

Thames Valley

Environmental Records Centre



Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire

Annual Report

2015-2016

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) is a 'not for profit' organisation covering Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We are run by a partnership of all the local authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

We collect, analyse and share geodiversity and biodiversity information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire to help people make sound decisions about how to develop and manage land sustainably and where to direct wildlife conservation, and for scientific research and education.

We hold around 1.5 million records of flora and fauna in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus information about Local Wildlife and Geological Sites, UK NERC S41 priority habitats (previously BAP) habitats and Ecological Networks (Conservation Target Areas and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas).

We collect this data from the general public, skilled volunteer /amateur recorders, professionals working for wildlife charities (BBOWT and RSPB), professionals working for government agencies (Natural England, the Environment Agency & local authorities) and ecological consultants.

TVERC is accredited by the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres.

Chairman's Foreword

Dominic Lamb,

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

I would like to start by thanking Jeremy Davy who retired as TVERC's Chairman in April. Jeremy was instrumental in helping to establish TVERC, working with colleagues in Oxfordshire and at Natural England to set up what has become one of the most successful records centres in the Country.

I and other members of the Steering Group will miss Jeremy's leadership and look forward to welcoming his successor to the Steering Group.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the TVERC team it has been another year of steady growth. Increases in income from commercial data searches and projects have helped to offset the reduction in income caused by the misguided decision of Natural England to reduce and now cease funding Local Records Centres.

We are now entering into a period of unprecedented uncertainty with the recent Brexit vote. It is likely that this will have an impact on some of our income streams particularly the income we receive from commercial data searches.

The challenge for the coming years will be to ensure that we continue to diversify our income streams, provide an excellent service to our partners and innovate with the data products we offer.

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1. Summary

We had several staff changes over 2015-16, with Camilla returning from maternity leave in May, Caroline starting as the Volunteer Co-ordinator in September, Yolanda starting as a second Biodiversity Data Assistant and Lucy our Projects Manager leaving in January and Dan starting as the new Projects Manager in March. We focused this year on reviewing our processes and procedures to ensure they are as efficient as possible in future. This included working with Andy Foy to automate some of our data management processes and creating new online forms for data search requests. This has been a great success so far and allowed our Data Team to spend more time wrangling data into our database. All data-users will benefit from the improved quality and quantity of data that we can provide. We also continued to survey sites and analyse data to further improve the environmental evidence-base in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

We were very busy as usual providing high quality raw data which has been validated and verified and data products to those needing it to make decisions. We were disappointed to hear the announcement from Natural England in February that they would no longer be funding any LERCs from 1st April 2016. TVERC have income from a range of sources which means we are resilient to this type of sudden change. However, the decision by NE to stop funding LERCs all across the country is very concerning. This decision appears to show a serious misunderstanding of the need for this evidence-base and the legal and policy requirement for them to use it to make decisions.

We have also been putting additional resource into support for voluntary recorders and recording groups, with Caroline our Volunteer Co-ordinator starting in September. We now have a list of survey equipment available for recorders to borrow on our website. We have also streamlined our processes for recruiting and managing office volunteers and updated our website pages.

We have been focussing on negotiating new agreements with key data-providers to give TVERC permission to use data at the highest possible resolution in the normal business of TVERC without seeking further permission either from the individual recorder or recording group. This will allow us to move towards 'Open Data', for example by uploading more of the species data we hold onto the NBN (at reduced resolution) so it is accessible to all.

We ended 2015-16 with a net underspend of £7.6k, which will be re-invested into the TVERC service.

2. TVERC Team

We are a team of ten people, but as some of us work part-time, this is equivalent to 8.7 full-time staff.

Camilla Burrow, Director - Development and delivery of the TVERC service.

Dan Carpenter, Projects Manager – Delivering services to our local authority partners in Berkshire and Oxfordshire and managing project work.

Graham Hawker and Ellen Lee, Biodiversity Data Services Officers – Data management, analysing and presenting data for commercial customers and project work.

Julie Kerans and Katherine Holmes, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Biodiversity Data Officers - Surveying local wildlife sites with the help of volunteers, analysing and presenting data for project work and developing links with the local groups and recorders.

Caroline Coleman, Volunteer Coordinator – Working with TVERC volunteers and recording groups to increase the quality and quantity of wildlife records and build up a volunteer network.

Hannah Boylan, Admin Officer - Finance, admin & promotional tasks to ensure the smooth running of a busy office.

Rachael Clemson and Yolanda Vazquez, Biodiversity Data Assistants - Data management, presenting data for commercial customers and project work.

New Data Assistant

Yolanda Vazquez joined TVERC on 4th Jan '16 as an additional Biodiversity Data Assistant. Prior to joining TVERC Yolanda attended several of the TVERC run training courses on species and habitat survey and identification techniques, and volunteered in the office inputting and validating ecological data. Yolanda has an MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation and Ecotourism and has worked in the environmental sector for 6 years in South East Asia, Spain and Action for the River Kennet.

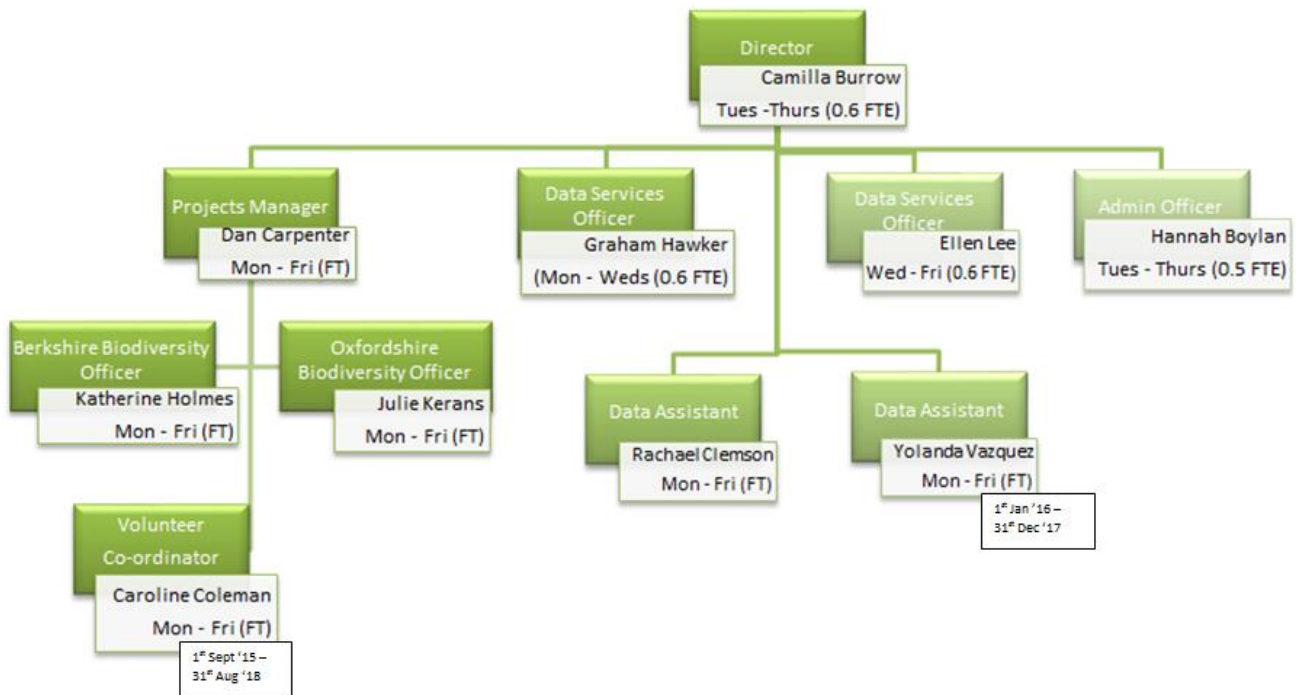
New Projects Manager

TVERC were sad to say goodbye to Lucy Lush, who resigned to take up a post-doc research position at Swansea University, related to her PhD in Hare ecology.

Dan joined the team on 8th March '16 as the new Projects Manager. Dan was previously the Biodiversity Officer at Bracknell Forest Council and before that worked at the Natural History Museum. In addition to being a highly qualified ecologist (with a PhD in Soil Science), Dan has lots of experience in analysing biodiversity data, funding and managing projects (including the BFC's Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space enhancement programme) and working with volunteers (at the Museum and also from setting up the Earthworm Society of Britain).

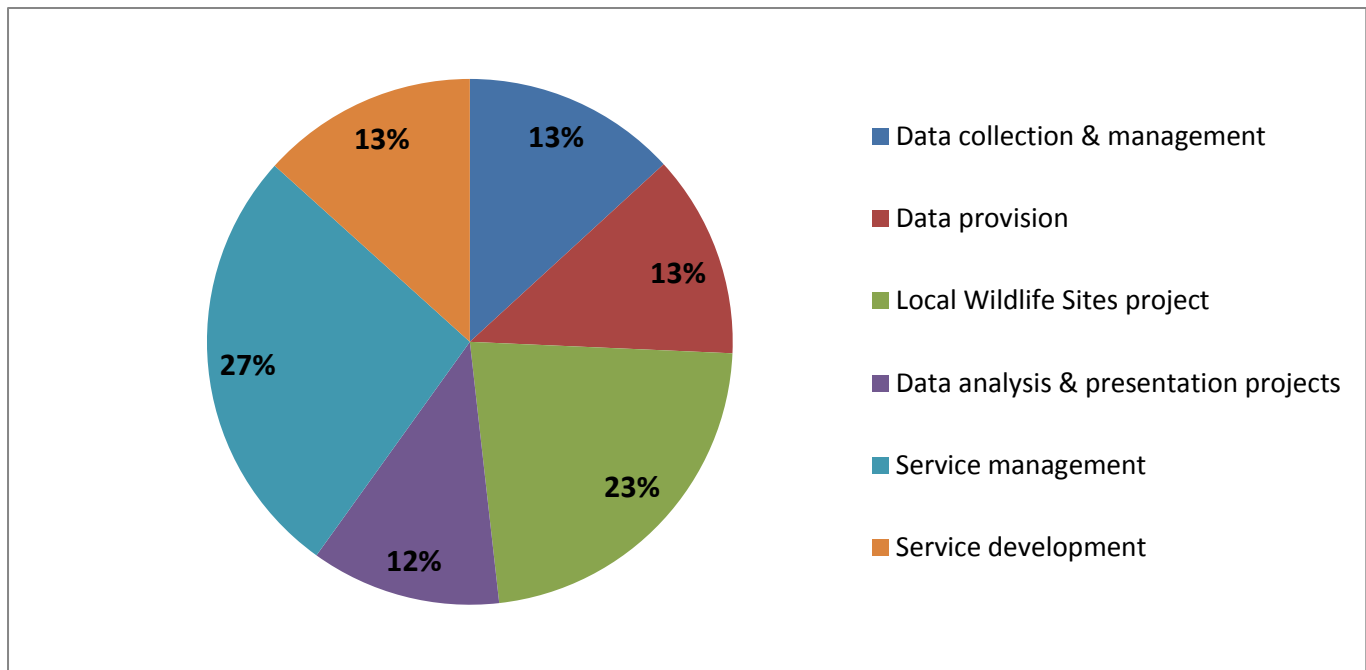
Structure

The current structure is shown below:



Areas of Work

The pie chart below illustrates the time spent by the TVERC team on different elements of the TVERC work programme during 2015-16.



Contact details

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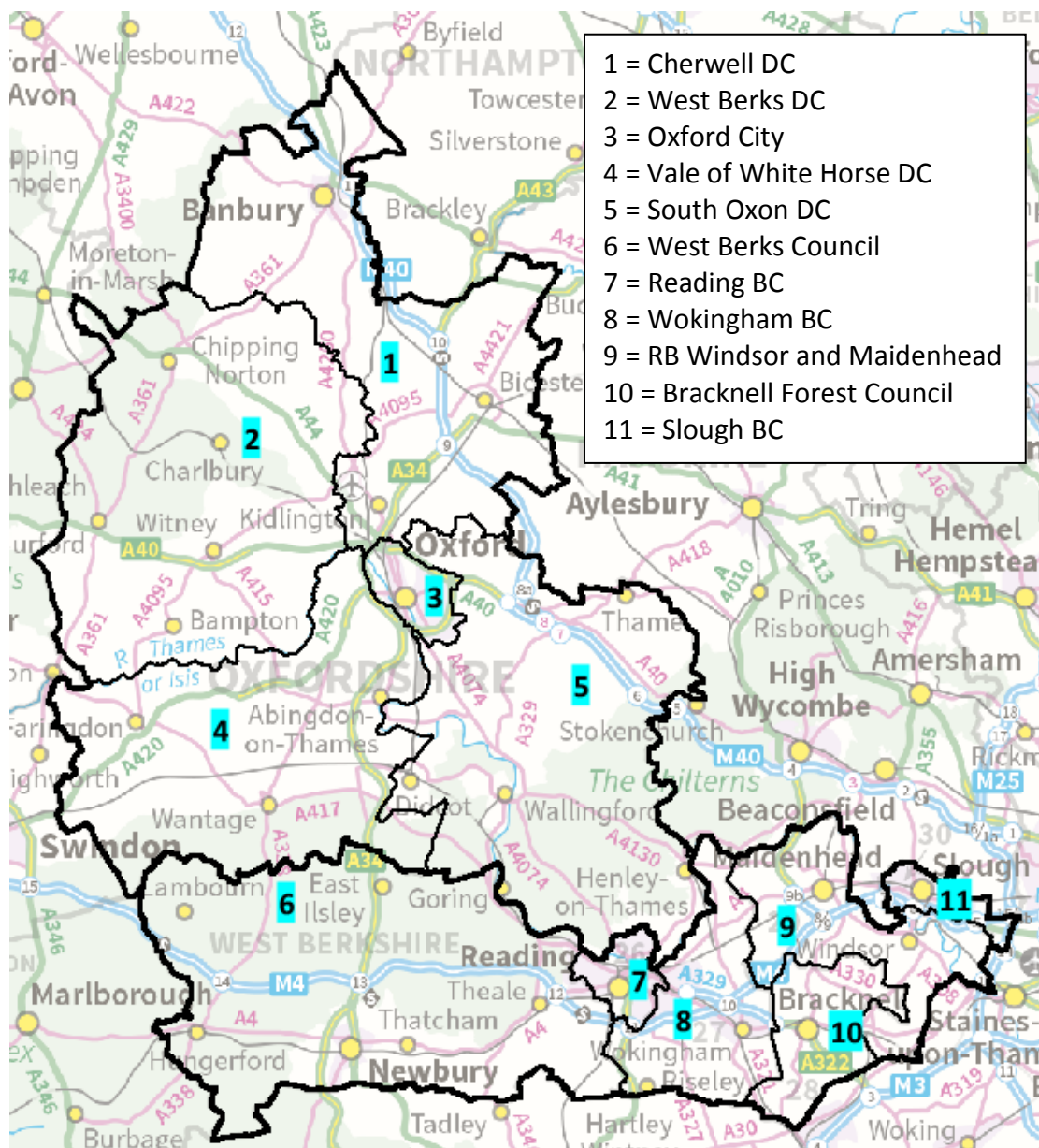
01865 815 451

tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Geographic Coverage

TVERC covers all of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, as shown on the map below.



3. TVERC Partners

Organisation

TVERC is a 'not for profit' organisation covering Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We are run by a partnership and are one of a national network of local records centres. We are a member of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and accredited by the Association of Local Records Centres (ALERC).

Our funding partners include all the local authorities in Oxfordshire & Berkshire plus the Environment Agency. We also work closely with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. TVERC is hosted by Oxfordshire County Council.

Steering Group

TVERC is monitored and directed by a Steering Group, which meets three times per year. The Steering Group provides strategic guidance for TVERC helping to set its overall aim, objectives and priorities; provides guidance as required to TVERC staff; and ensures that the operational management of the Centre is successful and that it is adequately resourced. Annex B of the MoU sets out the Steering Group's Terms of Reference.

Memorandum of Understanding

One of the requirements of ALERC accreditation is that we set out clearly and agree with our funding partners what they can expect from us, and what we expect from them. To help meet this requirement, the TVERC Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was drawn up. This MoU has been approved by the TVERC Steering Group in April 2014.

4. Data Holdings

TVERC aims to hold all available information about the plants, animals, wildlife habitats and important wildlife and geological sites in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. TVERC holds a database of over 1.7 million species records plus Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site boundaries and information and UK NERC S41 priority habitat (previously called Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)) and other habitat data.

We also hold the boundary data for Conservation Target Areas in Oxfordshire and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Berkshire. These landscape-scale conservation areas are used by the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership and Wild Oxfordshire to coordinate biodiversity work in Berkshire & Oxfordshire.

5. Data Collection & Management

We collect data from the general public, skilled volunteer/amateur recorders, professionals working for wildlife charities (BBOWT and RSPB), professionals working for government agencies (Natural England, the Environment Agency & local authorities) and ecological consultants.

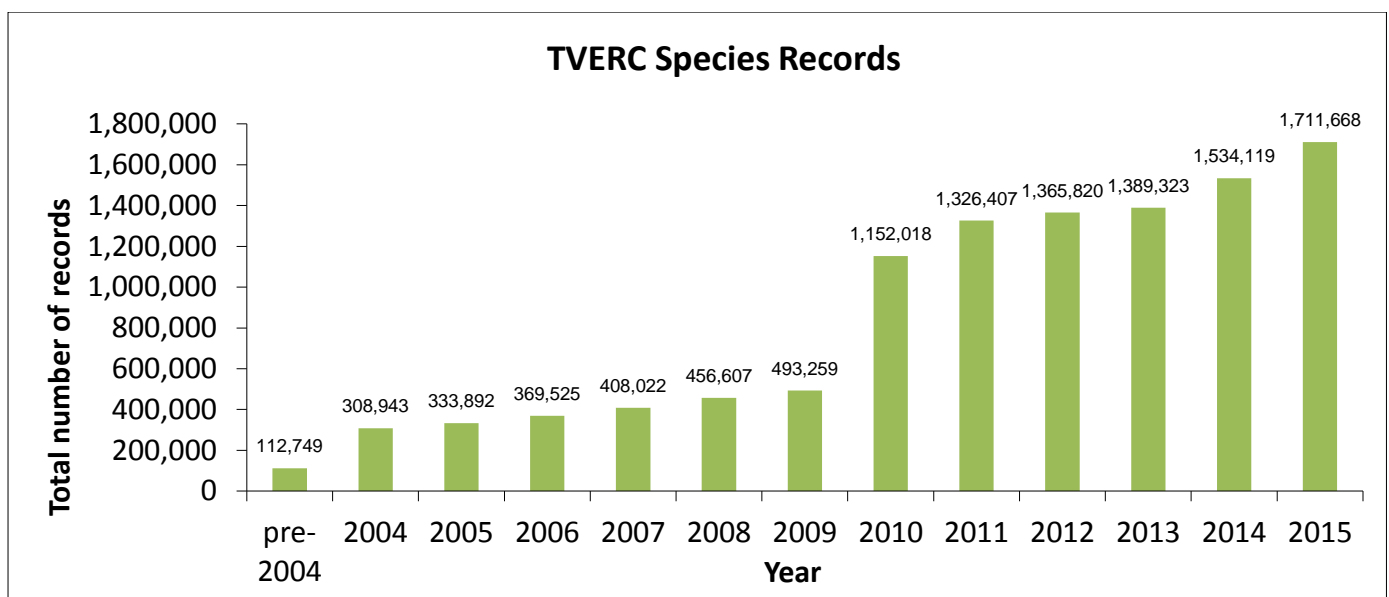
Species records

We added 177,549 new records to our database in 2015. Our database now includes over 1.7 million records.

Year	Records added
Pre-2004	112,749
2004	196,194
2005	24,949
2006	35,633

Year	Records added
2007	38,497
2008	48,585
2009	36,652
2010	658,759

Year	Records added
2011	174,389
2012	39,413
2013	23,503
2014	144,796
2015	177,549



Datasets

We added 255 new datasets into Recorder, plus Local Wildlife Site species data and Ancient Woodland Inventory data. 267 datasets were acquired by TVERC from individual recorders, recording groups, conservation organisation and environmental consultants during 2015/16 and will be processed and added to our database in accordance with our Data Policies & Procedures document.

In 2015 we concentrated particularly on inputting records of protected species from reports by ecological consultants. A big effort was made to improve the number and coverage of bat and great crested newt records. For the first time this year we actively sought out ecological reports on several local planning portals including West Oxfordshire, Cherwell District and Reading Borough. Other large data sets imported include hedgehog and other mammal surveys from PTES, various surveys held on IRecord, BDS Berkshire dragonfly records, bird records from Standlake Common, Moor Green Lakes Group records for 2012 and 2013 and Aston Rowant bird surveys for 2011. PTES gave us several dataset updates via NBN (National Dormouse database, Living with mammals, Hedgehog hibernation survey). We have also imported some records arriving via our online website. We have continued to keep up to date with records supplied to us by local recorders. In 2015 we managed to import or otherwise deal with approx. 83% of all the data sets received in the year and 88% of the high priority data sets.

Data Agreements

Each year, TVERC negotiate with the wide range of recorders and recording groups in Berkshire and Oxfordshire to ensure we can access new data. We have been focussing on negotiating new agreements with key data-providers to give TVERC permission to use data at the highest possible resolution in the normal business of TVERC without seeking further permission either from the individual recorder or recording group. This will allow us to move towards 'Open Data', for example by uploading more of the species data we hold onto the NBN (at reduced resolution) so it is accessible to all.

In 2015 we signed new data agreements with the following organisations:

- Berkshire Mammal Group
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Loddon Catchment Project (06/20/2015)
- River Thame Conservation Trust (07/03/2016)

The following groups renewed their agreements and:

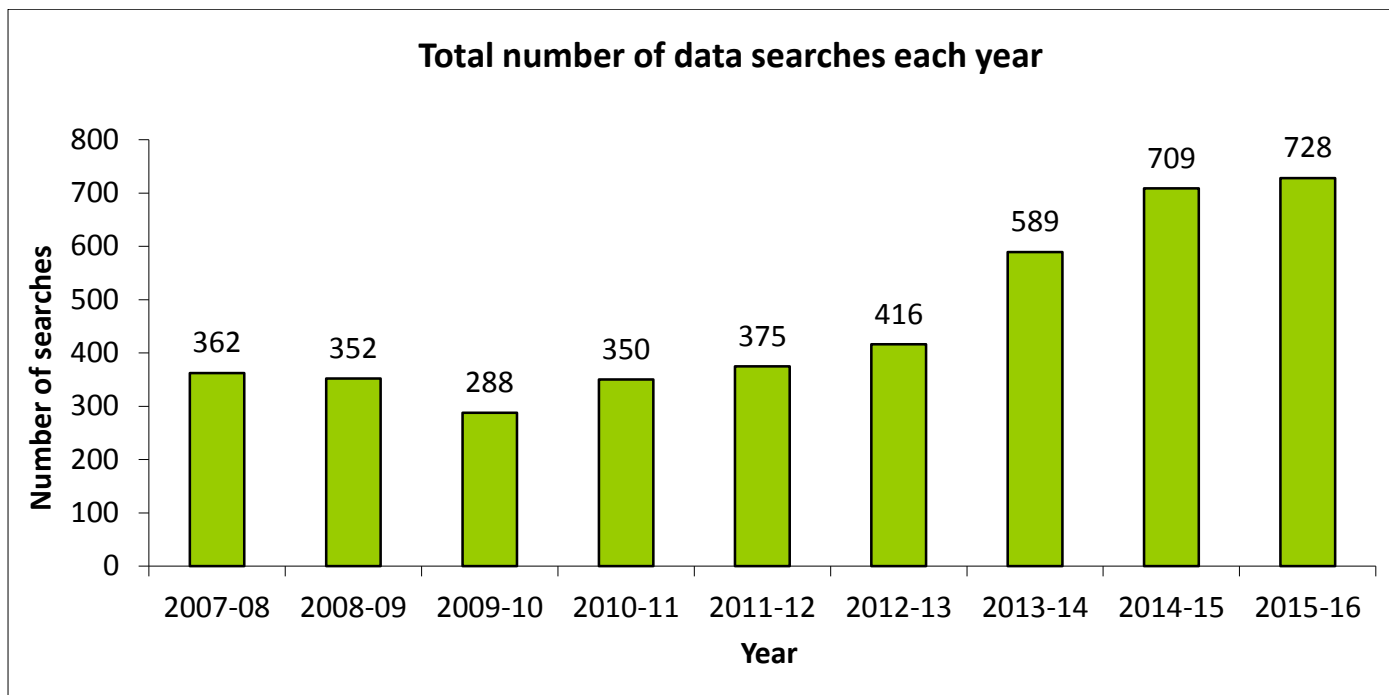
- Canal & River Trust
- Binfield Badger Group (01/10/2015) –supplied sett records/road kill records
- Oxfordshire Bat Group – supplied injured bat records

Data search improvements

We have implemented online data search forms, separate ones for commercial and non-commercial customers that are imported into a database, designed by the South East Local Records Centre Tech Advisor, Andy Foy. Besides storing the information it also automates many of the repetitive processes of dealing with data requests. For regular customers we have also created auto filled in data search forms to make it quicker for them to fill in too. We will be continuing to develop this further to automate many of the tasks of extracting and supplying data.

6. Data Search Requests

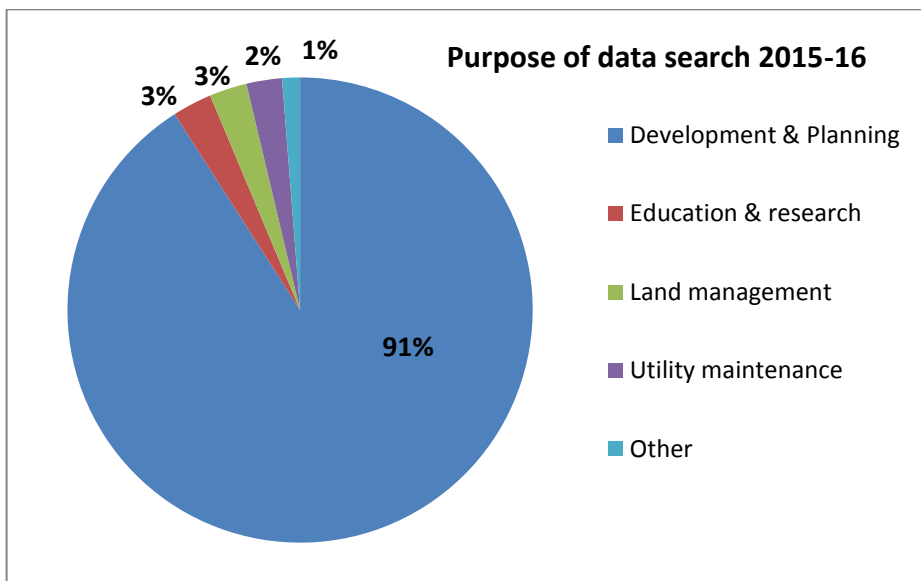
TVERC carried out 728 data searches in 2015/16. This was also an increase from last year when we carried out 709 data searches. This increase is probably due to an increase in the number of planning applications being submitted this year.



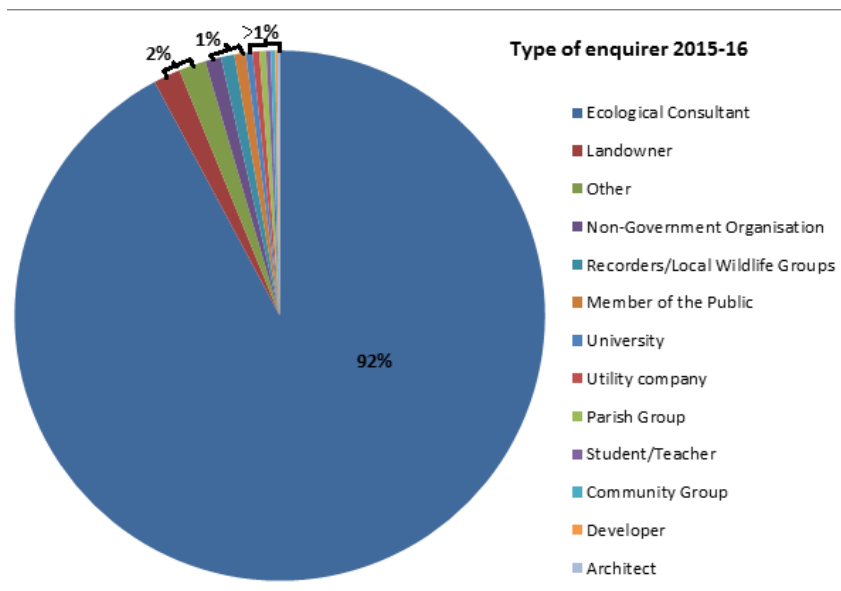
TVERC charges for data searches based on an hourly rate for extracting and presenting the data. The hourly rate includes a contribution towards the annual cost of collating and managing the TVERC database. TVERC waive this charge for data searches for individuals, landowners and conservation organisations where the data will be used solely for conservation purposes. In these cases, a donation is requested, to cover the costs of extracting and presenting the data. We also waive the fee for initial single species & bat searches, so although we carried out 728 data searches, a charge was made for only 603 of these, bringing in a total income of £85,914 for 2015/16. We also signed a 5 year agreement with Thames Water to supply them with Local Wildlife Sites data and we provided data to Buglife for their B-Lines project in Oxfordshire.

The types of data searches are shown in the pie charts and tables below.

Purpose of data search 2015/16	Number
Development & Planning	662
Education & research	20
Land management	19
Utility maintenance	18
Other	9
TOTAL	728



Type of enquirer	Total
Ecological Consultant	671
Landowner	12
Non-Government Organisation	7
Recorders/Local Wildlife Groups	6
Member of the Public	5
University	3
Utility company	3
Parish Group	3
Student/Teacher	2
Community Group	2
Developer	1
Architect	1
Other	12
TOTAL	728



7. Data Provision to Partners

TVERC provided updated datasets to our partners. These are essential to ensure that our partners comply with planning policy and wildlife legislation and that sound decisions are made about where to focus conservation effort, how best to manage land and where to direct development to minimise impacts on the natural environment.

The updated datasets TVERC provided to partners were:

- Protected & notable species (July 2015 & January 2016)
- Buffered protected species & notable (July 2015, January 2016)
- Local Wildlife Sites (February 2015)
- S41 Habitats of Principle Importance and Land-Use (previously UK BAP priority habitat) (December 2015)
- Invasive non-native species layer (July 2015, January 2016)

There were no changes to the following datasets:

- Local Geological Sites
- Conservation Target Areas / Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

8. Data Analysis & Presentation

TVERC carried out several projects during 2015-16, including carrying out surveys, analysing data and presenting the results in a user-friendly format. The results of these projects will be used by our funders to make sound decisions about where to direct conservation effort, how best to manage land and where to direct development to minimise impacts on the natural environment.

Improvements to evidence-base

Berkshire Ancient Woodland Review

TVERC updated the ancient woodland inventory (AWI) in Wokingham and Bracknell. The updated AWI, mapped the quality, extent and distribution of ancient woodland, including sites under 2 ha (which were excluded from the original AWI) and provides a robust evidence base to help inform planning decisions, strategic plans and various environmental projects, such as planning for strategic infrastructure, considering planning applications (e.g. commercial, housing, minerals and waste), directing habitat conservation work (e.g. buffering and linking smaller sites, enhancing existing sites), climate change adaptation and mitigation (e.g. carbon storage in woodland, carbon-neutral wood-fuel) and wood-fuel initiatives. The work involved a GIS analysis of modern and historic maps to assess whether currently wooded sites were likely to have been wooded since at least 1600 and subsequently considered to be ancient woodland.

Oxfordshire Habitat Mapping

Only about 36% of Oxfordshire is currently covered by habitat mapping (94,000 hectares). This is mainly concentrated on the most important designated sites in the county (primarily Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites), as well as Conservation Target Areas. However, there are still significant gaps in the dataset. The aim of this project is to increase the area that is mapped so that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) knows where important and protected priority habitats are to inform local planning and development, as well as targeting for wildlife conservation. Undertaking the project will allow OCC to better meet its obligations under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and other legislation and policy to protect and enhance the natural environment. Work has commenced with rapid mapping of arable and grassland habitats. Mapping of woodland habitats has also started. Although arable areas have been mapped for all of Oxfordshire, the emphasis is on the green belt, science vale and minerals extraction areas, particularly for grassland and woodland habitats.

Modifications to CTAs Layer

Wild Oxfordshire is leading a project to prepare a State of Nature report for Oxfordshire. TVERC is assisting by updating data on Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) in Oxfordshire. The first stage involved producing GIS layers and maps showing suggested changes to several CTAs and outlining proposals for one new CTA. Following discussions/consultations with relevant parties, led by Wild Oxfordshire, TVERC will update the official CTAs layers.

Cherwell District Wildlife Sites Project

TVERC carried out a project for Cherwell District Council in 2013, resulting in the identification of 63 sites of potential district importance for wildlife. The purpose in identifying sites of district value is to provide the local authority with additional information to inform the planning process. The study conducted in 2013 was desk-based, using information from local groups and experts alongside TVERC datasets and experience of rejected and/or denotified LWS. Some sites have been surveyed as part of the LWS process or are under the management of organisations with conservation objectives. However, some sites have never been visited, or have not had recent surveys. There is therefore a requirement to confirm through ground-truthing that the listed sites are of district importance. TVERC produced individual reports for five sites considered to be of district value, evaluating each against the current criteria for LWS selection and commenting on their potential district importance.

PondNet

PondNet is a new national volunteer survey to collect information about trends in pond quality and pond species, including uncommon plants and animals. It is led by the Freshwater Habitats Trust. Volunteers can choose to adopt sites from a randomly selected network or pick their own site, as well as choosing which wildlife group they would like to survey. The data from the surveys will be open access and will also be used to influence government freshwater policy and direct conservation action. TVERC will support the project by checking the provisional network of sites to be surveyed and identifying and contacting landowners.

Important Areas for Ponds

Freshwater Habitats Trust are working on a pilot project to identify 'Important Freshwater Areas' in Oxfordshire. Data which TVERC hold (plus national datasets) will be analysed and a methodology devised. The results will be used to provide a tool to focus practical conservation work on key areas and a methodology which can be rolled out nationally. TVERC will also be consulted throughout the pilot project for their advice on how to ensure the data is used in the planning system.

Land Management

High Park, Blenheim Grassland Survey

TVERC will provide information on the type, location and quality of the grassland habitats at High Park, Blenheim. This will be used to inform land management to improve biodiversity.

Rushy Common Survey

TVERC will provide information on the type, location and quality of the grassland and at Rushy Common. The records collected will provide a basis for further survey and/or monitoring on the site.

Shipton-Under-Wychwood & Chadlington Hedge Survey

West Oxfordshire District Council asked TVERC to undertake surveys of a 3 hedgerows in Shipton-under-Wychwood and one in Chadlington. The results of the survey will determine whether the hedgerow meets qualifying criteria to be identified as an "Important Hedge" (in terms of its wildlife interest), as described within the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Monitoring change

Local Wildlife Sites under good management

TVERC undertook the assessment of the Single Data List 160 (previously called National Indicator 197) – the percentage of local wildlife sites in favourable management condition – for individual Berkshire unitary authorities. The 2015 results for the analysis of data associated with the 2014/15 business year were that 59 % of local sites were in positive management across all of Berkshire. The table overleaf shows the results for the individual unitary authorities within Berkshire.

Local authority	% of local sites in positive management (2014/15)
Berkshire average	59 % (increase of 11% from 2013/14)
Bracknell Forest BC	66 % (increase of 13% from 2013/14)
RB Windsor & Maidenhead	39 % (increase of 5% from 2013/14)
Reading BC	81 % (increase of 4% from 2013/14)
Slough BC	63 % (increase of 20% from 2013/14)
West Berkshire DC	64 % (increase of 14% from 2013/14)
Wokingham	47 % (decrease of 3% from 2013/14)

Biodiversity indicators

Information on biodiversity indicators associated with our Berkshire and Oxfordshire local authority partners' was gathered, processed and supplied in 2015. The following biodiversity indicators were reported on:

- Changes in area of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS & LGS)
- Change in number of NERC Act S41 species of principal importance (previously called UK BAP priority species)
- Changes in mapped area of NERC Act S41 habitats of principal importance (previously called UK BAP priority habitat)
- Distribution and status of water voles
- Change in condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Distribution and status of farmland birds
- Status of non agri-schemes habitat creation and management

Training, education & sharing information

Oxon Rare Plants Register

TVERC has been supporting the work of the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire in its undertaking of a Rare Plants Register in Oxfordshire. Records have been collected by recorders over the last few years and the results have been processed and analysed by TVERC. Funding was provided to TVERC to generate distribution maps of species which will be included within the register. The results of the mapping (and associated species narratives) will be included within a future on-line publication.

TVERC Training Programme

To help increase identification skills, surveying techniques and encourage wildlife recording within Berkshire and Oxfordshire we ran 7 one-day introductory training courses on a wide range of species and habitats. In 2015 these were funded by Natural England and included; dormice, amphibian & reptiles, hare ecology and surveying, small mammal trapping, hedgerow surveys, winter tree ID and woodland plant ID. A further 7 courses have been organised for 2016 including; winter tree ID, bumblebee ID, intro to bird survey techniques, woodland plant ID, grass ID, otter ecology and surveying and water vole ecology and surveying. There is no external funding for these courses so the cost of the courses has been increased to cover costs.

9. Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Site surveys are one of the core services that TVERC continues to provide across the two counties for the majority of the Local Authorities. We carried out a total of 68 LWS surveys in 2015/16. We also organised volunteer surveyors to carry out specialist surveys for dragonflies, butterflies, general invertebrates, hymenoptera, fungi, bryophytes and birds. Survey reports were produced and taken to the site selection panel. The full detail of these is in appendix I.

Highlights from the LWS surveys

This year TVERC carried out surveys of 41 existing and proposed Local Wildlife Sites in Oxfordshire. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were completed on several sites for birds, butterflies, other invertebrates and fungi. We've started the species data entry, with over 4400 records added so far.

Sites surveyed include Pinsley Wood, ancient woodland in West Oxfordshire, where Herb Paris and Meadow Saffron, both on the Oxfordshire Rare Plant Register, were found in an area of recently thinned plantation. Other less common species seen include early purple-orchid and abundant thin-spiked wood sedge which was seen along the rides. This woodland has a large number of ancient woodland indicator species; these are species that depend on the kind of stable conditions that ancient woodland can provide, 34 of these were recorded during this survey.

Meadow Farm, Blackthorn is a BBOWT reserve in Cherwell. The site consists of 5 fields all with ridge and furrow indicating that they have not been ploughed. The rare True Fox-Sedge is recorded here along with many species typical of unimproved grassland such as Dropwort, Saw-wort, Great Burnet, Tubular Water-dropwort and Ragged-robin. Bozdown Basin is a chalk grassland in South Oxfordshire. It has a good range species indicative of unimproved conditions including pyramidal orchid, clustered bellflower, greater knapweed, common rock-rose, horseshoe vetch, fairy flax, mouse-ear hawkweed, cowslip, large thyme, basil thyme and squinancywort.

In Berkshire 27 sites were surveyed; 4 by volunteers. A highlight was Giant's Steps in West Berks. At first glance the site seemed not especially species-rich, but when the 'plateau' area in the centre of the site was reached, we were greeted by a riot of colourful wildflowers, clouds of butterflies, and a veritable carpet of Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids. We surveyed a wide range of sites located in all corners of the county. These included several ancient woodlands, with carpets of bluebells and open grassy rides; wildflower strewn grasslands exhibiting a profusion of colour and clouds of butterflies and urban wildlife havens offering sanctuary to birds, insects, mammals and reptiles. Several sites had undergone successful programs of restoration over the last few years, and many were evidently well used and loved by local visitors.

10. Supporting Recorders & Volunteers

TVERC are fortunate to get the help of volunteers to carry out some data processing, species recording and site surveys. In 2015/16, volunteers carried out 8.5 days of specialist surveys on Local Wildlife Sites. We also rely on help from volunteers to manage and input data into our database. In 2015/16, office volunteers carried out 180 days of data management. If this work had been carried out by paid staff, it would have cost TVERC almost £19k¹.

¹ An equivalent paid job would be £17k per annum, the 'on-costs' increase that to £21,400. That is equivalent to a daily rate of £100 (assuming 215 working days in the year) and hourly rate of £13.50

Volunteer recording groups

Much of the data in the TVERC database comes from volunteer recorders and so supporting them is an essential part of the work TVERC carry out. We provide technical support for recording groups who are collecting and analysing data across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. In 2015/16, TVERC provided assistance to Oxfordshire Rare Plants Register to carry out data management and maps for the forthcoming publication and provided office space for the Oxfordshire Mammal Group to hold their committee meetings.

Recording & Training Events

Working with other wildlife organisations, TVERC organise a local Recorders Conference to share information amongst volunteer recorders and increase their knowledge so they can provide us with even better data. We also provide training courses and talks to local groups. In 2015/16, TVERC went to the following events and recording group meetings:

- Oxford Festival of Nature
- Wychwood Forest Fair
- River Thame Conservation Trust
- Wychwood Flora Group
- Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire
- Oxfordshire Flora Group
- Abingdon Naturalists Society

TVERC staff attended the following events to keep up with current conservation issues and to promote TVERC and the importance of biodiversity data:

- Berkshire Local Nature Partnership Exec Board & Steering Group
- Wild Oxfordshire Biodiversity Advisory Group and CTA leads
- National Biodiversity Network conference (NBN)
- Association of Local Government Ecologists conference (ALGE)
- Association of Local Environmental Records Centres conference (ALERC)
- London & South East Record Centres meetings (several dates)

TVERC & BLNP Autumn Recorders Day 2015– Urban Wildlife

TVERC and the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership held an enjoyable and thought-provoking event for Berkshire and Oxfordshire recorders on 10th October 2015. The event was held in Thames Valley Business Park in Reading. The venue was kindly supplied by Oracle Corporation UK Ltd and Cliff Hilton (Sustainability, Environment, Health & Safety Senior Manager) provided support and assistance. Despite being in a business park we were within walking distance of Thames Valley Park Nature Reserve which we utilised for some of our workshops in the afternoon and so wildlife was not far from the nearly 50 people who attended.

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The theme was '**Urban Wildlife**' and we started with Professor Jeff Ollerton, from the University of Northampton talking about *The role of urban environments for supporting pollinator biodiversity*. Jeff spoke about how he and his team have been tracking bees throughout Northampton with surprising results, showing even small areas of planting surrounded by traffic, can support a wide range of pollinator species. Next we had Dr Phil Baker from the University of Reading with "*Lessons learnt from studying urban mammals*" who discussed the results of studies he has undertaken on urban foxes and hedgehogs, and inspired TVERC to invest in a hedgehog tunnel, which can be loaned out to recorders, to see if we have our own at the bottom of our gardens.

The following talk, was by Karen Harper from the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI) telling us about the issues involved in the control and eradication of invasives in a place like London with its airports and trade routes.

Just before lunch we had the Berkshire LNP AGM and update where we heard the partnership have funding for a new projects officer which when the position is filled will give them a new lease of life. After a very tasty lunch people had the opportunity to attend one of four workshops. The 'How to use sightings website' workshop lead by Rachael Clemson and Camilla Burrow was enthusiastically received. Stephen Ellwood gave another of his master classes on camera trapping this time. There was a Bird Walk lead by Caroline Coleman and Katherine Holmes where 24 species were spotted and subsequently entered into the sightings website. The reptile walk lead by Ellen Lee was decidedly more of an amphibian walk with toads and frogs discovered but unfortunately no reptiles. And at the end of the day we were given some quick recorder updates. Our thanks go to the Oracle Corporation Ltd for the venue and Cliff and to all of the speakers and participants for a stimulating and inspiring day.

Spring Recorders Day – Linear habitats and pollinators

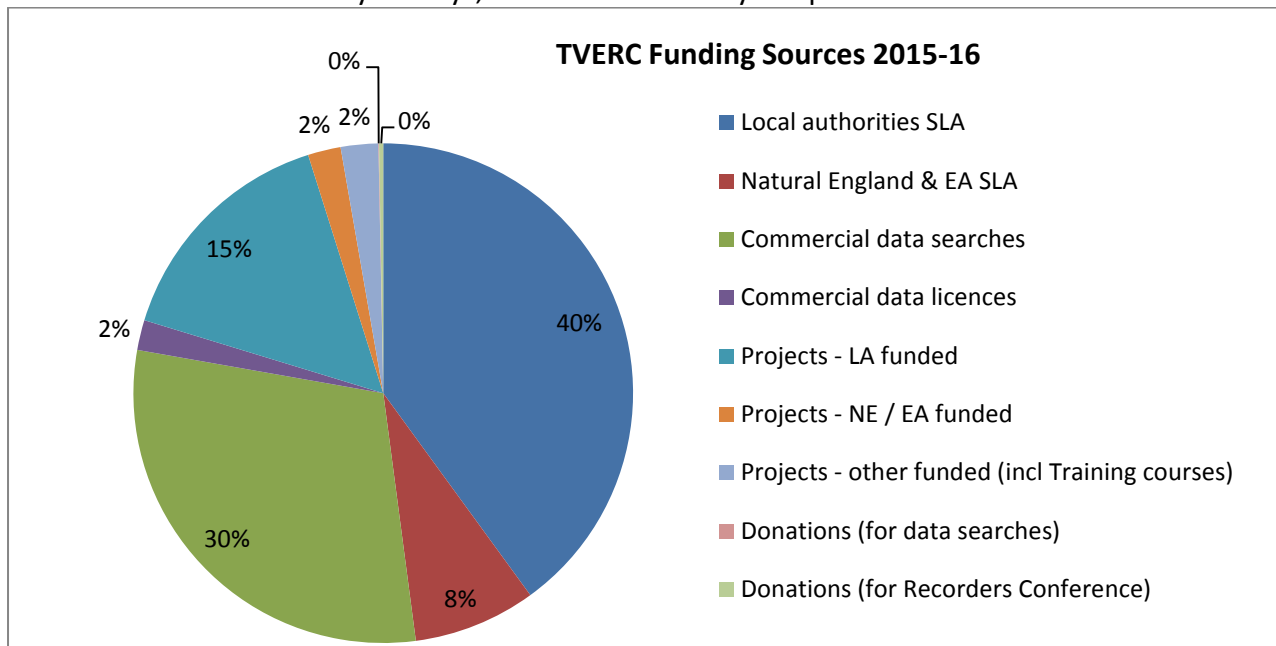
Over 60 people attended TVERC's spring recorders' day on 27th February. From local projects to enhance habitats for pollinators around Chipping Norton to national schemes, gathering data on wildlife from roadkill and training volunteers to take water quality samples, we heard great examples about how both amateur and professional scientists can harness people's time and effort to help monitor habitats and species.

The series of lively talks and workshops demonstrated the importance of data for good decision-making, from the Environment Agency using riverfly monitoring data to trigger water pollution investigations to Natural England altering stewardship scheme options for hedgerow management. Camilla (the TVERC Director) highlighted how all the data provided to TVERC by volunteer recorders (70% of the data we receive) is made into high quality data products by TVERC staff. These data products are used on a daily basis by all the local authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, BBOWT, RSPB and the Environment Agency to make sound decisions on how to manage land and waterways and the design and location of development.

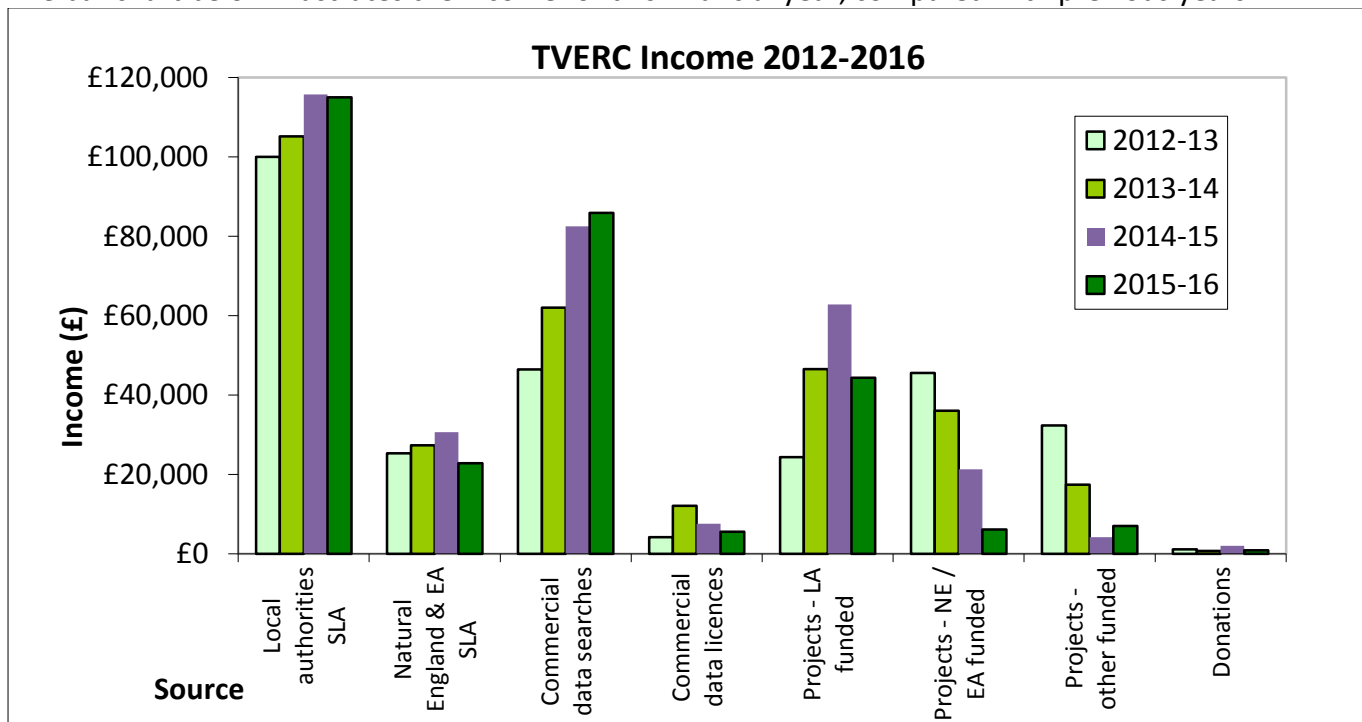
11. Finance

Sources of funding

TVERC is funded in a variety of ways, as demonstrated by the pie chart below.



The bar chart below illustrates the income for this financial year, compared with previous years.



Finance summary

In comparison with last year, the income from data searches has increased. Projects funded by ‘others’ also increased as this includes money from the TVERC Training Programme courses. Data licences decreased slightly as Thames Water reduced the data they required and HS2 declined to renew their licence. The funding from Natural England also decreased, and they announced they would no longer be funding any LERCs from 1st April 2016. We now have income from a range of sources which means we are resilient to this type of sudden change. However, the decision by NE to stop funding LERCs all across the country is very concerning. This decision appears to show a serious misunderstanding of the need for this evidence-base and the legal and policy requirement for them to use it to make decisions.

The biggest expenditure is on staff salaries. However, staff time is also the biggest asset TVERC has, as it’s the staff time spent on projects, data searches and data licences which bring in the income. Staff expenditure increased slightly this year due to covering Camilla’s maternity, paying Lucy an honorarium to step up as acting Director, as well as paying for a temporary Projects Manager on a one year contract. We spent £5.5k more than forecast on funding the automation of our data search service and other data management processes. This will save our Data Team significant time in future and we will continue to invest in this during 2016/17. Despite this additional expenditure, we ended 2015-16 with a net underspend of £7.6k, which will be re-invested into the TVERC service.

TVERC Finances	Year			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Income				
Local authorities SLA	£100,024	£105,188	£115,720	£115,038
Natural England & EA SLA	£25,333	£27,333	£30,613	£22,835
Commercial data searches	£46,424	£62,015	£82,520	£85,914
Commercial data licences	£4,200	£12,100	£7,596	£5,600
Projects - LA funded	£24,333	£46,516	£62,865	£44,361
Projects - NE / EA funded	£45,540	£36,055	£21,298	£6,115
Projects - other funded	£32,381	£17,427	£4,158	£6,983
Donations	£1,126	£725	£2,043	£895
Income total	£279,360	£307,359	£326,813	£287,741
Expenditure				
Staff (salaries, expenses, training)	£197,378	£215,633	£240,470	£246,318
Contractors	£12,170	£2,580	£15,810	£3,105
Overheads (equipment, printing, postage)	£2,659	£1,190	£5,384	£2,829
Premises (paid 'in kind' by OCC)	£16,500	£16,500	£16,500	£16,500
Recorders Conference	£296	£880	£1,654	£905
Investment in service (data tools, website etc.)	£3,000	£0	£1,771	£10,465
Expenditure total	£232,003	£236,783	£281,588	£280,122
NET TOTAL	£47,357	£70,575	£45,225	£7,619

Camilla Burrow, Director

May 2015

Balancing account

Due to Oxon CC accounting rules, the Business account must balance to £0 at the end of each financial year, but 'surplus' monies or deficits can be moved into or out of a Balancing account. Any underspend or overspend at the end of each financial year is moved into or out of the Balancing account. The TVERC Reserve is also kept in the Balancing account.

The TVERC Reserve is held for unforeseen circumstances and to cover any redundancy liabilities plus two months running costs. The running costs should comprise of staff costs and overheads (e.g. salaries, expenses, training, equipment, printing, postage, subscriptions). The Reserve would allow TVERC to move to a different host organisation or become independent should the need arise.

Reserve at end 2015/16	£242,704.92
Take out Oxon Habitat Mapping 2015/16*	-£18,200.00
Put in Thames Water data licence 2017/18 and 2018/19 and 2019/20*	£15,750.00
Put in balancing figure**	£7,619.06
Total Reserve at beginning 2016/17 (1st April 2017)	£247,873.98

Allocated Reserve for future years

Thames Water data licence 2017/18 and 2018/19 and 2019/20	£15,750.00
Oxon Habitat Mapping 2016/17	£25,800.00
Redundancy costs	£46,000.00
3 months running costs	£80,000.00
Move & independence costs	£50,000.00
Balancing figure for 2016/17	£27,027.00

Unallocated £ in Reserve at 1st April 2017	£3,296.98
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* Money Received In Advance. E.g. project money which was received in one year but will be spent in the following year, so had to be held in the balancing account.

** Money to be put in or taken out of Balancing Account to ensure Business Account equals zero.

Appendix I – Details of LWS surveys carried out 2015

Panel decision	Meaning
Retain	Existing LWS resurveyed and designation as LWS confirmed
Accept	Proposed LWS surveyed and designated as LWS
Deselect	Existing LWS resurveyed and de-designated as LWS
Reject	Proposed LWS surveyed and not designated as LWS
Deferred	Insufficient information to make decision e.g. further surveys required.

Oxfordshire 2014 Surveys

The following sites were taken to panel in January and February 2016.

Cherwell

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Cutter's Brook Meadows	62A03	Retain
Marsh West of Bletchingdon Quarry	41Y01	Accept
Meadow Farm, Blackthorn	61J05-7	Retain
The Meanders and Peat Marsh	33W16	Retain
Weston Wood	51N04	Retain
Wroxton and Balscote Mills	34V01	Deferred

South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Abbey Fishponds	59E01	Accept
Above Lids Bottom	58H01	Retain
Chilton Disused railway line	LIN5/1	Retain
Chinaman Copse	39C01	Deselect
Cowslip Meadow	49B01	Deferred
Field East of Appleton Churchyard	40L06	Reject
Kingstone Warren Down (north)	38C03	Retain
Kingstone Warren Down (south)	38B01	Deselect
Lyde Copse	29W02	Retain
Bozedown Vineyard (north)	67J10	Retain
Bozedown Vineyard (south)	67N01	Retain
Pond north of Cholsey Marsh	68D02	Deferred

West Oxfordshire

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Bladon Heath	41L02	Retain
Burleigh Wood	41L01	Retain
Coombe Fen	41C04	Retain
Crawley Marsh	31K03	Retain
Enstone Meadow	32X04	Retain
Mouldens Wood and Davis Copse	30N01	Retain
Pinsley Wood	41G04	Retain
River Glyme	42F04	Retain
Standlake Common Nature Reserve		Accept
West of Abel Wood	41C01	Retain
Wigwell	32K27.2	Retain

Berkshire 2015 surveys

The following sites were taken to panel in March 2016. For some local authority areas, time was spent on finding landowner details and organising the landowner database rather than on carrying out surveys. This will ensure that permissions are more easily received for surveys in subsequent years.

Bracknell Forest

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Blackmans Copse	SU86P08	Retain
Northerams Wood	SU86P05	Retain
Pockets Copse	SU86J02	Retain
Popes Meadow	SU86P10	Deferred
Farley Copse	SU86P13	Deferred

Windsor and Maidenhead

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Sutherland Grange	SU97I05	Deferred
St George's Lane Fields	SU96J05	Retain
Strattons Copse	SU87S01	Retain
Blackmore Stream	SU96E12	Deselect
Hemwood Dell	SU97H02	Retain

Reading

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Devils Dip	SU67W04	Deselect
Waterloo Meadows	PExt. to SU77A03	Reject

Slough

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Herschel Park	pSU97U10	Reject

West Berkshire

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Giants Steps	SU38A01	Retain
Kate's Gore	SU48W04	Retain
Easton 1	SU47B07	Retain
Easton 2	SU47B08	Retain
Welford Park	SU47B04	Retain
Bonds Gully	SU56M02	Retain
Hopgarden Gully	SU56M01	Retain
Hanging Lands Gully	SU56H09	Retain
College Wood	SU57U06	Retain

Wokingham

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Bulmershe College	SU77L05	Deselect
Alder Moor	SU77R04	Retain
Round Copse	SU76N03	Retain
Wyvols Copse	SU76M04	Retain
High Wood	SU77L01	Retain