

Managers Annual Report to Members at AGM November 2011

Introduction

This is a brief summary report for the BIS financial year April 1st 2010 to March 31st 2011. BIS was established in 2000 and began its 'running phase' in November 2001 and therefore celebrated its 10th anniversary in this financial year. Two events have marked this anniversary: an informal BBQ for staff and supporters of BIS over last 10 years, and a Recorders Forum in March 2010 attended by recorders and LRC staff from all over Wales.

BIS moved to its new premises at Unit 4, 6 the Bulwark, Brecon in March 2011. Although this has increased rent by £2650 pa, the office provides a much better professional, working environment for the staff. It has increased office space which allows BIS to be used for identification training workshops. It also has greater security, with a swipe card system to enter the building and office, and a fire alarm system maintained by the landlord

Finance

The full accounts have been circulated to the Members for the AGM on 17th November 2011. A summary of accounts of last 4 years is set out below.

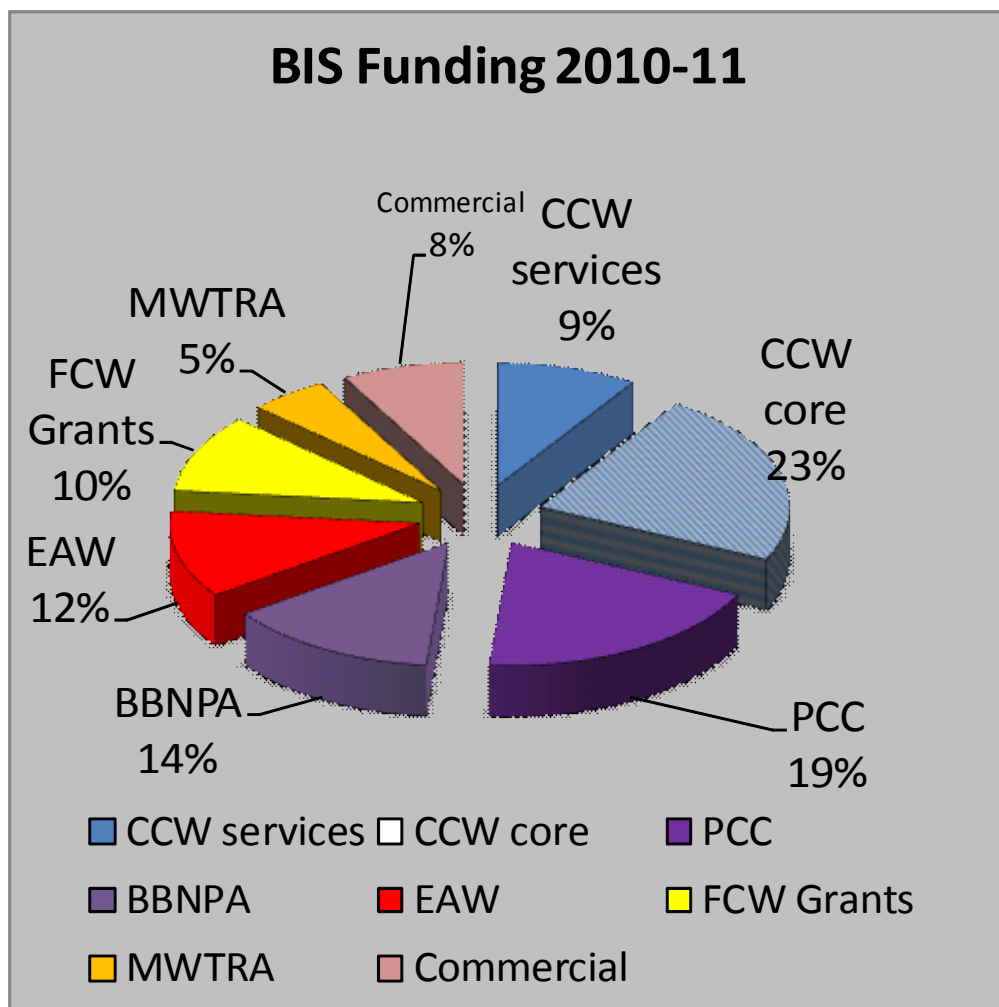
£	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Operating Profit	5287	412	871	477
Turnover	19,478	30,031	20,247	12,447
Administrative expenses	101,929	114,882	113,636	97,076
Corporation Tax	267	106	46	9
Profit for financial year	5,797	682	952	640

BIS continues to balance the budget and at 31st March 2010 held reserves in the bank of £29,469. This is a similar amount held a year ago and is sufficient to act a buffer to cover 3 months operating costs. BIS made a slight profit in 2011 but this was only due to not having an IT officer in post from November 2010, and was initially expected to make a loss. However a loss and use of reserves, had been agreed by the Board of Directors to allow BIS to maintain a higher staffing level in 2010. This is reflected in higher administration costs for 2009-10 and would have extended into 2011.

Partnership

The graph overleaf (BIS Funding 2010 – 11) summarises the contribution by the funding partners. All funding is for services provided by BIS under a Service Level Agreement, except core funding from Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) which is by a grant. The Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (MWTRA) renewed a previous 3 year agreement, for one year. Powys County Council (PCC) and

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) are annual agreements but have renewed annually since BIS became operational. This is the final year of the Forestry Commission Grants SLA as the Better Woodland for Wales grants finished in November 2010. This will be a big loss of income in the future. Unfortunately the Wildlife Trusts did not continue SLA's in 2010-11 which would have contributed to the expected loss.



Enquiries and Projects

A summary of reports completed by BIS in 2010-11 compared with 2009-10 is shown below

	2010-11	2009-10
Planning lists (BBNP + PCC)	1 per LA per week	1 per LA per week
Forestry Commission (Woodland Grant Schemes/ Felling Licence/ Better Woods for Wales Applications)	129	104
Powys County Council (excluding Planning reports)	80	67
Commercial enquiries	67	71
Other	36	5

In spring 2010 BIS was contracted by CCW to complete a Habitat Suitability Map for Lesser Horseshoe Bats for the whole of Wales. This was an extension of the GIS modelling work Michelle Weinhold (Data Officer) had completed at BIS for BBNP in 2009, and she was able to complete the CCW project as a sub-contractor to BIS.

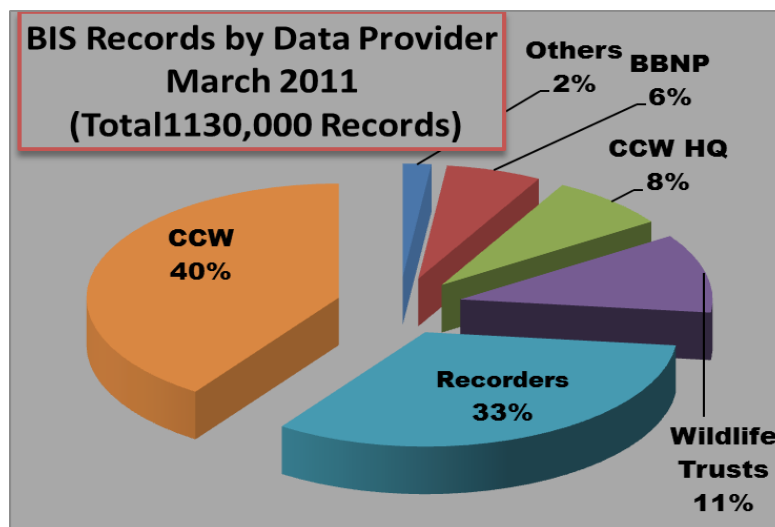
Staff

- Anna Georgiou (Biodiversity Information Officer) returned from maternity leave in July 2010 to work 3 days per week.
- Naomi Stratton was taken on in Dec 2009 as a Go Wales trainee and covered for Anna's maternity leave until May 2010
- Phil Ward (Biodiversity Recording Officer) continued to work 2 days per week
- Piotr Ged (IT Officer) left BIS f/t employment in November 2010 but continued to support BIS systems on a sub-contractor basis.
- Michelle Weinhold (BIS Data officer) left BIS f/t employment in September 2010 to do PhD at Lancaster University and continues to support BIS GIS systems on sub-contractor basis.
- Janet Imlach remained f/t BIS Manager

Directors.

BIS holds its AGM for members in November, and in 2010 there were a number of changes to the Directors of the Company. Brecknock, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trusts, founder members of BIS in 2000, stood down as corporate directors of BIS. Norman Lowe, (representing BWT) and Bob Dennison became individual directors and Margaret Underwood took over from Peter Seaman as the director representing the BBNP. Colin Young remains an individual director, as does Steve Packer representing PCC.

Data



In May 2010 BIS reached the 1 million species records in the database. This was mainly achieved with the import of Brecknock bird and butterfly records. BIS completed a project funded by the Welsh Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) to digitise all Brecknock bird records (30,000), not already held by BIS. These were put onto NBN Gateway to view at 1km square; with sensitive records at 10km square. In autumn 2010 BIS put all records from CCW data mobilisation project onto NBN Gateway at full resolution. A Himalayan Balsam Survey by an MSc student was also uploaded to Gateway.

BIS continued its policy of sending all casual records received by BIS to Vice-county recorders for inclusion in their databases and for verification. Main BIS data work has been cleaning of historical datasets removing duplicates, plus setting verification levels. Large historical datasets have been sent to some VCRs for verification but this is a slow process due to the workload on these voluntary recorders.

BIS also continued its policy of exchanging data with National Schemes and Societies. All VC42,43 and 47 historical Odonata records were exchanged with VCRs and Dragonfly Recording Scheme. The 3 VC moth recorders have received all BIS historical records and will exchange with Moth Recording Scheme as appropriate.

Technical

Until November 2010 Piotr completed a lot of development work on BIS systems.

- Reviewed the Merlin internal management system and put in place automatic updating of the species GIS layers from Recorder 6 to ArcView, so that they are now updated overnight.
- Updated the Forestry reporting system to be more accurate and reliable with clearer reports.
- Revised planning reports to ensure all the relevant species status information is being reported. Following the lead of Cofnod, developing a drill-down HTML planning report. This allows the user to drill down through the layers of the report, from summary to detailed records, as required. This is not only more convenient for the user but has virtually fully automated the whole process, freeing BIS staff for other work.
- Further developed a dnormal table that shows all the species records held in the database. This can now be viewed by staff and will be used to export records for verification by VC recorders and allow marking of duplicates to clean the R6 database
- The BIS website has been updated with an easier to use Content Management System, new look and logo for the BIS anniversary. Brecknock Moth group pages have been added. The Products and Services pages have been updated to show more detail and sample products. A page was added to enable casual recorders to submit a record or multiple records.
- In autumn 2010 Piotr worked with LRC Wales to develop an all-Wales database. This collaborative work progressed very quickly over a few months using free software. This will enable LRC Wales to easily provide national 'Alert' layers, do cross-border enquiries and provide analysis on all –wales data. Unfortunately this work has not been completed due to lack of IT resources and will be under review in 2011.

Supporting local wildlife recorders and recording

In March 2011 BIS held a special Anniversary Recorders Forum to celebrate 10 years since BIS began its development phase in 2001. Jane Davidson, WAG Minister for the Environment, Sustainability & Housing, agreed to speak on the 'Living Wales - a new framework for our environment, our countryside and our seas' consultation and the ecosystems approach to sustainable development.'

In autumn 2010 BIS applied for a grant from the BBNPA Sustainable Communities Fund and Brecon Beacons Trust Fund to purchase microscopes for ID training days. These include a video microscope, compound and stereo microscopes which were first used at the BIS Centipede course in March. The new office provides the space to make this equipment readily available not only for BIS ID training days, but for individuals or recorder groups to use at BIS offices, or possibly other venues, to help with recording wildlife.

WBP funded LRC Wales to run wildlife identification courses in 2010-11. BIS ran 7 courses as below.

Sat 5 Jun. 2010	Bee & Bumblebee Identification
Sat 10 Jul. 2010	GPS Data Collection Training
Sat 7 Aug. 2010	Dragonfly Identification
Sat 15 Jan. 2011	Identification of difficult Moth species by dissection
Thu 10 Feb. 2011	Workshop at Welsh National Herbarium
Sat 19 Feb. 2011	Ladybird Identification
Sat 12 Mar. 2011	Centipedes, Millipedes and Woodlice