

WeBS Local Organiser Advisory Committee

Minutes of 16th Meeting: 2nd June 2026

Attendees

Chair: Gill Birtles (GB) (BTO)

Alan Burnham (AB) (Northern England), Neil Calbrade (NC) (BTO), Teresa Frost (TF) (BTO), Chris Gunn (CG) (Eastern England), Jamie Hicken (JH) (Midlands), Daniel Jenkins-Jones (DJJ) (Wales), Kerry Mackie (KM) (Northern Ireland), Andy Riches (AR) (South and East Scotland) and Simon Wotton (SW) (RSPB).

1 Apologies for absence

Eve Tigwell (South West England) & Katie August (JNCC)

2 Welcome and introductions

All attendees of the WeBS Local Organiser Advisory Committee (LOAC) meeting introduced themselves.

3 Confidentiality and conflicts of interest

Members of the LOAC were asked to note that agenda items marked with an asterisk [*] should be regarded as strictly confidential. The LOAC may add or remove asterisks during the meeting. LOAC members are asked to notify the Chair of any conflict of interest for any particular item and to absent themselves from the discussion, decision or vote for this item as appropriate.

4 Action Points from the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

AP/LOAC12/1 Add coverage maps of LTC sites onto the BTO website - not done. NC will look into this in the following year. - Neil will look into the feasibility of this but it is a tricky task. - With the new website launch, we are not sure at the moment if adding this will be feasible or approved by the website team. - **in-progress - NC gave an update in the Low Tide Update.**

AP/LOAC15/1 GB to look into adding a re-design of the Manage My Team -> Locations list to make site hierarchies clearer. - **in-progress - GB gave an update in the Core and Supplementary Update.**

5 WeBS Progress Update

Core and Supplementary Update (GB)

Social Media

In February 2026, the WeBS X account was shut down in favour of focusing on Bluesky and Facebook.

Manage My Team - Locations Development

GB has started the development of re-designing this page to make it clearer to LOs when there are site hierarchies in their region.

Contact: webs@bto.org

Low Tide update (NC)

LTCs were carried out in 2025/26 at Belfast Lough, Chichester Harbour, Eden Estuary, Fowey Estuary, Hayle Estuary, Killough Harbour, Orwell Estuary, Stour Estuary and Strangford Estuary.

Sites to be targeted in 2026/27 include Alde Estuary*, Burry Inlet, Conwy Estuary, Deben Estuary, Dyfi Estuary, Firth of Clyde, Langstone Harbour*, Lavan Sands (Traeth Lafan), Lindisfarne, Medway Estuary, Northwest Solent, Pagham Harbour, Pegwell Bay, Ribble Estuary and Tees Estuary.

*Already shown an interest.

Low Tide Coverage Map

Hopeful that this will be developed in the same way as the Vacant Sites map. Several options of how this map could look:

- Map showing the sites at a broad level and have an accompanying grid to show each estuary and when complete and partial counts were carried out.
- Map where you can click on a site to see its extent and have an accompanying bar graph that shows when full and partial counts were carried out.
- Have a sector level map, with accompanying bar graph when sites are selected. This is a more complicated option as Low Tide sites don't have the same hierarchy set up as Core Count sites.

Any thoughts are welcome. It is planned that we launch this within the next year.

Contact: lowtide@bto.org

GSMP Update (NC)

International Swan Census (ISC)

ISC took place in January 2026 and was the first time BTO organised this. 89% of sites were allocated either through GSMP Online or WeBS Online including 96% of priority sites.

Counts from 501 sites were entered into GSMP Online and WeBS contributed to 862 sites*.

*These are counters who submitted via the pop-up box after submitting a WeBS Core Count. However, these counts didn't take into account zeros where people carried out a count but didn't see a bird. This is something to improve for next time.

We are about to start the data cleaning work ahead of analysis, so please submit any outstanding WeBS counts.

Any feedback welcome on how to improve for the next ISC in 2032.

Contact: gsmp@bto.org

Waterbird News Update (NC)

If any LOs want to offer an article please get in touch. The deadline for articles is the end of July and editing will start in August, for publication in September.

Ideas for articles currently include NEWS, WeBS Roosts and the importance of rivers in WeBS.

Contact: neil.calbrade@bto.org

Other updates (NC)

Bridget Hiza left her role as the Surveys Support Officer in April. We are currently in the recruitment process for her replacement. Please bear with us while we are short-staffed.

WeBS Roosts / WeBS Report Online Update (NC)

We recently added WeBS roost maps and data to WeBS Report Online after the 2019 pilot in Wales. This can be found at <https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/roosts.jsp>

Through this, anyone can see where roosts are located after data has been added into WeBS Online under 'Roost Assessment'.

This is updated every year, so isn't live data.

NEWS Update (TF)

Funding has been secured for three years from the country agencies, which is separate from WeBS funding. Year one initial fieldwork has been completed by fieldworkers and the main volunteer effort will be this coming winter, 2026/27, with the target date of 16/17 January - the same as the WeBS Priority Core Count date.

Ian Woodward is project managing but we don't have a specific NEWS Organiser due to various staff changes, so the people who contact volunteers will change over the next few months, but will all come from the single email address, non-estuarine@bto.org

The webpage is now live (www.bto.org/webs-news) and we will be approaching people to be specific NEWS Local Organisers very shortly. We will firstly be approaching those who LO'd for the last NEWS, then current WeBS LOs and then the BTO Regional Organisers for taking on the role.

Once again, NEWS will be carried out in ROI, so we are working with Birdwatch Ireland.

In the past, we also had groups doing expeditions for us to the more remote sites. This winter, we will have some expedition funds available that people can apply for, which will only be available to members of the Regional Network (LOs, ROs etc.).

AB - How much access is there currently for LOs to access the NEWS map? *TF - Once we have the NEWS LOs in place, the map of sites will become available to all WeBS counters and LOs. NEWS doesn't have a separate application but is done through WeBS Online, so there isn't a way for volunteers to sign up to NEWS separately, so will have to have signed up to WeBS first before they can see the map. We can look to change this so that anyone can see the map before signing up.*

DJJ - Thinks it would be good for people to see the map before signing up. What is the timeline for getting NEWS LOs in place? *TF - We are contacting people now so that they are in place when we announce the survey in Waterbird NEWS in September. [Post-meeting additional info: We will be contacting potential NEWS LOs in late June and are planning to set them up as LOs and send them further details asap after they have been set up as NEWS LOs].*

AB - How does a NEWS visit differ to a WeBS Core Count? *TF - Each site is linear and ~2km long. Counts are done at low-tide and each site is split into three habitat types - intertidal (beach), seaward and landward and counters count what they see in each habitat. Also include mammals.*

CG- Have we considered contacting bird clubs? *TF - We are hoping to do comms asap and hope that NEWS LOs will get in touch with bird clubs.*

Contact: non-estuarine@bto.org

6 Reports from LOAC Regions

- Alan Burnham:
 - LOs raised the problem of people signing up to WeBS counts but not carrying out any counts.
- Daniel Jenkins-Jones:
 - Do we know yet how WeBS will feed into the Atlas? *TF - we've had initial conversations but nothing has been decided yet.*
- Jamie Hicken:
 - Asking about County Bird Recorder's access to WeBS. *GB - they can have access through WeBS Online, but many CBRs and LOs don't know about this so often send spreadsheets to them directly.*
 - Is there a way of making the BirdTrack import more streamline so that it's not a two step process and people don't have to login to WeBS Online? *TF- unfortunately not as we need extra information about the count e.g. if the count was complete or not and why, which can't be included in a BirdTrack app.*

AP/LOAC16/1 GB to contact County Bird Recorders to inform them about how they can access WeBS data through WeBS Online.

7 [WeBS] Single-Visits

There are many WeBS sites which struggle to attract allocated counters who can carry out monthly counts. This can be a variety of reasons such as a) they are in remote areas that are difficult to access, b) in areas with lower human population density and so the pool of people to attract to the survey is smaller and c) they do not hold a wide variety, or high numbers of birds and therefore difficult to persuade someone to visit regularly.

We have found that one-off counts at these extreme sites to be better than no counts and can provide very useful data for WeBS, for filling in gaps in site coverage and feed into e.g. avian influenza work, population estimates, species distribution and future projects.

Therefore, [WeBS] Single-Visits accommodates counters to submit 'one-off' counts for established WeBS sites where we struggle to receive monthly counts.

Which sites can be Single-Visit sites?

At the launch of this survey in Oct/Nov 2026, we will make an initial ~2,300 sites from around the UK into Single-Visit sites.

Then going forward, Local Organisers can make **any** WeBS site within their region a Single-Visit site. Single-Visit sites can be any WeBS site that:

- A. Currently exists and is countable;
- B. Must be able to visit (no access issues recorded);
- C. Mustn't have an allocated counter;
- D. Can be any priority;
- E. Must be a single sector site and not part of a site tree (so it's not missing out on coordinated surveying within a larger site);
- F. Must have a defined boundary.

Who can submit a Single-Visit Count?

Single-Visit counts are only available to active counters who are allocated to a WeBS site and are submitting monthly counts for any site already.

Any counter can submit a Single-Visit record for any region.

It is always more ideal for us to have an allocated counter submitting monthly counts than monthly counts submitted under Single-Visit sites, in order to ensure consistency and accuracy with data. So we hope that, if you see that a volunteer is submitting monthly Single-Visit counts, you can ask if they would consider becoming the allocated counter for a site.

When are Single-Visit counts carried out?

Any time of the month, not just on the Priority Core Count Date. Single-Visit counts don't need to be carried out on a month's Priority Core Count date (or within the usual two-week window) but can be carried out at any time of the month, in order to increase the opportunity for counters to submit for a Single-Visit site.

If more than one Single-Visit count is carried out in a month for a site, the one that falls closest to the Priority Core Count data will be automatically marked as the Primary Count and all others will be marked as a Supplementary Count.

How are Single-Visit counts carried out?

The methodology for [WeBS] Single-Visit counts are the same as the WeBS Core Count methods (with the exception of counting on the Priority Core Count date).

How are Single-Visit counts submitted?

In a separate form on WeBS Online.

Local Organiser's Role:

- Maintain Single-Visit sites by upgrading or downgrading.
- Identify where someone could possibly become an allocated counter.
- Validate Single-Visit submissions, the same as they do for Priority Core Counts already.

Timeline:



See meeting recording for a run-through of the new survey in WeBS Online.

PILOT

- We will be running a two month pilot from July - September (date TBC but will cover 2x Priority Core Count dates).
- We are asking for yourselves to test in your roles as Local Organisers.
- Either ask specific counters to carry out SV counts or send an email to all your counters. Anyone can submit for these counts but we only ask for you to communicate with either selected or all counters within your region/s.
- LO and Counter guidance will be available and will have a feedback form for feedback.
- We will set the sites for your regions - you won't have the option to upgrade/downgrade during the pilot.

What we want testing:

1. Usability for Counters.
2. Usability for Local Organisers including validation.
3. How easy and understandable the flow is from data collection, submission, viewing to validating.

Asked LOAC members if they are happy to take part in the Pilot for your LO regions?

Thoughts from LOAC:

- All LOAC members present are happy to take part in the pilot.
- KM unable to take part in the pilot as sites are too complex, so will contact other LOs in Northern Ireland to see if they can take part. GB to send an up-to-date list.

- AB - suggests it would be good to have a separate map showing Single-Visit sites that people can take a look in advance.
- CG - would it be possible for LOs to download a list of Single-Visit sites? We can send a list for the pilot, but being able to download an up-to-date list from WeBS Online (once it's live and LOs can upgrade/downgrade) would require a whole new tool.
- DJJ- how are data from Single-Visit visits submissions useful, esp. summer counts?
TF - it will be interesting to see the type of data we receive in the summer. Will be useful for Rare Breeding Bird Panel, Avian Influenza work, some indices.

8 Any other business

No other business was raised.