated through Hidden Herefordshire recording activities. Furthermore, of the 23 earthworm species recorded, 14 of these species were recorded for the first time in Herefordshire through the Hidden Herefordshire project - that means it added almost half of the British earthworm fauna to the species list for the vice county."

People – key points

- More people are being trained and this is creating the potential for more biological recording taking place. People, who may in the past, have only recorded butterflies, are now able to record other things, mosses, grasses, earthworms etc.
- The project is making people more aware of their natural heritage and that in turn is giving people more ownership of it. It should create a difference to the way people connect to nature, and how they look at nature.
- The project is making a difference in schools. In the past, schools would have little or no exposure to wildlife, this is improving now.

- It has got people engaged who were not previously and, because of this, should help to strengthen the biological recording community.

“The project has contributed to enthusing people about the wildlife in their communities and in the County. That enthusiasm plays out in a lot of different ways. It sort of makes people happier in some ways because they have something that really keeps them going, an interest thing which takes them away from the drudgery of normal life.”

“People have found a real sense of enjoyment out of attending the courses that I've been to. I like seeing the satisfaction on people's faces when they're learning something and they're getting it right.”

Megan started attending the courses the project had to offer at the start of the project. This led to her becoming a volunteer with the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's Wildlife Watch Club. As part of her A-levels, Megan started to do an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) and due to her fascination with the natural world, particularly ornithology, inspired by the project, Megan decided to research the challenges and impacts of British bird reintroduction projects, with a primary case study of the White Stork project.

Megan has now, successfully, completed her A Levels and has recently started to study Zoology at Swansea University.

Megan partially attributes the courses she attended, as a part of the project, as inspiring her to work towards a career in Zoology and Wildlife starting with her degree.

Communities

- The project has contributed to enthusing people about the wildlife in their communities and in the County.
- There's certainly more interest from local communities and individuals within those communities about recording.
- A lot of the community groups the project worked with form a Parish base, and they're trying to get their Parishes and their local communities out and about and caring more about nature. The project has given them the framework to support that and to get people into nature and recording.
- Seeing people come out of their shells amongst other people through shared interest.

“I think it's created a good sense of community among recorders and course participants.”

The extent to which the project made a difference, through achieving its outcomes, can be further seen through the consideration of the monitoring data as follows:

OUTCOME: A WIDER RANGE OF PEOPLE WILL BE INVOLVED IN HERITAGE

Training course attendees

The attendees comprised a variety of genders and ages (Figures 1 & 2). 9 (3%) of the attendees preferred not to say their gender. Of those who wished to disclose their gender identity, 192 (64%) were female and 99 (33%) were male.

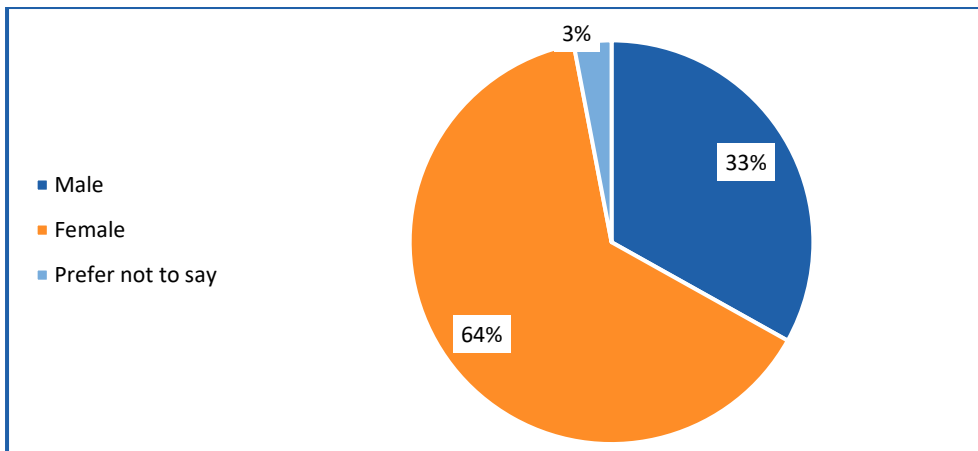


Figure 1. Gender ratio of attendees

There was a wide distribution of ages, with every age category being covered. The majority of participants (62%) were within the 44-74 range.

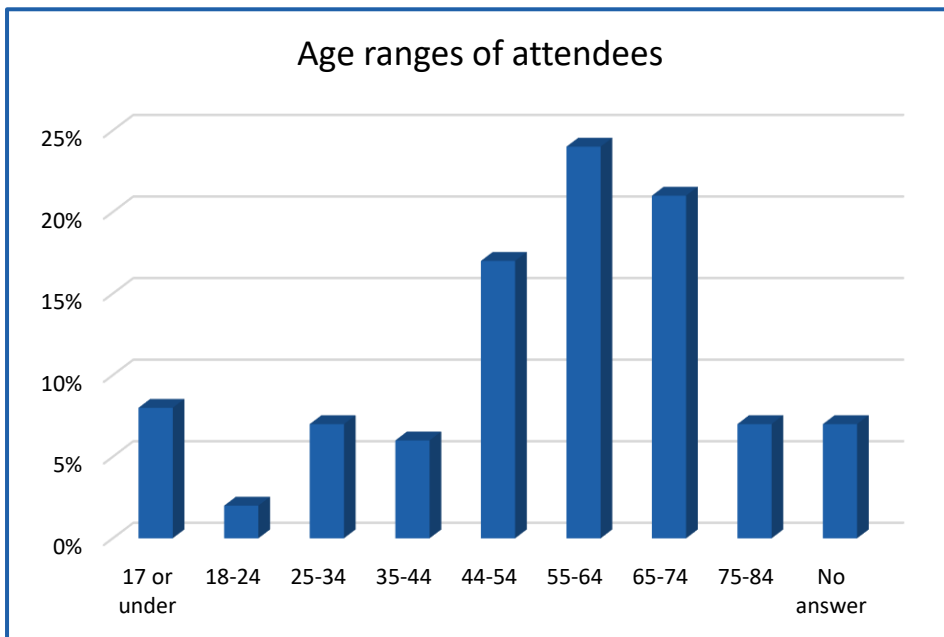


Figure 2. Age ranges of the attendees

The majority of attendees came from parts of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. However, there were people from as far away as Carmarthenshire, Shropshire and Dorset who attended the project courses and events.

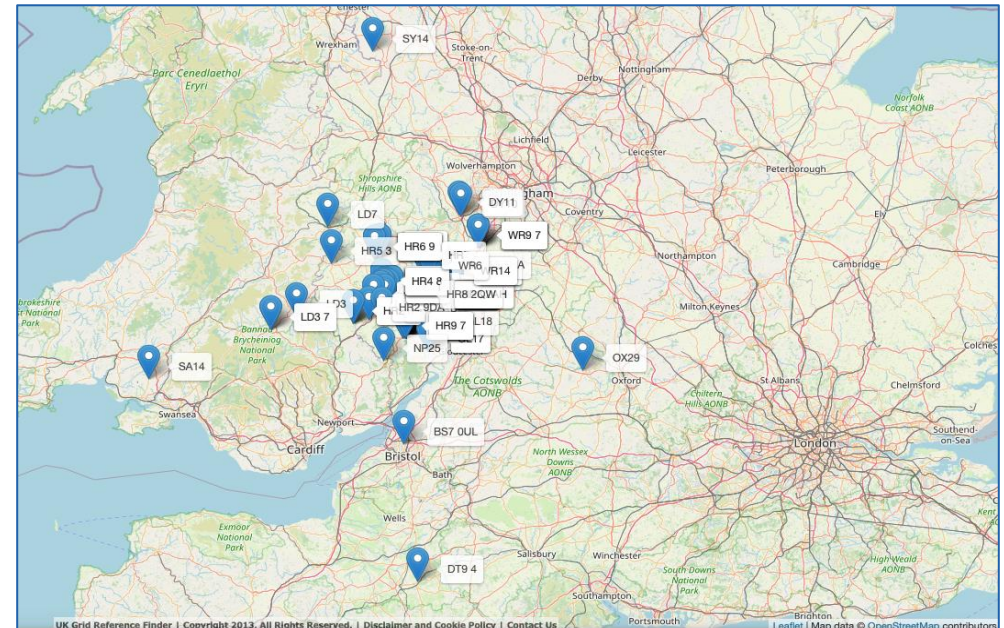


Figure 3. Map showing distribution of attendees

In terms of ethnicity (Figure 4), respondents were predominantly White British, 235 attendees or 96%; 3 attendees or 1.2%, being European; and 5 attendees or 2%, being of mixed / multi-ethnicity. This is broadly in line with the County's ethnic breakdown of 98.2% White, 0.8% Asian, 0.7% Mixed and 0.2% Black.

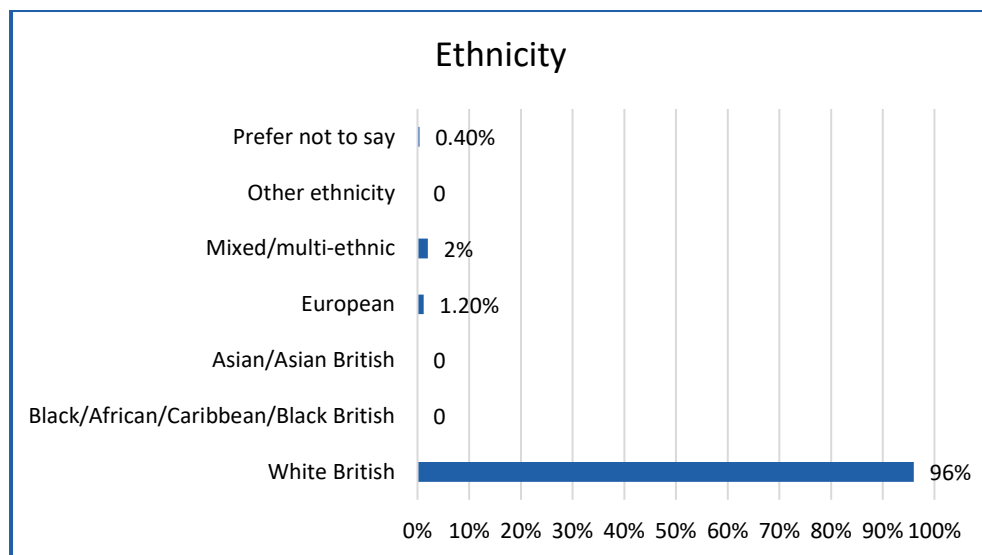


Figure 4. Ethnicity of attendees

In response to the question “do you have a disability?” 11% of the attendees considered themselves to be disabled, compared to 89% of the attendees who did not (Figure 5). All, who were asked, decided to respond which is most refreshing.

OUTCOME: HERITAGE WILL BE IDENTIFIED AND BETTER EXPLAINED

At the start of the project, some 881,207 records were held on the HBRC database. By the end of the project, this number had increased to 935,853 records, an increase of 54,646 records, or a 6.2% increase in the records held within the HBRC database. It is not possible to attribute all this growth to the project, but the investigation and calculations HBRC have carried out show that at least 20,719 records received by them are directly attributable to the project.

77% of people who attended the Hidden Herefordshire courses and events said that they would do some biological recording as a result of attending the events.

This suggests that the project made an important contribution to the growth in biological records being submitted.

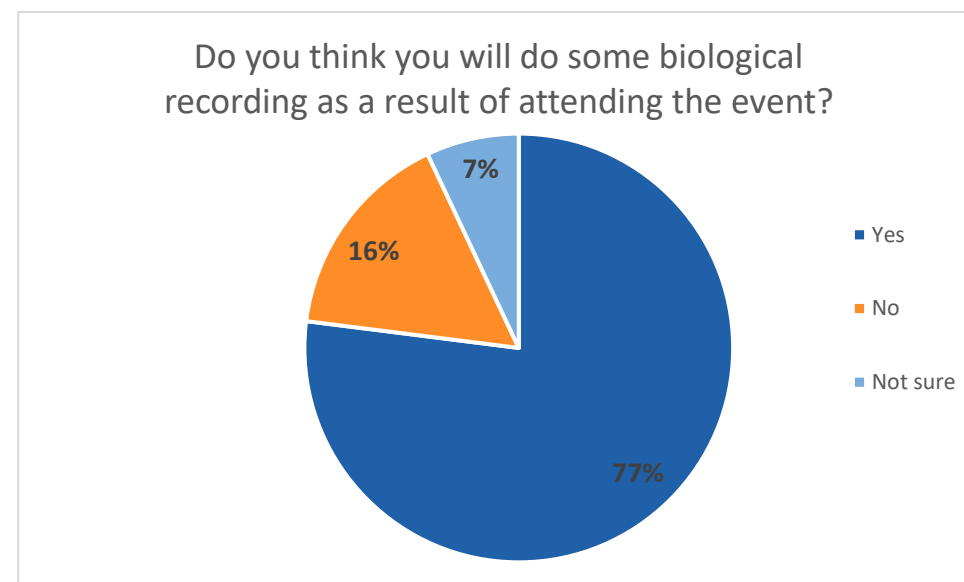


Figure 5. Attendees’ responses to “Do you think that you will do some biological recording because of attending the event today?”

Coupled with this, 99.7% of those who attended an event felt that they had gained ‘New Knowledge’ (94% strongly agreeing, 5.7% agreeing). Also, 97% felt that they had learnt a ‘New Skill’ (86% strongly agreeing, 11% agreeing)

With these new skills and knowledge, it is likely that heritage will be better identified, as well as better explained in the future.

OUTCOME: HERITAGE WILL BE IN BETTER CONDITION

It has already been seen that the quantity of biological records held by HBRC has increased during the life of the project.

Over 2,600 different species were recorded as part of the project with a number of other records coming in at a lower precision such as genus, family, etc.

This lower level of recording has a value, as it helps HBRC know that someone has been to a site and a general idea of what they have found. From this information, they can determine if a site is worth further investigation.



As the project has progressed, many new species (new to Herefordshire) have been recorded, from bees to earthworms, flies to beetles. For example, two species of earthworm, *Eisenia Andrei* and *Dendrobaena veneta*. (Shown here)

In the words of the Manager of HBRC:

"For me personally, the most exciting new finds for the County were of two species of earthworm, Eisenia Andrei and Dendrobaena veneta. These were collected by me from the compost bin at home and I learned to identify them during the earthworm course run by Keiron Brown, the National Earthworm Recorder, who subsequently verified the records. It may well be that half of the County have these in their compost bins, but I think what this really highlights to me is just what there is to discover in your own area that people just aren't looking for. There are plenty of chances for people to bag themselves a County first!"

The level of enthusiasm generated through the project towards identifying and recording species within the County can do nothing but leave the County's wildlife heritage in better condition.

OUTCOME: PEOPLE WILL HAVE DEVELOPED SKILLS

Attendees were asked if they felt they 'learnt new skills.'

305 attendees answered this question, with some 86% (261 people) stating that they 'strongly agreed' that they had learnt new skills. Only one attendee felt that they had not learnt new skills as a result of the events. A further 8 attendees did not state a view either way.

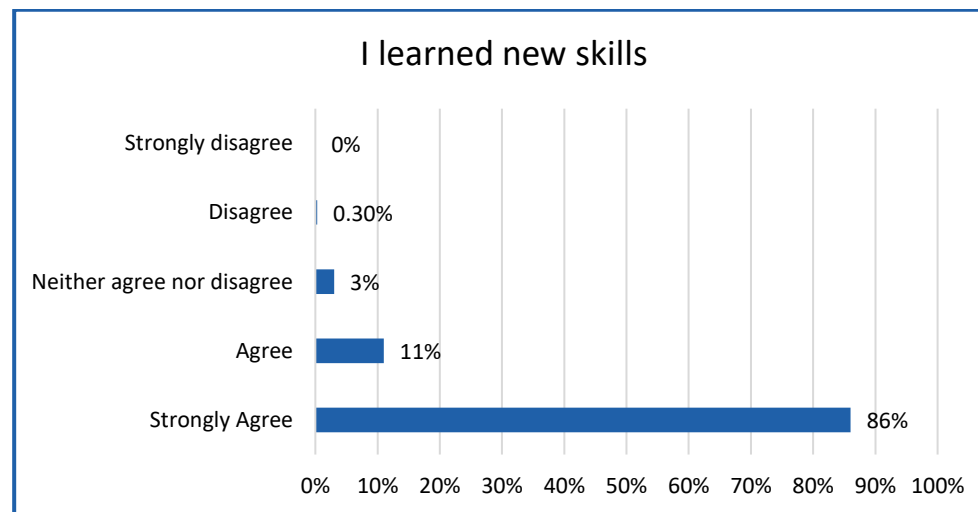


Figure 6. Attendees' responses to "Do you agree to the following question, I learned new skills."

Interviewees

The word 'learning' came up regularly when people talked about what difference the project had made to them. They reported that the process of learning had made them more inquisitive and confident about being able to recognise things,

coupled with having the knowledge of where to look if they find something they have not encountered before.

"It stimulated me to look closer at things and to go back and query and look up. I've signed up to several things on Facebook now, to do with bees and shield bugs, because I've got more of an interest and I've got more understanding of what these topics are about."

Since the involvement with the project "I have been doing quite a lot of work for wildlife in the County. I think the programme contributes towards that enthusiasm."

Terrestrial isopods are a good group to study being found in urban habitats and all year round. However, there are some severe gaps in our knowledge of the county fauna. Even common woodlice species such as the Ant Woodlouse, *Platyarthrus Hoffmannseggii* only had 9 records on the HBRC database. The Project supplied 5 new records. They are small and associated with ant's nests.

Another species of woodlouse, *Armadillidium depressum*, was recorded at Hellens Manor (to add to a solitary record held at HBRC). We also found and recorded *Haplophthalmus Danicus* which was a county first.

Participants, actually school children from Madley Primary, were lucky enough to find a new county first at Brampton Woods. *Philoscia Affinis* has recently been discovered (it was hiding in the *Philoscia muscorum* complex!). A spur on the 7th leg of a male confirmed it, but clearly they are there to be found at other locations.



Platyarthrus Hoffmannseggii



Philoscia Affinis

They also felt that they now understood the importance of biological recording and because of this were more likely to submit records:

"I am more mindful and more interested in other species; I record bird sightings."

"I will be trying to do a bit more and looking for things in different places, rather than the places I'm just familiar with."

OUTCOME: PEOPLE WILL HAVE LEARNT ABOUT HERITAGE, LEADING TO CHANGE IN IDEAS AND ACTIONS

Training attendees

As with developing skills, the majority of people gave feedback confirming they were gaining new knowledge from attending an event or course.

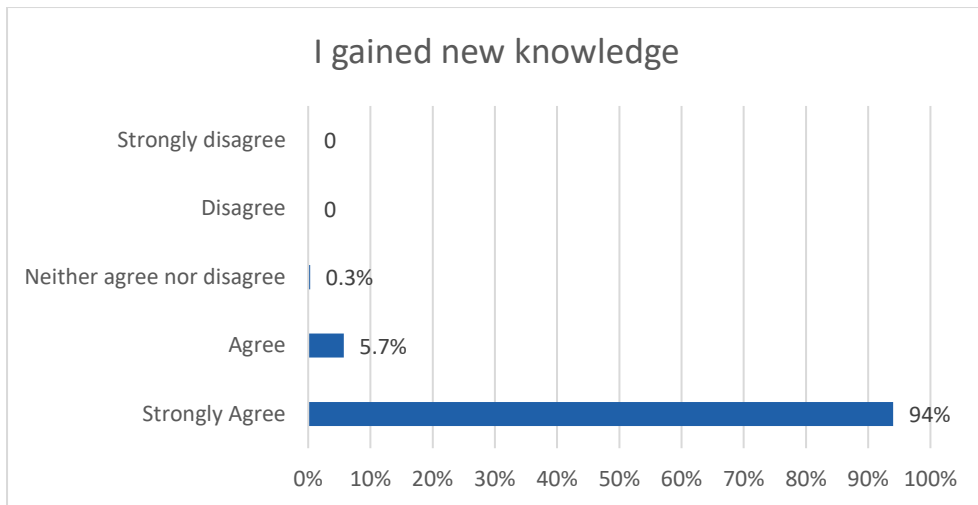


Figure 7. Attendees' responses to "I gained new knowledge."

Comments:

"Learning about new groups of invertebrates, about their biology and natural history, but mainly about identification and learning about groups I don't know much about."

"What I liked the most is the classroom base lesson then looking for what you've been studying and the fact that we just go out to just outside the door and find things that are really interesting."

In answer to "How do you think you will use the knowledge and skills that you have gained today?" attendees had a variety of responses. Most popular was to carry out some surveying/ recording themselves, then identification for personal reasons such as wanting to find out what lives in their land/ garden, then in a current work role, then to teach others/ share knowledge, to improve their own general knowledge, for enjoyment.

Event attendees

In answering the question "How much do you think you have now learnt about this topic?" 71.5% felt that they had learnt a lot about the topic covered, and a further 21.5% felt that they had learnt some information about the topic.

Comments:

"Learning about new animal groups, their natural history as well as identification and where to look for them."

"We've become much more aware of what's in the churchyard now; we recognise a lot more variety of things. Discovering ladybirds, we didn't realise existed because they are a small variety and a rather more discreet variety."

Interviewees

Participants interviewed were asked if they had done any biological recording since their involvement with the project. All who were interviewed stated that they had carried out some recording, but two said that they had not done as much as they wanted to.

"I record generally what I see on my walks, particularly because one of my main hobbies is birds, so I've always recorded on Birdtrack."

"I have done some bird ringing. The Big Garden Birdwatch. So, yeah, it's made me more interested to do that more in the future."

"I am definitely converted to biological recording."

There was a common theme throughout the interviews that, whilst some may have already been recording prior to the project, all have increased the types of species they now look to record.

"I always recorded Birds and Butterflies, but now I am recording a lot more."

"We were already keeping moth records. Now we've been recording the flora in the meadows at home. We left the meadows un-grazed this year."

"We certainly will be continuing and trying to do a bit more, looking for things in different places, rather than the places I'm just familiar with."

OUTCOME: PEOPLE WILL HAVE GREATER WELLBEING

Measuring wellbeing is a complex process and one that is still being researched. In a project of this scope and size, it is really only possible to use one or more proxies of wellbeing indicators (in this case enjoyment) and to collect anecdotal evidence as to the wellbeing benefits people feel derives from their involvement.

Training attendees

Most attendees, 295 out of 310 (95%) who answered, strongly agreed that they enjoyed the session with the remaining 15 (5%) simply agreeing. None of the attendees were ambivalent and none disagreed. Below is a wordcloud of the feedback from the attendees:

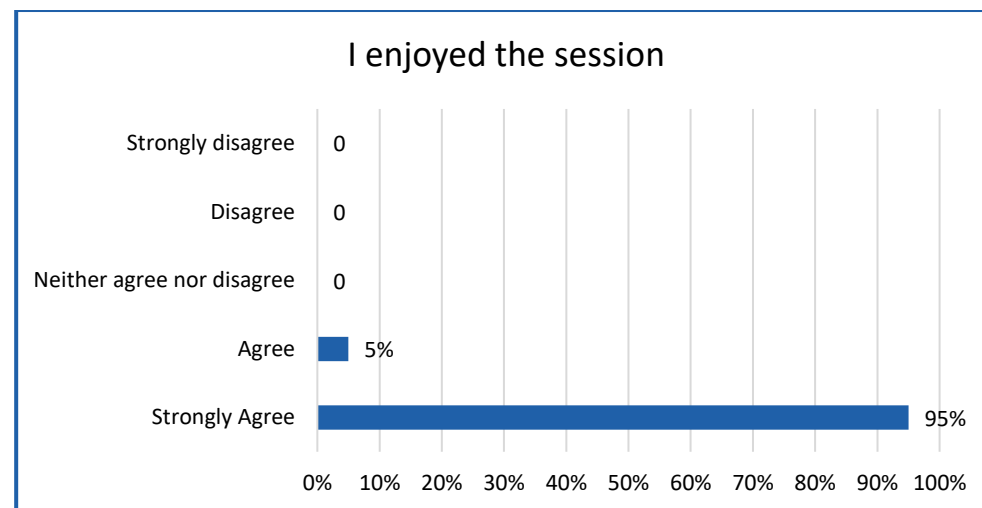


Figure 8. Attendees' responses to "I enjoyed the session."

Event attendees

Out of 105 attendees at events organised by the project, in response to the question "How much have you enjoyed today?", 71.5% stated that they enjoyed the event a lot, with a further 21.5% simply stating that they enjoyed the event.

Interviewees

The participant interviews shed further light on what they found most enjoyable about their involvement with the project. These insights included:

- Seeing different places around the County.
- Sharing time with like-minded people and making new friends.
- The training was really inclusive, with a wide age range, diverse backgrounds and starting knowledge.
- Access to a diverse range of subjects and, through this, learning new things.
- Excellent presenters/ trainers.
- Course content being pitched at the right level, challenging but not too much so.

- Chance to be involved in something that is a bit different from day-to-day life. Creates a new interest.
- Learning new things is liberating, especially things to do with nature.

Prior to the project starting, Ellie found herself at home, having completed a degree in Zoology with conservation, but finding it difficult to get her first job. Ellie started attending the project's courses as a way of meeting other, like-minded people, broadening her knowledge and experience, as well as providing her with some much-needed mental stimulation during COVID; in her words 'to give her some personal wellbeing.'

One of these courses, which particularly stimulated Ellie was on Earthworms, led by Kieron Brown.

Ellie found herself doing a Traineeship with the Dorset Wildlife Trust, part of which included helping with the Trust's Young Conservation Group at Brownsea. Ellie was challenged to give a presentation to the group on a subject of her choice. Remembering how inspired she was at the Earthworm course, Ellie set about producing a program for the group along the same lines, which proved to be very successful.

Ellie has very recently been given the job of Assistant Ranger with the Dorset Wildlife Trust, which she directly attributes to the inspiration, knowledge, confidence and motivation which she gained through attending the project.

"It is also nice to do something which takes your mind off the everyday. We all have problems, but you go out there and start concentrating on that and it stops you thinking about other stuff for a while, it has been great."

"Being closer to nature is always good for people's wellbeing. We've appreciated the project coming along and helping us to identify much more variety than we realised was here and naming some of the things."

"It lifts your spirits to be able to look for stuff and see stuff."

OUTCOME: THE FUNDED ORGANISATION WILL BE MORE RESILIENT

How the organisation can be seen to be more resilient as a result of the project can be looked at in various different ways.

If the organisation is better understood and well-publicised within the community it serves, then it should become more resilient through more requests for, and use of, its services.

We can see that the use of the HBRC website and social media, which was virtually non-existent prior to the project, has grown substantially. Prior to the project, most promotion and marketing will have been carried out through the Council's online presence; however, since the project it can be seen that 74% of training courses and event participants heard about the event through either the HBRC website or the HBRC social media.

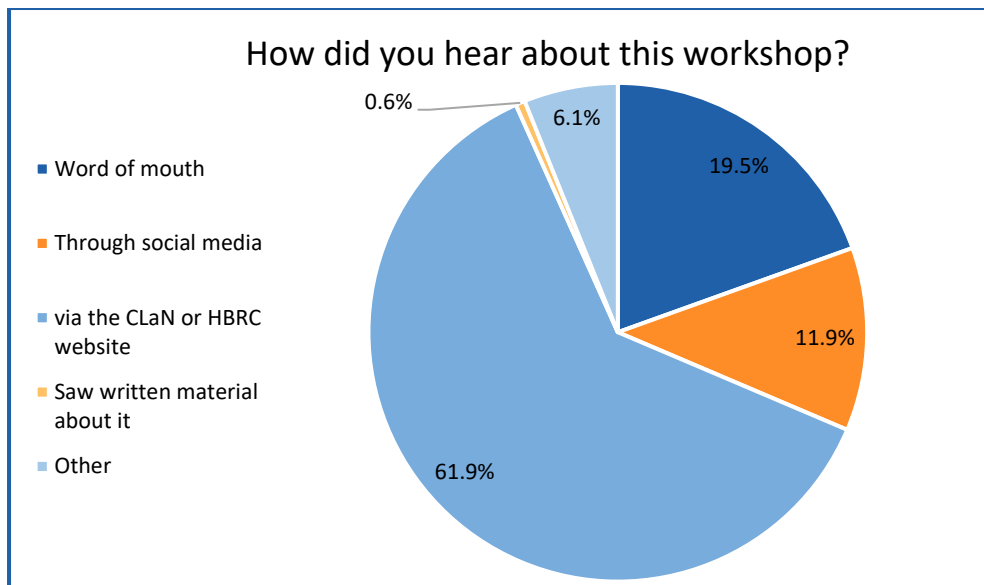


Figure 10. How the attendees heard about the Courses and Events.

HBRC now has a strong presence on social media, with 465 followers on Facebook, 1,298 followers on Instagram and 496 followers on Twitter (X). This is effectively from a standing start prior to the project.

Training & Event Attendees

The most common way that the attendees heard about the workshop was through the CLaN or HBRC website (61.9%), then word of mouth (19.5%), which will of course have built as the project continued and 'Communities of Interest' formed. The next most common source for information about events was through social media (11.9%).

Growing a 'Following' on social media takes time, especially for a non-mainstream activity such as biological recording. That HBRC already has more than 2,230 followers across the Social Media platforms, given the comparatively short space of time the project has been in operation, is a commendable result.

Other methods of attendees finding information about events included through the Herefordshire Green Network, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and a Parish magazine.



Interviewees

The participants interviewed were asked how they had first heard about the project and how they subsequently kept in touch with it. Half of those interviewed had heard of the project through direct contact with the project officer while a further 43% had been told about it by the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. In effect, 93% had learnt about the start of the project by 'word of mouth'.

Over the course of the project, the interviewees confirmed that their method of updating themselves or finding out about future events had changed from word of mouth to 35.5% receiving their updates via social media, 29% from regular checks of the website and the remaining 35.5% receiving emails of mailshots. This

shows that the organisation is better understood and is communicating more effectively.

"I follow the social media stuff, so I quite often see the Instagram posts sharing what people are discovering across the County."

"I started following them on Facebook and Instagram, which was really good actually, because they'd always post things if they found new species in Herefordshire or about different events they'd been doing."

"I do check the website from time to time to see what courses there are, and if there's space, try and go on them."

Another way of judging if the organisation will be more resilient is to look at how much it is used. Prior to the project, the HBRC was not used much by the community. The project has helped with this:

"I think we have raised the profile of the Records Centre and biological recording massively. People know that there's someone local who's interested now, and I don't think that was the case before with the wider community."

At the start of the project, HBRC held some 881,207 records within its database. The database now holds 935,853 records, an increase of 54,646 records over the course of the project.

There has also been an increase in the number of records for typically under-recorded groups. For instance, whilst there has been an increase by 2% in the number of amphibians recorded there has been an increase of 117% in records for booklice (Psocoptera). Similarly, there has been an increase by 1% in the number of reptiles recorded, but an increase of 58% in records for springtails (Collembola).

There is an increasing recognition among stakeholders of the value of HBRC.

"An increased awareness of the Centre and the fact that it exists and what it does for the County and what it holds in terms of data."

RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE PROJECT

The stakeholders and participants interviewed were asked a series of questions about how they felt the project was run. Their views are summarised below.

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL?

- Going out on site - it is far better to get people to see it on site than in a classroom if the species can handle the disturbance.
- Engagement with the trainers and speakers and the ability to contact them after the course. It is important for people to know where to go if they need to ask for help. It was felt that this has been a stumbling block in the past.
- The range and variety of different courses offered.
- The inclusivity and diversity of attendees, aged from 8 to 80, all learning together.
- Enthusiasm.
- Having the opportunity to do hands-on activities to further aid or reinforce the learning.
- Engagement with schools and teachers.

Deilephila Elpenor, or Elephant Hawk-moth to give its common name, is one of the most recognisable moths within the Europe. This common name is derived from the caterpillar's resemblance to an elephant's trunk.

Despite this moth being relatively common within England and Wales, prior to the project, HBRC only held 342 records of the moth, built up over many decades of recording.

During the project, a further 72 records of the moth within Herefordshire were entered to the HBRC database, this is an increase in recordings of some 21%.

WHAT HAS HELPED DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT?

- Outgoing and enthusiastic personality of the project officer, particularly helped in engaging young people.
- Resources, such as microscopes, that the Records Centre has made available.
- Social media profile.
- Lots in the News over the last few years about the importance of wildlife.
- Changing the training delivery part way through the project, having shorter talks followed by more field activities.
- The Council, providing training venues and other facilities.
- Covid, people spending more time outdoors and through this becoming more interested in nature.
- Being with other 'like-minded' people. The make-up of groups may have been diverse, but the aim and focus of the group was all the same.

- The generosity of the experts who run the training sessions, generous with their time and expertise.

WHAT HAS HINDERED DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT?

- Some events undersubscribed or cancelled. Potentially due to lack of communication in the early stages.
- Not been enough communication of project activities and successes in the early stages if the Project, however the social media and website developments rectified this.
- The process of recording sightings, it's still quite technical and puts people off, so they don't make use of what they have learnt.
- Training days, especially the classroom element may have been too long on certain events and training.
- The poor of interaction with Secondary Schools in the County, most appear to have resisted getting involved.
- Covid, particularly for the Records Centre, when their building was used as a Covid response location. Meant that their work on the project was compromised.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- More creative ways of engaging people.
- Length of some of the courses, perhaps spending too much time on one subject.
- Promotion of the Garden Wildlife Survey. There was initial concern, however, the Project changed the format which proved successful.
- More use/ involvement of the Steering Group.
- Drawing more people in from outside the present biological recording community.

The participants were also asked if ‘anything could be done better’ and in their own words:

“Nothing I can think of. I would recommend it to anyone.”

“No, the Children all enjoyed it.”

“The only thing I was quite surprised about was we didn't have feedback forms to reflect on at the time.”

“I think that it might have been handy to have a handout at the end of a session or lesson, just to remind you.” Note: only on some courses, lots did provide handouts, the lesson was learnt during the project.

“Only one thing, and it is a personal thing, when a booking is confirmed, if it could include a link to put it straight into my diary.”

“Some of the more technical/ difficult topics, I found were a bit long. They were generally from 10 o'clock, until four o'clock, and very often by three o'clock, my mind was wobbling a bit, but I suspect that's because I'm in my mid-70s, and not a youngster with a brain like a sponge.”

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST LESSONS WE CAN TAKE FROM THE DELIVERY AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT SO FAR?

- Creation and use of the Steering Group.
Concerns about the steering group which was formed after the project had started. For some people it is not clear what its role is, is it for governance or guidance. So, the question is, “Could the project have been stronger if it was formed earlier and helped steer from the start?”

- Range of courses.
Offering a wide range of subjects has helped attract more and a wider range of people.
- Communication.
This was lacking at the start but has now improved considerably. It would have been good to have communication processes in place from the initiation of the project.
- Appetite.
The appetite for Biological ID training within the County. People’s desire to learn new skills.
- Hard to reach groups.
More focus could have been given to how to engage ‘hard to reach’ groups. For example, Primary School children and Adults were relatively easy to reach and enthuse, but young people (12 – 18) were far more difficult to engage with.
- The long-term nature of biological recording.
People who come on the training don’t necessarily, immediately apply what they have learnt, so there is a natural lag between training people and seeing an increase in records. This is particularly so when working with young people who might not, for a variety of reasons, apply what they have learnt until later in their lives.

WHAT HAS HELPED ENGAGE NEW AUDIENCES IN BIOLOGICAL RECORDING?

- The opportunity to meet experts and networking.
- The work undertaken with schools.
- The courses have been pitched at a variety of levels, engaging both beginners and people with prior knowledge.

HAVE YOU USED THE NEW BIOLOGICAL RECORDING WEBSITE? IF SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

- It's a very good promotional tool but does it provide the best way of submitting records?
- The lay out and navigation is good.
- It needs to allow people to submit multiple records at one time.
- There were concerns about only the scientific name being used as opposed to a search feature for common names.
- Having the events page, and the ability to submit records, all on the one site shows a joined-up approach.

LEGACY

Now that the project has finished, it is important to understand what legacy the stakeholders feel the project will leave behind.

WHAT LEGACY DO YOU THINK THAT THE PROJECT WILL LEAVE FOR BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN HEREFORDSHIRE?

- More people have got into the habit of collecting and submitting biological records.
- A new generation of biological recorders, with more young people getting involved, leading to a stronger biological recording community.
- The records submitted will allow the Records Centre to know more about what species are within the County, what is 'missing' and what is moving in.
- The level of post-course contact between course tutors and the course attendees. This has been higher than expected and is ongoing, with specialists being contacted on a more regular basis.
- Prior to the project, there was little or no interaction between the various recording groups within the County. Now, during and since the project,

there is a lot more cross-referencing, support and collaboration between the groups. Indeed, the Herefordshire Mammal group had been in danger of collapse, the interaction of the Project has helped to revitalise it.

- The potential development of a 'Recorders Forum.' This is in discussion, but there are several keen individuals and groups who wish to see this happen.

WHAT LEGACY DO YOU THINK THAT THE PROJECT WILL LEAVE FOR THE HEREFORDSHIRE BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE?

- Hope was expressed that this project will help HBRC move forward through:
 - An increased awareness of the Centre and the fact that it exists and what it does for the County.
 - An increased awareness of what the Centre hold in terms of data.
 - An increase in awareness of what the Centre and its resources, including data, can be used for.
 - More volunteers involved in supporting the Centre.
 - Giving people the encouragement and support to go on to do good things within the biological recording sector.
 - A more open approach to sharing information particularly with those who have supplied it. Payment is a barrier to more and better recording.
 - A real presence on the Web and social media. This now needs to be maintained, updated and kept current and 'active.'

CONCLUSIONS

This section uses what has been learnt about the project through the evaluation process to provide, by way of conclusion, an analysis of the Key Evaluation Topics which were as follows:

- Has the project met its outputs and outcomes?
- The success of the new website
- How have we improved the knowledge of biodiversity in the County
- Has the project improved the profile and business of HBRC?
- What messaging/ activities has been best at attracting a new audience?
- Has biological recording helped to improve wellbeing?

HAS THE PROJECT MET ITS OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES?

The output data shows that in the 'events' people engagement categories the project achieved or exceeded its output targets.

The project aimed to generate over 50,000 records throughout its lifetime. The County's database has increased by some 54,646 records during the time the project has been running.

The targets were met in all outcome areas, indeed, in some areas these targets were exceeded. This is summarised in the table below:

A wider range of people will be involved in heritage	There is evidence that the events facilitated by the project attracted a wide range of participants, from 8 to 80, along the general ethnic breakdown of the County. These participants' levels of experience varied widely from complete novices who wished to gain knowledge to experience recorders looking to expand their understanding and expertise.
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Heritage will be identified and better explained	A number of courses looking at less popular taxa were run and well received, and people reported an increase in the understanding of these groups. HBRC has confirmed that this has resulted in an increase in the recording of many taxa, including an increase of these less popular species. More details are shown in Appendix A.
Heritage will be in better condition	HBRC has confirmed the increase in the number of records held on their database over the course of the project, some 54,646 extra records. The impact of there being more records of a broader range of taxa should help lead to the better conservation of heritage but this is a long-term impact and probably out of the scope of this evaluation.
People will have developed skills	It is clear from the training courses and events feedback that people have learnt new skills and that these are giving them a greater degree of confidence when identifying and recording nature.
People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions	Participants on events and courses are clearly learning a considerable amount and there is anecdotal evidence that this is leading to changes in ideas and action. People talk about recording for the first time or recording a wider range of species. This seems to be particularly so with the school groups that have been worked with, for example one school setting up a Citizen Science club. The concept of a 'Recorders Forum' is also gaining some traction, which should allow crossflow of information and ideas within the various groups in the County.
People will have greater well-being	This is a challenging outcome to measure and evaluate in a project of this size. If we assume that enjoyment contributes to wellbeing, then the project has been a success as there is a high level of enjoyment being reported from all project activities. Beyond this, we must rely on anecdotal evidence where people report the benefits their involvement is having. We have some of this

	type of evidence and this points strongly to the social aspects of meeting like-minded people and developing new friends as being important in enhancing wellbeing.
The funded organisation will be more resilient	The project is well regarded among stakeholders which reflects well on the project partners. The website has been well received (see below) and the approach being adopted is seen as an important step in the development of the Biological Records Centre.

THE SUCCESS OF THE NEW WEBSITE

The new website has been well received and is reported as being easy to navigate and containing interesting content. People particularly like the events listing and perhaps would like more information about related activities – creating a bit of a ‘One-stop-shop.’ It’s fair to say that most people who commented on the website through the evaluation process, were positive about it, but only a few of these had used it to submit records and there was a question as to whether this part of the site was user friendly and flexible enough to be useful to new recorders.

There have been 138 records submitted through the website to date and 116 data requests, also through the website. However, there have been 380 records submitted to HBRC via email, which suggests that the website still has a way to go to be the first point of contact.

This, however, is eclipsed by the number of records, directly attributable to the project, which have been submitted through iRecord (20,201 records). During the interviews, it became apparent that people were fairly resistant to change their old habits. If they had previously submitted records through iRecord, or one of the many other recording portals, they were likely to continue to submit that way. HBRC are not resistant to this, they will still receive the record through the

other portals’ systems, but it does indicate that there is still some work needed to convert the recorders to the new website.

When we look at the website, we must also include the social media platforms. HBRC are already at more than 2,250 across their three chosen social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter (X) and Instagram), which for the comparatively short space of time they have been using the platforms is quite an accomplishment.

HOW HAVE WE IMPROVED THE KNOWLEDGE OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE COUNTY?

There has undoubtedly been an increase and a wider range of people engaged and informed about biodiversity, and trained in ways that they can contribute. With a wide age range of new, interested, fledgling Recorders starting their biological recording journey, and the fact that more than 54,600 records have been submitted and arrived at HBRC (through many routes), more than doubling what would have previously been expected, there is a displayed increase in the knowledge of biodiversity across the County.

Existing biological recorders have had the opportunity to extend their knowledge, often considering new taxa for the first time, while those new to recording have been encouraged to take first steps. Anecdotal evidence suggest that this is having an impact on personal knowledge and appreciation of biodiversity, supporting the substantial increase in records received at HBRC.

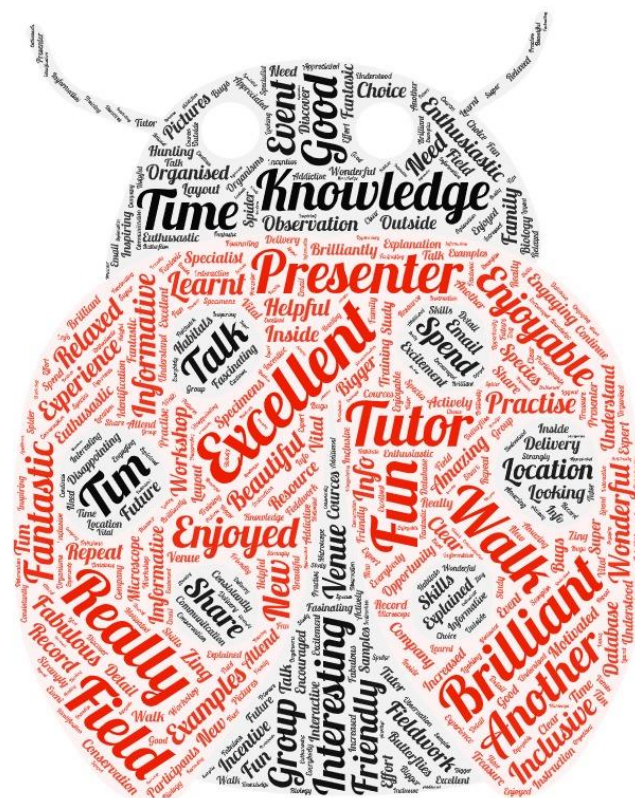
There is clear evidence that the profile of the HBRC is improving through its involvement in the project. The website is a significant factor in this, as is the social media profile that is developing. Through these online routes people are able to learn more about HBRC as an organisation, both what it does and how it can help/ what records it keeps and are available to all.

From the interviews, it is clear that there is a perception that HBRC is starting to shift towards a more friendly, helpful organisation when compared to pre-project.

This is also being reflected in how HBRC is being used. Over the course of the project, some 634 records and requests have been submitted to HBRC electronically (138 records and 116 data requests through the website, 380 records by email). That HBRC is being contacted, and used in this way, reflects the improved profile of HBRC which, ultimately, should result in a stronger business.

As has already been stated in earlier sections of this report, undertaking an empirical assessment of wellbeing benefits is probably outside the scope of the evaluation (and its budget). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that participants' wellbeing is being improved although at the moment it seems to be most related to the social aspects of group activities.

Please see the word cloud below for a broad cross section of the attendees' comments in feedback.



Half way through the project we undertook 'Health Check' evaluation to ascertain if the project was on track to achieve its outcomes. We were pleased at that point to report that this was largely the case although we did note that it was too early in the project to determine the heritage benefits in terms of the more biological records.

It is pleasing, at this final evaluation stage, to now be able to report a more rounded picture of success. The project has achieved what it set out to achieve, more and a wider range of biological records, more people involved in collecting those records. It has been a well-run project, with the training and events particularly well received. Many of the participants report significant benefits from being involved, including personal development, wellbeing and the sense of being part of a larger biological recording community.

In terms of the outcomes for heritage, more is now known about the natural heritage of Herefordshire. Perhaps more than actual number of records it is the range of taxa for which records have been submitted is perhaps the most valuable aspect. Increasing the evidence base for the less well understood groups helps to provide a robust evidence base for conservation in the county.

The project has also enhanced the standing and reputation of the biological records centre who are now seen as a more accessible organisation. The challenge now is to ensure that HBRC and the expanded biological recording community find ways of maintaining the momentum that has been established by the Hidden Herefordshire project.

This has been an interesting and enjoyable project to be involved in and the evaluation team would like to thank everyone who participated in the evaluation for your time and cooperation.

Mike King & Nicholas Tod
Resources for Change
October 2023

APPENDIX A – PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN RECORDS BY TAXON GROUP

The table below compares the number of records which are directly attributed to the project, proportionally against all other records held in the HBRC database. For instance, if there were previously 1,000 records of Species X on the HBRC database, a 2% increase would mean that there are now 1,020 records of Species X on the HBRC database.

Taxon Group	% increase
acarine (Acari)	1
amphibian	2
annelid	22
bird	0
bony fish (Actinopterygii)	0
centipede	44
coelenterate (=cnidarian)	13
conifer	1
crustacean	18
false scorpion (Pseudoscorpiones)	5
fern	1
flatworm (Turbellaria)	8
flowering plant	1
fungus	0
ginkgo	17
harvestman (Opiliones)	7
horsetail	1
insect - alderfly (Megaloptera)	4
insect - beetle (Coleoptera)	9
insect - booklouse (Psocoptera)	117

insect - butterfly	3
insect - caddis fly (Trichoptera)	0
insect - dragonfly (Odonata)	3
insect - earwig (Dermaptera)	26
insect - hymenopteran	17
insect - lacewing (Neuroptera)	12
insect - mayfly (Ephemeroptera)	6
insect - moth	10
insect - orthopteran	20
insect - scorpion fly (Mecoptera)	10
insect - snakefly (Raphidioptera)	20
insect - stonefly (Plecoptera)	4
insect - true bug (Hemiptera)	20
insect - true fly (Diptera)	6
lichen	1
liverwort	7
millipede	37
mollusc	16
moss	4
reptile	1
slime mould	0
spider (Araneae)	11
springtail (Collembola)	58
stonewort	2
terrestrial mammal	1

APPENDIX B – NEW SPECIES TO THE HBRC DATABASE, DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT

The table below shows some of the new species added to the database of HBRC as a direct result of records which have been made by participants of the project.

A few highlighted new species to our database attributed to Hidden Herefordshire	Common Name (where there is one)
<i>Anthophora quadrimaculata</i>	Four-banded flower bee
<i>Brachymeria tibialis</i>	
<i>Chrysosomopsis auratus</i>	
<i>Coelioxys elongata</i>	Dull-vented Sharp-tail Bee
<i>Coelioxys rufescens</i>	Rufescent Sharp-tail Bee
<i>Dendrobaena veneta</i>	Compost Worm
<i>Eisenia andrei</i>	
<i>Hemyda vittata</i>	
<i>Hylaeus pictipes</i>	Little yellow-faced bee
<i>Hylaeus signatus</i>	Large yellow-faced bee
<i>Ichneumon sarcitorius</i>	
<i>Lasioglossum malachurum</i>	Sharp-collared Furrow Bee
<i>Lasioglossum villosulum</i>	Shaggy Furrow Bee
<i>Melitta leporina</i>	Hairy Legged Mining Bee
<i>Osmia leaiana</i>	Orange-vented Mason Bee
<i>Philoscia affinis</i>	
<i>Pilophorus perplexus</i>	



Brachymeria tibialis

A small chalcid wasp it is rarely found

Pilophorus perplexus

A Mirid bug



Chthonius ischnocheles

A pseudoscorpion, very few records

Anisoxya fuscula

A False Darkling beetle, 3rd record

