

End of Year Report 2016-17

...

# Thames Valley

## Environmental Records Centre



*Sharing environmental information in Berkshire and Oxfordshire*

01865 815 451

[tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

[www.tverc.org](http://www.tverc.org)

Follow us on Twitter @TVERC1

# END OF YEAR REPORT

2016-17



## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

---

2016/17 has been another strong year for TVERC despite the upheaval of office moves and uncertainty regarding the future. The staff have coped incredibly well with the move and the unfortunate drop in quality of the 'new' offices at Speedwell House and I would like to extend my thanks for the seamless service they provided during the move.

The number of data searches was at a record level yet again, undoubtedly influenced to a large extent by the high levels of development activity in the counties. Good progress has been made with diversifying TVERC's income streams with a number of new data products available to our customers, which is good news given the continued squeeze on the finances of our public sector customers.

As we look forward, TVERC is facing another year of uncertainty with the looming prospect of yet another office move on the horizon. Over the course of the coming year we will be looking at the organisational structure to determine how best to ensure that TVERC is as resilient as possible to future changes whilst remaining flexible in order to take advantage of new opportunities.

Dominic Lamb MCIEEM

Countryside Officer, Planning  
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils



## SUMMARY

There were some staff changes in 2016-17 with Hannah, our admin officer, leaving and being replaced by Kate. We also all moved offices from Eynsham to Oxford city centre which was disruptive but did give us the opportunity to declutter.

We increased our data holdings to 1.9 million species records, in addition to collecting negative records for great crested newts and bats. This data was used to carry out some modelling to understand the potential extent of GCN meta-populations in South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse.

We improved the evidence-base by completing the habitat map of Oxfordshire (previously the coverage was only 36%), updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory in West Berkshire and identifying District and City Wildlife Sites in Cherwell and Oxford. We also carried out a review of Green Infrastructure in Bracknell Forest and surveyed 67 Local Wildlife Sites.

We have clarified data-sharing permissions with some key data-providers to enable TVERC to use the species records in the normal business of TVERC without seeking further permission and allow us to publish some of our data as 'Open Data' so it is accessible to all and promotes the other data we have available.

We were fortunate to get the help of volunteer surveyors on six Local Wildlife Sites, and 23 office volunteers contributed 223 days of their time to help us with data management. We assisted the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire in its undertaking of a Rare Plants Register in Oxfordshire and provided a bespoke data entry form for swift records for the RSPB Oxford Swift City project. We also provided funding (via TOE2) to support three volunteer recording groups to improve the quality, quantity and/or coverage of biological recording. We ran six training courses to help increase identification skills and surveying techniques, in addition to the two conferences.

We carried out 800 data searches, an increase from the previous year's 728 and supplied the usual GIS datasets to the local authorities and Environment Agency to enable them to properly consider the natural environment in decision-making. The funding from Natural England ceased on 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.

We ended 2016-17 with a net overspend of £18.8k, which was less of an overspend than we originally forecast and leaves TVERC in a strong position to continue to invest in improving our service and ensuring we are resilient to change.



## CONTENTS

1. TVERC team	7
1.1. New admin officer	7
1.2. Structure	8
1.3. Areas of work	8
1.4 Contact details	9
1.5 Geographic Coverage	9
2. TVERC Partners	10
2.1. Organisation	10
2.2. Steering Group	10
2.3 Memorandum of Understanding	10
3. Data Collection and Management	11
3.1. Species records	11
3.2. Datasets	12
3.3 Data Agreements	13
New data agreements:	13
Renewed data agreements:	13
Groups which supplied TVERC with data:	13
Groups/individuals which gave permission for records to be shared publically	14
3.4. Data search Process improvements	14
4. Data Sharing	15
4.1 Data Search Requests	15
4.2 Data Provision to Partners	17

## End of Year Report 2016-17



5.	Data Analysis & Presentation	17
5.1	Improvements to Evidence-Base	17
	West Berks Ancient Woodland Inventory	17
	Oxon Habitat Mapping	18
	Cherwell District Wildlife Sites & Oxford City Local Sites	18
5.2	Monitoring Change	19
	Berks Single Data List 160 for LAs	19
	Annual monitoring report for LAs	19
	Oxfordshire State of Nature	19
5.3	Data Modelling	19
	Great-crested newt meta-populations	19
	Green Infrastructure	19
6.	Local Wildlife Sites	20
6.1	Highlights from the LWS surveys	20
	Oxfordshire	20
	Berkshire	20
7.	Supporting Recorders and Volunteers	21
7.1	Volunteer Recording Groups	21
	Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire	21
	RSPB Swift City	21
	Advice and Support	22
	Attendance at Meetings / Conferences	22
	Recording Grant	23

## End of Year Report 2016-17



7.2 Training, education & sharing information	24
Training Courses in 2016/17	24
Autumn Recorders Conference - Berkshire	24
Spring Recorders Conference - Oxfordshire	25
8. Finance	26
8.1 Finance Summary	26
8.2 Sources of Funding	27
8.3 Income	28
8.4 Expenditure	29
8.5 Reserve	30
Appendix I - LWS Surveys Carried out in 2016	31
Oxfordshire Surveys	31
Cherwell	31
West Oxfordshire	31
Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire	32
Berkshire Surveys	33
RB Windsor & Maidenhead	33
West Berkshire	33
Wokingham	33



## 1. 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 developing 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.

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

**Kate Prudden, 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.

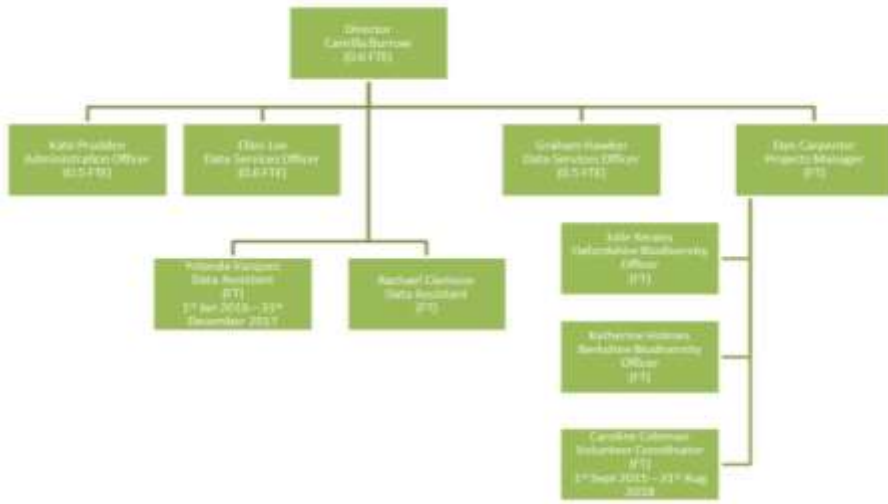
### 1.1. NEW ADMIN OFFICER

Hannah Boylan left as our Admin Officer in October 2016 to move with her family to the Czech Republic. Kate Prudden started in this role in December 2016. Kate has an applied and research grounding in ecology. She has a 1st class degree in Marine Biology from Liverpool University – completed at the Port Erin Marine Biological Station on the beautiful Isle of Man. She was then employed there for over 3 years as a post-graduate research assistant collecting and analysing commercial fisheries and research vessel data on two local scallop species: *Pecten maximus* and *Aequipecten opercularis*. She also had internships and then work with the UK Marine Biological Association in Plymouth. She subsequently worked in a variety of logistics, finance and research project co-ordinator roles mainly within the film production industry and for around 12 years at the Oxford University's Department of International Development. Prior to joining TVERC Kate was a community wildlife trainee with the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). She also now works for BBOWT as Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project Officer – a role that links neatly back to TVERC who are the project partner. Kate is active in the local wildlife volunteer community including as a Shotover Wildlife committee member and is involved in aspects such as botanical surveying and regular practical conservation work including coppicing and heathland restoration.



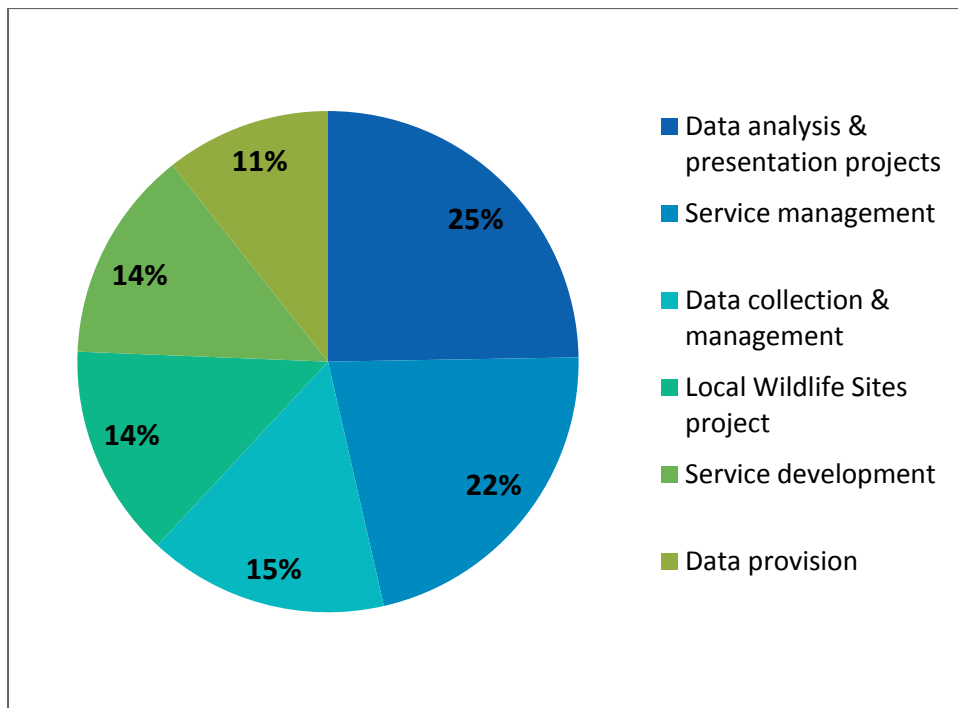
## 1.2. STRUCTURE

The current structure is shown below:



## 1.3. AREAS OF WORK

The pie chart below illustrates the time spent by the TVERC team on different elements of the TVERC work programme during 2016-17.







## 1.4 CONTACT DETAILS

TVERC moved office in March to Speedwell House in the centre of Oxford. Our new address is:

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre  
c/o Countryside Service, Oxfordshire County Council  
Speedwell House  
Speedwell Street  
Oxford  
OX1 1NE

<http://www.tverc.org>

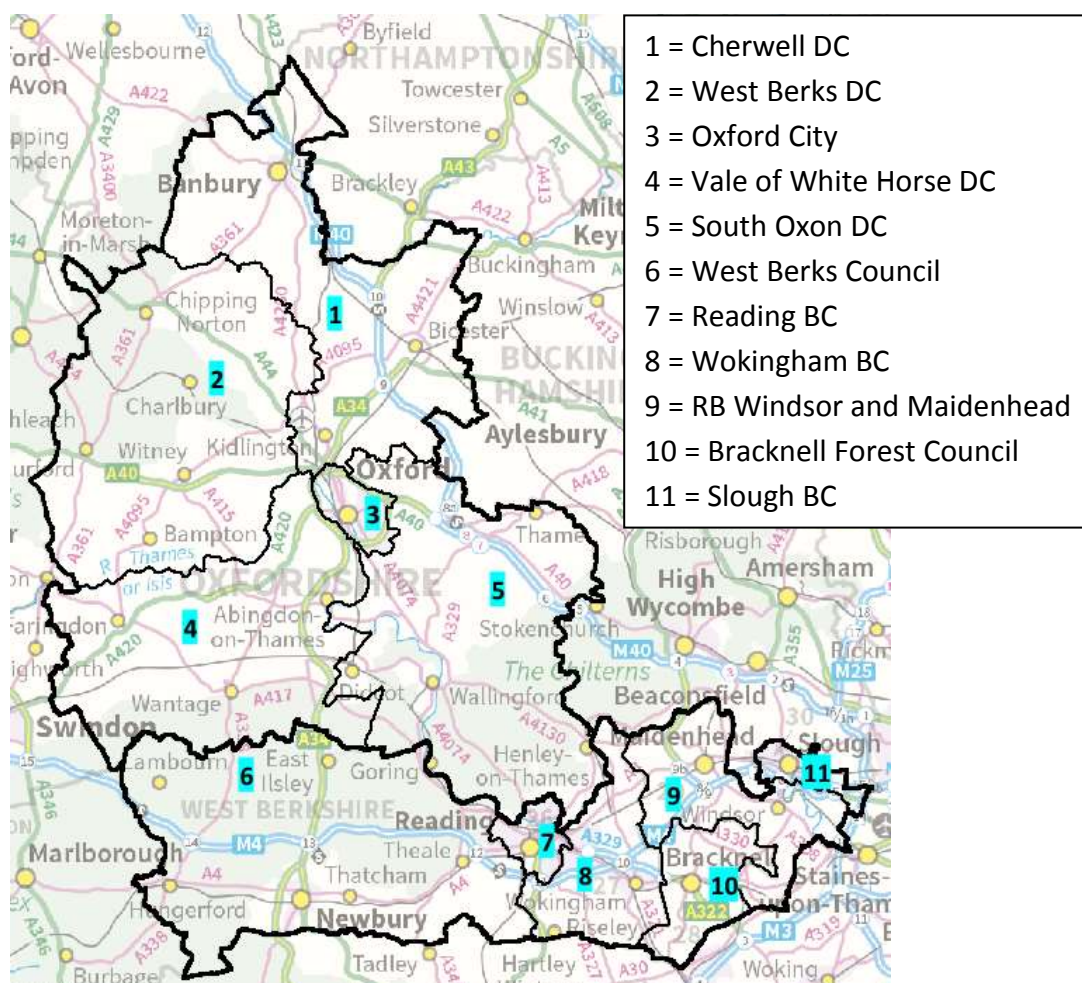
Follow us on Twitter @TVERC1

01865 815 451

[tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## 1.5 GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

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





## 2. TVERC PARTNERS

### 2.1. 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.

### 2.2. 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.

### 2.3 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 was approved by the TVERC Steering Group in April 2014.

#### What TVERC does



*"We provide our funding partners with annually updated species and sites information as GIS tables, and undertake surveys of local wildlife sites. We also carry out data analysis for the monitoring of local authority Local Plans.*

*We provide information to parish councils, local people, conservation bodies, land-owners, students and commercial organisations such as ecological consultants and utilities companies via data searches, data licensing and data exchanges.*

*We provide other services such as ecological surveys, data analysis & presentation and training."*



### 3. DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

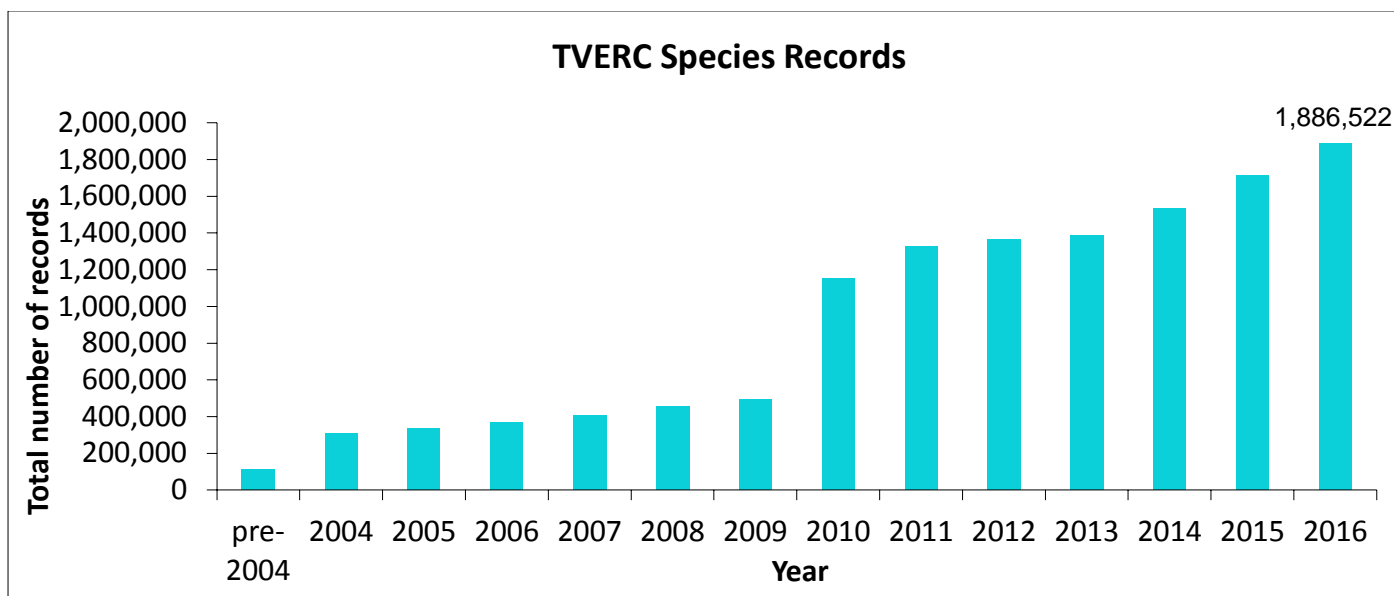
We hold almost 1.9 million records of flora and fauna in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus information about Local Wildlife and Geological Sites, NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance (previously called UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats) and Ecological Networks (Conservation Target Areas and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas).

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. The cost to TVERC to collect, check and process data is about 25p per record, which means we prioritise datasets which are recent and include protected & notable species for data management.

#### 3.1. SPECIES RECORDS

We added 174,854 new records to our database in 2016. Our database now includes almost 1.9 million records.

Year	Records added	Total number of records
pre-2004	112,749	112,749
2004	196,194	308,943
2005	24,949	333,892
2006	35,633	369,525
2007	38,497	408,022
2008	48,585	456,607
2009	36,652	493,259
2010	658,759	1,152,018
2011	174,389	1,326,407
2012	39,413	1,365,820
2013	23,503	1,389,323
2014	144,796	1,534,119
2015	177,549	1,711,668
2016	174,854	1,886,522



### 3.2. DATASETS

360 datasets were acquired by TVERC from individual recorders, recording groups, conservation organisations and environmental consultants and from local authorities either direct or via planning portals during 2016/17. In 2016/17 we concentrated particularly on collecting both positive and negative records of great crested newts and bats because these are essential for data modelling. These are processed and added to our database in accordance with our Data Policies & Procedures document.

In 2016/17 we managed to import or otherwise deal with approximately 48% of all the data sets received in the year and 54% of the high priority data sets within the same financial year. These percentages rise to 83.5% for all data sets and 92% of all high priority data sets for data received in 2015/16 and processed by the end of 2016/17.

We added 322 new datasets into Recorder, plus Local Wildlife Site species data and Ancient Woodland Inventory data. Other large data sets imported include 130,515 Berkshire bird records from Berkshire Bird Clubs (2009-2012), 14,459 Oxfordshire bird records from Oxfordshire Ornithological Society (2006) and over 50,000 records from BBOWT (2015-2016). We have also imported some records arriving via our online website and selected surveys from IRecord.



### 3.3 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 publish some of our data as 'Open Data' so it is accessible to all and promotes the other data we have available. For example we are planning to upload species data to the new NBN Living Atlas that is more than 10 years old at 2 km square resolution (where permission has been given from data-owners; which we are actively seeking).

#### NEW DATA AGREEMENTS:

- Lower Windrush Valley Project
- Chiltern Society
- Martin Harvey and Berkshire Moth Group
- Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire
- Weevil and Bark Beetle Recording Scheme
- BSBI Oxfordshire VC23
- High Park

#### RENEWED DATA AGREEMENTS:

- Binfield Badger Group

#### GROUPS WHICH SUPPLIED TVERC WITH DATA:

- Abingdon Naturalists' Society
- Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire
- Association of British Fungus Groups
- British Lichen Society
- Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire
- Moor Green Lakes Group
- People's Trust for Endangered Species
- River Thames Conservation Trust



#### GROUPS/INDIVIDUALS WHICH GAVE PERMISSION FOR RECORDS TO BE SHARED PUBLICALLY

- Judy Webb
- LWVP
- Dick Greenaway
- Stuart Mabbutt
- Jacqueline Wright
- OUWG
- Ivan Wright
- Shotover Wildlife
- Brian Clews
- County Ornithological Services
- Bob Eeles
- Des Sussex
- Friends of Milham Ford Nature Park/Judy Webb
- John Lerpeniere
- Chris Mason
- Adrian Hickman
- Reading and District Natural History Society
- UK Wild Otter Trust
- John Killick
- ORAG
- John Melling
- Oxford University
- Imperial College London
- Mick Crawley
- Steve Gregory
- Susan Erskine
- Peter Whitton
- TVFG
- Graham Scholey
- Child Beale Wildlife Trust
- Peter Sheasby
- Plantlife
- Banbury Ornithological Society

#### 3.4. DATA SEARCH PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

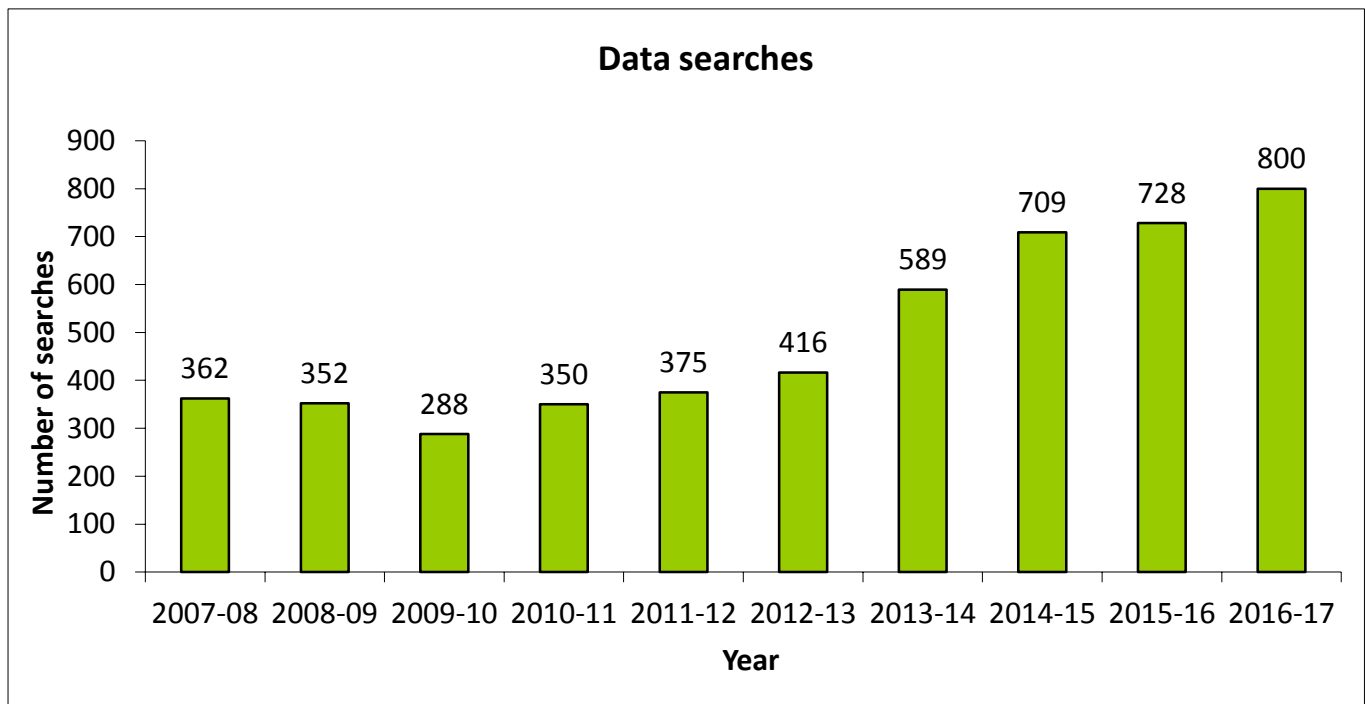
We have continued to improve our data search processes to automate many of the tasks for extracting and supplying data. We are now spending less time on these tasks, which leaves more time for collating, checking and importing data. We have been preparing for the move to a simpler charging structure for the most commonly requested data searches which won't require a quote to be issued by TVERC and signed by the requestor which should save even more time and allow requestors to instantly see the cost of their search report. The new online form will also allow us to add more options for requestors for additional datasets (e.g. SSSI risk zones and Ancient Woodland Inventory sites).



## 4. DATA SHARING

### 4.1 DATA SEARCH REQUESTS

TVERC carried out 800 data searches in 2016/17. This was an increase from last year when we carried out 728 data searches. This increase is probably due to an increase in the number of planning applications being submitted this year and increased awareness by developers of the necessity of data searches since the publication of BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development which states that *“local record centres ... should be approached initially for species and habitat information to inform desk studies.”* and paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that *“planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area”*.



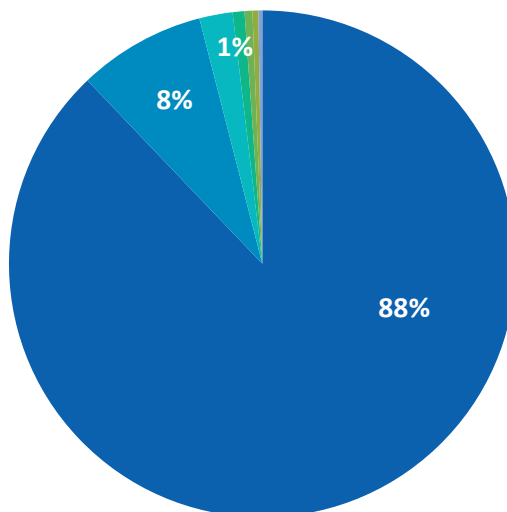
TVERC charges for data searches based on an hourly rate for extracting and presenting the data. The hourly rate includes a contribution towards the annual cost of collating and managing the TVERC database. TVERC waive this charge for data searches for individuals, landowners and conservation organisations 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 800 data searches, a charge was made for only 632 of these, bringing in a total income of £103,977 for 2016/17. We also signed supplied data to Thames Water under their five year agreement with us.



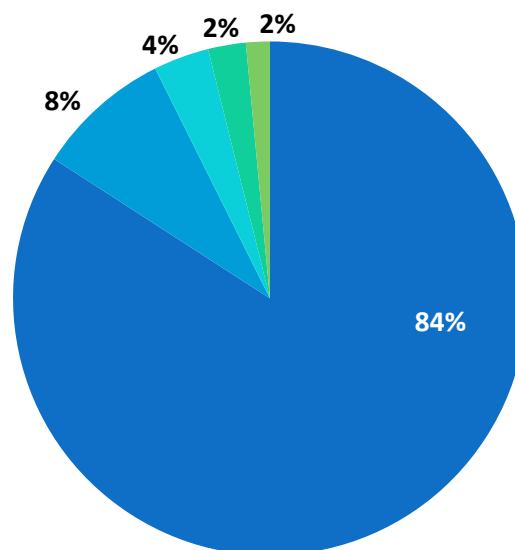


The types of data searches are shown in the pie charts and tables below.

Contact type	No.
Ecological Consultant	703
Other	65
Landowner	17
Community Group	6
Ecological Consultant working for TVERC Partner	4
Member of the Public	3
Student/Teacher	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>800</b>



Purpose of data search	No.
Planning application/development	673
Other	68
Utility maintenance	28
Education or research	19
Land management	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>800</b>







## 4.2 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 2016 & January 2017)
- Buffered protected species & notable (January 2017)
- Local Wildlife Sites (May 2016)
- Local Geological Sites (May 2016)
- UK Priority Habitat (NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principle Importance, previously called UK BAP priority habitat) (January 2017)
- Invasive non-native species layer (July 2016, January 2017)

There were no changes to the following datasets:

- Conservation Target Areas / Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION

TVERC carried out several projects during 2016-17, 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.

### 5.1 IMPROVEMENTS TO EVIDENCE-BASE

#### WEST BERKS ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY

TVERC prepared updated data for the ancient woodland inventory (AWI) in West Berkshire. The updated AWI, mapping the quality, extent and distribution of ancient woodland, will include sites under 2 ha (which were excluded from the original AWI) and provide a robust evidence base to help inform planning decisions, strategic plans and various environmental projects, such as planning for strategic infrastructure, considering planning applications, directing habitat conservation work, climate change adaptation and mitigation and wood-fuel initiatives. The work involves using GIS analysis of modern and historic maps, supported by field work, to assess whether currently wooded sites were likely have been wooded since at least 1600 and subsequently considered to be ancient woodland.



---

## OXON HABITAT MAPPING

Only about 36% of Oxfordshire was covered by habitat mapping (94,000 hectares), this being 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.

---

## CHERWELL DISTRICT WILDLIFE SITES & OXFORD CITY LOCAL SITES

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 will produce individual reports for up to five sites considered to be of district value, evaluating each against the current criteria for LWS selection and commenting on their potential district importance. TVERC will also produce a draft set of criteria.

Oxford City would like TVERC to establish criteria for selecting city wildlife sites (SLINCs), as well as carrying out some survey work of the proposed sites. This work will be staged over two years, with criteria development to be carried out in year 1 followed by survey work in year 2.



## 5.2 MONITORING CHANGE

### BERKS SINGLE DATA LIST 160 FOR LAS

TVERC provide an analysis of the SDL 160 for each of the Berkshire unitaries. Site management data is collated to calculate the number of local sites that are in positive management for the 6 Unitary Authorities. Local authorities are required to report to DEFRA on the SDL 160 each year as a measure of their success of protecting the biodiversity in their area.

### ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR LAS

TVERC analyse environmental data and produce an annual monitoring report to Local Authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The AMR reports on a number of environmental indicators that help to monitor biodiversity within their district. Currently there are 7 possible indicators that they can choose from. This includes, changes to Local Wildlife Sites, Priority habitat and Priority Species, the status and distribution of water vole or farmland birds, SSSI condition and non agri-schemes habitat creation and management.

### OXFORDSHIRE STATE OF NATURE

Wild Oxfordshire is leading a project to prepare a State of Nature report for Oxfordshire. TVERC is assisting by providing additional data, analysis, mapping and checking of the draft report.

## 5.3 DATA MODELLING

### GREAT-CRESTED NEWT META-POPULATIONS

This is a project to map and survey ponds for the presence of GCN and then to carry out some modelling to understand the potential extent of GCN meta-populations in South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse.

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Bracknell Forest Council have asked TVERC to quote to carry out a review of GI in the borough and to identify deficits and opportunities for GI provision, as part of the new comprehensive local plan.



## 6. 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 67 LWS surveys in 2016/17. Thanks to the help of our volunteers, specialist species group surveys were completed on several sites for birds, invertebrates and rare plants. Survey reports were produced and taken to the site selection panel. The full detail of these is in appendix I.

### 6.1 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LWS SURVEYS

#### OXFORDSHIRE

Sites surveyed include Bagley Wood, an ancient woodland to the South West of Oxford, where species seen included early purple-orchid, goldilocks buttercup, wood sorrel and moschatel. This woodland has records for a large number of species typical of older woodland, 43 of which were recorded during this year. We also visited a farm north west of Oxford that is managed sympathetically for wildlife. Arable land here includes a wide range of arable weeds including several rare species.

In July, we visited a chalk grassland site north of Lambourn in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It included a good range of calcareous grassland species with fragrant orchid, common twayblade and yellow-wort. Balscot Quarry is a Banbury Ornithological Society reserve that provides habitat for a range of birds including breeding Lapwing and Little Ringed Plover. Less common plant species found here included fern grass. Another highlight were the Green-winged Orchids putting on a good display, with over 200 counted, at a site near Leafield in West Oxfordshire.

#### BERKSHIRE

Sites included ancient woodlands carpeted in bluebells, floodplain meadows with beautiful wildflowers and a wide selection of sedges and rushes and remnant heathland and acid grassland hidden amongst urban sprawl. Many sites were clearly loved and well cared-for by private landowners and the public alike.



## 7. SUPPORTING RECORDERS AND VOLUNTEERS

TVERC are fortunate to get the help of volunteers to carry out some data processing, species recording and site surveys. In 2016/17, volunteers carried out seven days of specialist surveys on six Local Wildlife Sites. We also rely on help from volunteers to manage and input data into our database. In 2016/17, twenty-three office volunteers carried out 223 days of data management. If this work had been carried out by paid staff, it would have cost TVERC almost £23k<sup>1</sup>.

### 7.1 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 2016/17, TVERC provided assistance to:

---

#### ASHMOLEAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF OXFORDSHIRE

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 has been 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.

---

#### RSPB SWIFT CITY

RSPB are proposing to establish a swift city in Oxford. They will recruit and train volunteers to carry out surveys for swift nesting sites and to survey for foraging swifts, as well as install swift nesting boxes on existing and new buildings. They will also hold swift walks and talks and arts competitions. They also plan to build a swift tower. TVERC will provide a bespoke data entry form for swift records and analyse and present the swift data for partners and other local organisations.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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



---

## ADVICE AND SUPPORT

- Oxford Ornithological Society (advice on data recording)
- Wychwood Flora Group (advice on data sharing)
- Freshwater Habitats Trust (took part in Advisory group meeting)
- Lower Windrush Valley Project (equipment loan)
- Bracknell Forest Veteran Tree Survey (TVERC online recording)
- Friends of the Trap Grounds (TVERC online recording)
- Imperial College (Silwood Park) (TVERC online recording)

---

## ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS / CONFERENCES

Our Volunteer Coordinator attended the following recording group meetings:

- Butterfly Conservation (attended conference)
- National Plant Monitoring Scheme (took part in stakeholder workshop)
- Oxfordshire Mammal Group (attended meeting)
- Earley Environmental Group (spoke at meeting)
- Watlington Environment Group (spoke at meeting)
- Theale Area Bird Conservation Group (attended meeting)
- Wild Maidenhead (attended meeting)
- Lower Windrush Garden Club (spoke at meeting)
- Watlington Environment Group (spoke at meeting)
- Benson Nature Group (spoke at meeting)
- Child Beale Trust (attended meeting)



---

## RECORDING GRANT

At the beginning of 2016, we reinstated our Recorders Grant Scheme to support projects that improve the quality, quantity and/or coverage of voluntary species recording in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The fund is administered by Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2). Applications may be standalone grants to support better recording or they may be linked to a larger biodiversity application to TOE2 ([www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk)). In 2016/17 we funded the following projects:

### **Moth Trapping in Oxon, Butterfly Conservation     £750**

The main purpose of this project is to loan traps to individuals who usually would not have access to them. We aim to loan mains operated skinner traps, with one pair of protective UV glasses and ID book, for an initial term of a month with a further five months' loan available to interested individuals.

### **GPS equipment for River Thame Conservation Trust     £400**

The River Thame Conservation Trust is a grassroots environmental organisation working towards a river catchment with healthy fresh waters and wildlife, more resilient biodiversity for the future and valued and enjoyed by local people. As part of the project submitted for TOE2 funding and our other survey work being carried out by trained volunteers and our own staff in the Lower Thame in the next three years, a range of survey and monitoring activities will be taking place. To improve accuracy and efficiency of our survey and monitoring we want to purchase a handheld GPS with detailed OS mapping accuracy.

### **High Park Biodiversity survey, Blenheim     £750**

High Park, a section of Blenheim Park near Woodstock in Oxfordshire, was recently found to be the primary site in England (and by extension, all of Europe) for large ancient oak trees. This proposal aims to address this shortfall in our knowledge and understanding of High Park and to make an attempt to fill in the gaps where feasible. This project will be heavily dependent on volunteer participation. We are seeking mostly locally based (Oxfordshire) recorders with specialist knowledge and experience in recording for their organisms of interest. Field work will have to be coordinated and managed in close consultation with the Blenheim Estate management. Despite the voluntarism inherent in this survey proposal, it may become desirable or even necessary to be able to recompense reasonable expenses, such as travel. It is highly important for recorders to persist in their efforts and accumulating costs may become a disincentive to continue till the survey is completed. It may also be necessary to pay for some assistance from specialists with identification.



## 7.2 TRAINING, EDUCATION & SHARING INFORMATION

### TRAINING COURSES IN 2016/17

To help increase identification skills, surveying techniques and encourage wildlife recording within Berkshire and Oxfordshire through running a number of day training courses on a wide range of species and habitats. In 2016 these include courses on otters, water vole surveying, bumblebee ID, winter tree ID, woodland plant and grass ID.

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.

### AUTUMN RECORDERS CONFERENCE - BERKSHIRE

Our autumn conference was held in October, generously hosted again by Oracle Corporation at its offices in Reading. Opening the conference, Dr David Roy, Head of the Biological Records Centre at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology told the audience how biological recording can be used to monitor change and discussed future challenges. The crucial role that volunteers can have in recording was demonstrated through a fascinating description of BBOWT'S Linking the Landscape project in West Berkshire, described by Roger Stace. Hannah Worker explained how the Freshwater Habitats Trust has mobilised volunteers nationally to monitor and protect freshwater habitats including ponds. Keiron Brown also gave a characteristically enthusiastic talk about FSC's BioLinks project, which aims to fill gaps in biological recording. The conference provided an opportunity for recorders from across Berkshire and Oxfordshire to meet, exchange news and learn from one another. Short speed updates, as usual, gave groups a chance to update others and we were pleased to hear from Isobel Collyer about new developments for the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership. During the afternoon, those who chose to get a breath of fresh air, joined Dr Dan Carpenter to explore how to value landscapes or Dr Alastair Driver for a walk around the wetlands at Thames Valley Park. Others opted for a workshop run by TVERC's data team which demystified how to use the online recording website. Once again, we enjoyed a fascinating day of talks, conversation and networking.





---

## SPRING RECORDERS CONFERENCE - OXFORDSHIRE

The 2017 Spring Recorders' Conference took place on 4th March 2017 in Wallingford and was attended by 58 people. The event was themed around "Wildlife Restoration". Speakers included Lisa Lane, who shared her experience restoring meadows at Chimney Meadows which showed that the techniques used can be successful even on arable land. This was followed later in the day by a thought-provoking talk on water vole reintroductions by Meryll Gelling. Throughout the day there were sessions for short speed updates from local recording groups – a total of 21 – covering news updates, calls for volunteers and interesting species. The afternoon included a choice from four workshops covering swifts, hedgerows, social media and participatory mapping. The day included plenty of time for speed updates, networking over lunch and refreshment breaks and to look around the many displays brought by local and national groups. It was interesting that many of the speed updates and displays were looking for volunteer help with surveys or other activities. We are looking into whether we could help support this 'volunteer exchange' through our website.

## 8. FINANCE

### 8.1 FINANCE SUMMARY

In comparison with last year, the income from data searches has increased whilst the income from licences has been stable. The income from projects was a total of £59k which was below the target of £65k; however our Projects Manager has been focusing on new income streams which should increase income over the coming years.

The funding from Natural England ceased on 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 this year due to planned extra expenditure on an additional Data Assistant (to cover the increase in data search requests) and a Volunteer Co-ordinator (to provide better support to our volunteer recorders and office volunteers).

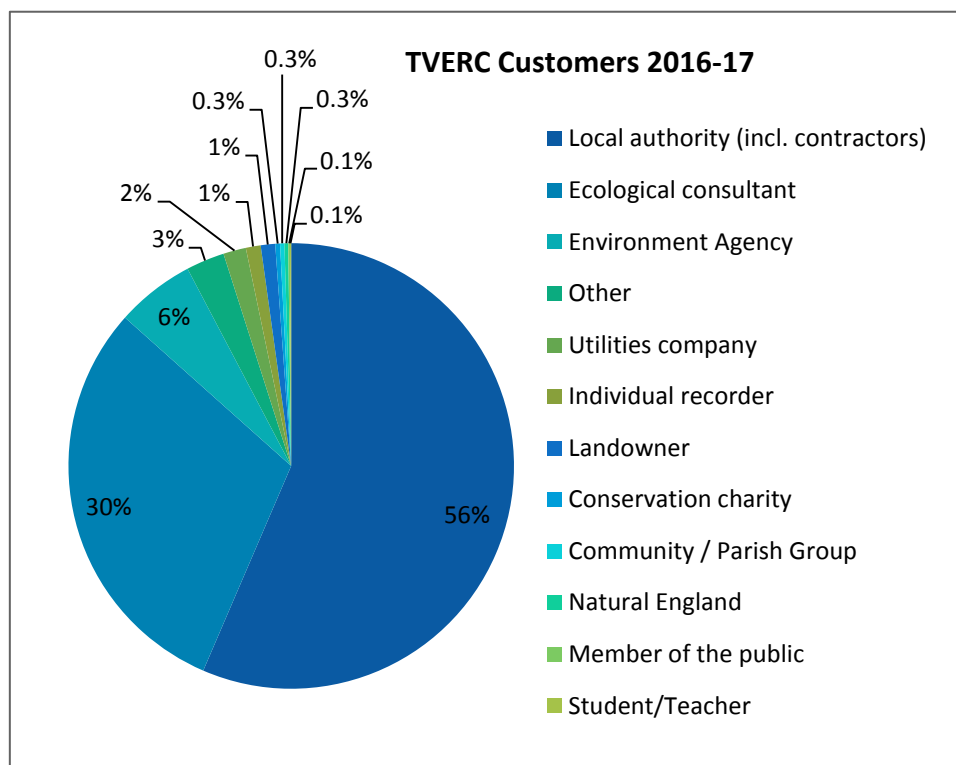
We ended 2016-17 with a net overspend of £18.8k, which was less of an overspend than we originally forecast and leaves TVERC in a strong position to continue to invest in improving our service and ensuring we are resilient to change.



## 8.2 SOURCES OF FUNDING

TVERC has a variety of customers, as shown in the table and pie chart below. In 2016/17 the majority of our income came from local authorities and ecological consultants (working on behalf of developers).

TVERC Customers	Amount	Percentage
Local authority (incl. contractors)	£171,181	56%
Ecological consultant	£91,370	30%
Environment Agency	£17,280	6%
Other	£8,448	3%
Utilities company	£5,000	2%
Individual recorder / recording group	£3,267	1%
Landowner	£3,170	1%
Conservation charity	£1,050	0.3%
Community / Parish Group	£950	0.3%
Natural England	£825	0.3%
Member of the public	£390	0.1%
Student/Teacher	£260	0.1%
<b>Income total</b>	<b>£303,190</b>	

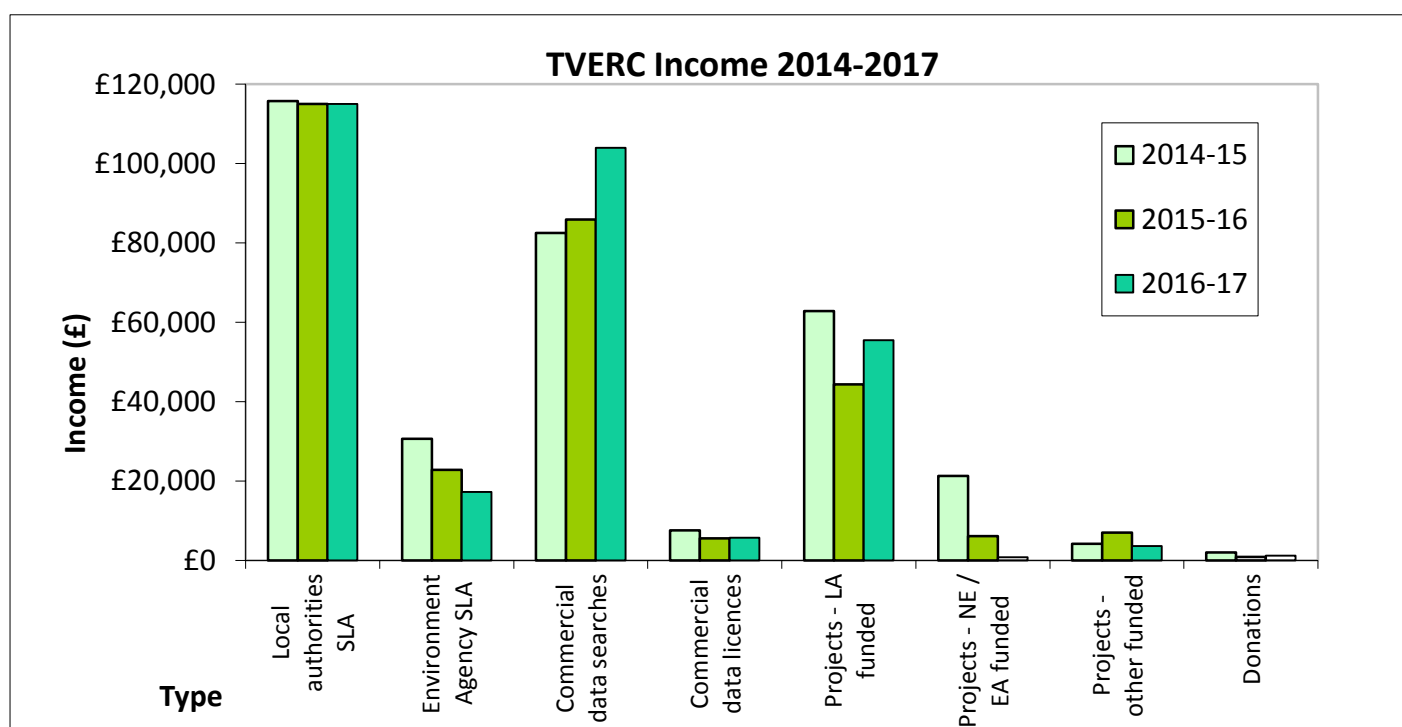




### 8.3 INCOME

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

Income type	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Local authorities SLA	£115,720	£115,038	£115,038
Environment Agency & Natural England SLA	£30,613	£22,835	£17,280
Commercial data searches	£82,520	£85,914	£103,977
Commercial data licences	£7,596	£5,600	£5,700
Projects - LA funded	£62,865	£44,361	£55,523
Projects - NE / EA funded	£21,298	£6,115	£825
Projects - other funded	£4,158	£6,983	£3,642
Donations	£2,043	£895	£1,205
<b>Income total</b>	<b>£326,813</b>	<b>£287,741</b>	<b>£303,190</b>





## 8.4 EXPENDITURE

Expenditure type	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Staff (salaries, expenses, training)	£240,470	£246,318	£283,772
Contractors & project expenses	£15,810	£3,105	£852
Overheads (equipment, printing, postage, subscriptions)	£5,384	£2,829	£3,636
Premises (paid 'in kind' by OCC)	£16,500	£16,500	£16,500
Recorders Conference	£1,654	£905	£3,321
Investment in service (data tools, website etc)	£1,771	£10,465	£13,948
<b>Expenditure total</b>	<b>£281,588</b>	<b>£280,122</b>	<b>£322,029</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>£45,225</b>	<b>£7,619</b>	<b>-£18,839</b>

## 8.5 RESERVE

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.

<b>Reserve at start 2016/17</b>	<b>£247,874</b>
Take out Oxon Habitats Mapping*	£25,800
Take out balancing figure**	£18,839
<b>Total Reserve at beginning 2017/18 (1st April 2017)</b>	<b>£203,234</b>

### Allocated Reserve for future years

Thames Water data licence 2017/18 and 2018/19 and 2019/20	£15,750.00
Redundancy costs	£45,269
3 months running costs	£82,718
Balancing figure for 2017/18	£16,276
Investment in service 2017-2021	£43,221

<b>Unallocated £ in Reserve at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017</b>	<b>£0</b>
--	-----------

\* 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 LWS SURVEYS CARRIED OUT IN 2016

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 SURVEYS

#### CHERWELL

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Shenlow Hill	34L06	Retain
Balscote Quarry	34U01	Retain
Meadow west of Bestmoor	43V02/3	Defer
Fishponds Wood, Hanwell	44L01	Defer
Berryfield Farm	33G02	Retain
RSPB Otmoor	51R11	Accept
Hedgerow between Little Wood and	61I01	Accept
Piddington Wood	61I01	Retain
Piddington Wood extension	61I01	Accept
Wildflower meadow at Bodicote House	n/a	Reject
Bicester Airfield—Skimmingdish Lane	52X10	Reject

#### WEST OXFORDSHIRE

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Shilton Bradwell Grove Airfield	20N01	Retain
Shilton Bradwell Grove Airfield (ext)	20N01	Accept
Dunster Meadow	30W01	Retain
Bank north of Fordwells	31C01	Retain
Bank north of Fordwells (ext)	31C01	Accept
Langland Farm Meadows, Finstock	31T04	Retain
Glympton Valley	41J14	Retain
South Freelands Meadow	41F01	Retain
South Freelands Meadow (ext)	41F01	Accept part



VALE OF WHITE HORSE AND SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Lowerhill Farm Wood	59W08	Deferred
Wroxhills Wood	68A09	Retain
Old Elvendon, Park and Griggs Woods	68F03	Retain
Dean Wood	68G03	Retain
Upper Covert	68K07/1	Accept
Bellmans Covert	68R06	Accept
Breach Wood	68S02/1	Accept
Busgrove Wood (SE)	68W07/3	Defer
Oakingham Bottom	68X05.1	Accept
Bush Wood (part)	68X05.2	Defer
Church Wood	69V04.1	Accept
Nettlebed Common	78D03	Retain
Kelart's Field	49W02	Defer
Bagley Wood	50B05	Retain
Kennington Memorial Field	50F06	Retain





## BERKSHIRE SURVEYS

### RB WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Triangular Wood	SU87T03	Defer
Ascot Heath, Golf Course	SU96J01	Retain
The Wells	SU96J07	Defer
East Clewer	SU97N01	Retain
Eton Meadows	SU97N06	Defer

### WEST BERKSHIRE

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Bungum Lane, Inkpen	Geology	Defer
Field next to Great Common Road	SU36S23	Accept
Opposite Weston Chapel, Weston	SU47B02	Retain
Near Weston Ford	SU47B03	Retain
Field adjacent to Hoptarden Gully	SU56M09	Accept
Pondhouse Copse	SU66T04	Defer
Bradfield Plantation	SU67B04	Retain
Dog Kennel, Avenell's & Highfield	SU56H06	Retain
Waterside Copse	SU56H06	Retain

### WOKINGHAM

Site name	Site code	Panel decision
Farley Hill Woods, Great Copse	SU76M01	Retain
Long Copse, Robin Hood Copse	SU67M03	Retain
Old Pond Copse and Moor	SU77K03	Retain
Bottom Boles Wood	SU87E05	Retain
Alder Moors pExt	SU77R04	Reject
Lea Farm	SU77W04	Accept