**CONFIDENTIAL**

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Interviewer:

Respondent:

**INT So, the first question is how long have you been doing any sort of biological recording and how did you start?**

P06 Individually I’ve been doing it since I’ve been – since I was a kid, so as long as I can almost remember. I think the first official survey I did for the [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION], I think it was a winter bird survey was 84 was the first official one I did, and I’ve been in post, National Park Authority, in this role, since 1999 so I’ve been officially involved in coordinating and promoting the survey work since then.

**INT And so you started with the birds then it expanded out into different species groups, did it?**

P06 Yeah, birds is my primary interest, but it’s always been a wide range of nature conservation, but birds have been my focal point, and again through work we have different projects and that sort of got me more involved in some of the species, taxonomic groups, that perhaps as an individual I might not have got that involved in.

**INT So, then has the kind of new stuff that you’ve learnt through your professional role, has that then spilled over into your personal recording as well?**

P06 Yeah, there’s a very blurred line between – I’m birding all the time in my own time, or when I’m out. Luckily, I’m privileged that I’ve got a job that I can do field work and things like that, so it is often, when my work stops and personal enjoyment starts – so, yeah, they’re very mutually exclusive.

**INT And it’s sort of structured surveying as well as just casual recording is it that you do, do you do some of the transect walks and things like that as well as just causal recording?**

P06 As a volunteer I do things like web surveys, the odd breeding bird, as well as casual records into things like bird track and I use the [Species] conservation iRecord app quite a lot for [Species] sightings, and again, through work we look at doing structured surveys for monitoring or formal survey work, and also we do look at where we’ve got time, and if they’re interesting records putting casual incidental records in as well.

**INT So, for the butterflies do you do any of that the UK [WILDLIFE CONSERVATION] or the wider countryside wider [Species] survey?**

P06 We do the transects, so we’re involved in those at a number of sights in the National Park. Again, I do some in my own time as well, but we do follow the formalised surveys as well as, like I say, incidental records.

**INT And then do you have any role in verifying records or anything like that as well?**

P06 I do in my own – I’m also [COUNTY] Bird Recorder for the [wildlife association] in a voluntary capacity, so there is some verification of records in that role. I should do more on it but there is some verification. What we tend to use at work is we tend to use existing schemes and frameworks or recording systems so we would submit records into those rather than whole data or do vet record verification ourselves. There will be some of it, don’t get me wrong, but we tend to try and use – we don’t want to set up a separate system.

**INT In terms of the kind of geographical area that you recover with your recording, is it right across the [NATIONAL PARK]?**

P06 Yeah, so the whole of the – I work for the whole of the National Park. Again, I do some birding and work there voluntary, so I record stuff separately on there but butterflies are my – I live just outside the National Park so I will record regularly in my local birding patches on those, and again if I go to – if I went somewhere else pre-Covid when we could do these sorts of things to a reserve and you see something that you know is unusual I would put it in a bird track or use the [Species] app, or something like that but I would meticulously record everywhere I go sort of thing.

**INT So, you said that you started recording when you were quite young, what sort of motivated you to start and has that motivation changed over the years?**

P06 I think it was just the done thing, you recorded in – in those days it was notebooks and you could send paper records in, and there were index cards and things like that, I don’t know, it was just the sort of – when you got into it – I can’t remember how, why, who or whatever, but it was just sort of you followed what the protocol was at that time and then obviously times change and we’ve now got apps and websites, the whole data entry thing has changed but it’s just – I suppose it’s just going with the flow and whatever the appropriate protocols are at a particular time.

**INT So, did it start off more as a hobby then rather than necessarily like wanting your data to contribute to nature conservation or anything like that?**

P06 Yeah, it was just out of personal interest and first and late dates of summer migrants, comparing with was it earlier or later than last year, it was just that general interest, but then as you progress and get more experience you realise that, you know, if you see a rare bird, for example, there’s county description species so you have to write a description for it so it can be verified so you get into that sort of process and then – like I say, I just picked up on a few surveys that were – I must have seen advertised somewhere and checked them and there were local squares available, and just sort of got into it that way really.

**INT And do you think that kind of motivation has changed over time or is it – is that still kind of the primary reason you do it, it’s your hobby, it’s your personal interest?**

P06 I think it’s probably changed because I’m involved in a work scenario I appreciate more how important records are so it’s incredibly frustrating when, again you understand it, but you talking to people I saw – a Black Grouse, for example, I saw one here and it’s like oh well it’s a site we didn’t know about if you submitted the record, and there was a – many years ago before the constraints checking there was a few examples where we, for a work capacity, we had woodland applications that we – we looked at the constraints that we had and there was nothing to prevent it so we allowed it to go ahead.

And then when it’s planted, for example, there was one case where the local [Species] recorders were up in arms because it was a Northern Brown Argus site and we said, “Well, we didn’t know about it” “Well, it’s been there for 40 years, we’ve known about it” and it’s like “Well, if the land managers aren’t aware of these things then what’s” “Well, you should have known, why didn’t you contact us?” “Well, we can’t contact every single organisation every time we want to plant a tree, sort of thing.

So, it’s a lot more – it’s my day to day job, I’m a lot more aware of how important – and the actual records can make a difference between inappropriate management or a plan application going ahead and not. So, that’s probably subconsciously if not highlighted the importance of why I do try and put records in where I can.

**INT And your hobby, I guess, led you into your career as well, did it, having that as your hobby from a young age?**

P06 Yeah, it’s something I’ve always wanted to do, circumstances and fate were very kind and I managed to get a job doing a lot of the work that I do – it’s a lifetime, wildlife both professional and in my own time so, yeah, I’m very fortunate.

**INT Yes. So, then thinking about how – and this is probably varied between the different types of recording you do but when you go out recording what’s the first thing that you consider, is it you want to go to a particular site, or you want to see a particular species, or it’s routine, or how does that kind of work when you’re going out doing recording?**

P06 I suppose the – I have various local birding patches that I just – you go to regularly so obviously you want to get the first swallow of the year, and any – when you’ve got migration time you’re getting – hopefully try and get something different or unusual. So, it’s just that sort of trying to get – you keep revisiting your local areas and then at weekends and what not [unclear 00:10:50] can do this again, if something rare turns up on the coast I’ll go and see that or visit a reserve to look at particular bitterns of if there’s butterflies there, or something like that. I just tailor my visits like that really.

**INT How often are you going out then, it’s probably a daily event is it that you’re doing some sort of recording?**

P06 Yeah, so especially under lockdown I try and – whether it’s just walking, or I can drive a short distance, like you can at the moment, I’m out every day, so I was out at lunchtime today and I was using bird track on the site to, I was wanting to record. It’s become addictive – I was thinking about this the other day, I can’t seem to go out now and just birdwatch without actually having to write it down and record it, so it’s just become second nature really.

**INT And can you go for a walk without doing recording, do you always record when you go out somewhere?**

P06 Yes, more, or less. Well, I don’t really – I wouldn’t really go out for a walk unless I was actually birdwatching or anything else like that, so I must admit – if I’m pushed for time and I see something different from the previous day I might not record that, but I’d probably still – I’d make a few notes in my notebook but like I say, if it was just the same as the previous I just probably wouldn’t it on to bird track or anything else like that, but normally I would.

**INT When you go to a site are you trying to record full list of species that you see or is it just things that are unusual or a bit different?**

P06 It’s quite influenced, so for example, bird track, they actually want you to do a complete list, so every species you see when you’re out on site and then they can work out – even if you don’t get the abundance just presence or absence they can work out how many complete lists – I don’t quite know how they do it all but have certain species on so they can derive trends or if there’s any change over time or anything else like that then – so because – and in fact my recording has changed since doing bird track, and I do a complete list, I will record robins, blue tits, everything else.

Whereas if I wasn’t using bird track I would just note down the more interesting species or high counts, or something like that, I wouldn’t have recorded everything. I think it’s – the way I record is influenced by what system I’m putting it into.

**INT And that’s because they’re asking you to do that and you kind of trust them that that’s the data that they need to make – to be able to, like you say, base trends on and things like that.**

P06 Yeah.

**INT And then in terms of the butterflies do you just kind of record what you see when you’re out and do it in your birding, or do you kind of make specific trips for your [Species] recording as well?**

P06 I do some [Species] transects and I’ve done a few – and council butterflies, so they will be specific visits solely to record butterflies but generally – I mean one of the things I’m trying to do in the [NATIONAL PARK] because we have a – a shortage of people actually out recording, so we’re quite a long – the National Park, you know, there are only small towns and villages in it, there’s no – all the big towns and cities are outside the park so we’ve got a huge shortage of data, so even for common species if you look at distribution maps of birds, butterflies and things like that, there will be huge gaps.

So, even the common stuff isn’t recorded. So, I’ve, you know, I’ve given some of my recording to requests from organisation, is that, you know, even a robin or a small tortoiseshell [Species] recorded at some of these sites will be the first time anyone has actually put a dot on a map so it’s trying to improve the sort of distribution records like that. So, that –

**INT So, it’s knowing the value of any sort of record in a kind of data poor region is important.**

P06 Yeah, again from a professional point of view it’s frustrating when you look at distribution maps and there’s [unclear 00:15:45] for the National Park when you know that they’re there. So, it’s trying to help on that, so again it’s difficult because you can’t record every single species on every single visit and – especially if you’re driving along or you’ve got multiple – you’re looking for some species, you’re doing multiple stops. You can’t necessarily record everything.

But, yeah, it is trying to get some of those, potentially even a record of a dead common species in looking at that distribution.

**INT And then you mentioned that you’ve had like requests from [Species] conservation for more records in that area, is that specifically to set up transect recording?**

P06 No, it’s in the annual reports. Occasionally they will – do atlas work. So, I have seen over the years maps will show these are the squares where we’ve not had any records and a general encouragement that because it’s an atlas year or something like that then if people can make a specific effort to go out and check these then – so when things like that come up you do think, yeah, well, I know that area, it’s not far out. I’m going past it and you can try and just do a bit of that.

**INT So, you respond to that, do you, you kind of see gaps on a map and you think I’ll help to fill that?**

P06 Not 100% but, yeah, it will influence, it will guide you. You try and think right, yeah, I’ve got another site visit so I will record the butterflies there, or something like, so it does try and stimulate or perhaps change my recording habitats and where I might go. It’s not the be all and the end all, it’s not the main driver but it’s just a factor that I would consider.

**INT And that’s using the maps that [COUNTY WILDLIFE GROUP] put on their website then, is it?**

P06 Yeah, and if it’s anything similar or if there’s particular requests for particular sightings of a particular species, or something like that, then they do help. Like I say I’m not saying I go out specifically to monitor all these blank squares or anything, but it does – some of what I record is sort of guided by that.

**INT So, are there other places that you receive other information about where you might record from or any kind of other support with recording, so you mentioned like [COUNTY WILDLIFE GROUP] but are there other organisations that you have contact with that influence where and what you record?**

P06 Yeah, to a certain extent. Again, from a work capacity, whichever organisation, you know, the Dragonfly Society or the Plant Group, they just say “Great, while you’re out can you record this or look out for that?” and it just becomes, you know, you cannot – if you’re out somewhere doing a bird survey you might – if you see something rare or unusual you can note it, but you can’t start recording all the butterflies you see on a bird survey, or looking out for rare plants or anything else like that. It just doesn’t work out.

I tend to just – because I’m a birder and I’ve also got into the butterflies through work I tend to focus on those. I mean the other thing is if I’m not careful – I do like to do some of this outside work for a hobby and relaxation, if I then have to – if on a Saturday if I’m out and then I have to fill in bird track, [Species] sightings, the dragonfly app, before too long you’ve spent [unclear 00:19:58] on the computer putting records in when you are trying to – like I say that is probably a limitation – and people say, “It’s just an app”.

I’d like to get into the mammal app that they’ve just re-done and re-released but again it’s like if you’re not careful you’re spending all your time looking at your phone, or notebook typing in records, and spending an evening filling them all in.

**INT And it sort of undoes all the good work of spending time outside and the good things that that does for your mind compared with spending time at a computer. Yeah.**

P06 Sometimes it is nice just to go out – I can’t help, I’m a compulsive notebook – but when you’ve had a busy day, if you’re on the computer all day the last thing you want to do is then spend another two hours on a night typing in loads of records, so there are limitations to it.

**INT And then in terms of – so the professional side of things, do you have kind of – well, it sounds like you don’t have much kind of support in the recording but are there volunteers that kind of share transects with you, or is it your colleagues that you’re sharing that with?**

P06 So, the [Species] transects, we work with [Species] conservation and [wildlife association] so there are – they’ve established, and we’ve established a few but we’ll look to help out and assist.

**INT And did you help with deciding where they should be, how did –**

P06 Some of them.

**INT How did that decision making work in terms of where to set up new transects?**

P06 The one we’ve set up recently, which hasn’t worked to be honest is that – the problem in the [NATIONAL PARK] with the [Species] monitoring, stop me if this going off on a tangent, but you require the – there’s some quite specific variable so it’s got to be sunny, low wind, what is it, over 75% cloud cover. So, the reality is in the [NATIONAL PARK], especially in the higher ground those sort of days are few and far between. So, we try to set up transects that were near where people were because the problem is, is I live just on the edge of the [NATIONAL PARK] but it’s – one of the transects – the transects that I do – if I was going straight from home, 45 minutes away.

So, I can leave home here, bright sun, not much cloud, get up into the [NATIONAL PARK] and it’s breezy. You go from one dale to another, I’ve left the office with ideal conditions for doing the transect, got over into watershed in the next dale and it’s raining. So, we’ve struggled in getting people – because they’ve got travel from where they live to the sites then we’re really struggling with getting the transect filled, so that’s one of the issues.

So, when we – did set some transects up that were intended to be near where people were rather than actually where we wanted to set them up. I think for something like Northern Brown Argus – (a) we haven’t got the number of volunteers and people and (b) even with the best will in the world unless they’re retired and basically can go any day of the week once you start factoring in – I don’t know, if they’re picking up kids two days a week from school suddenly your window goes from seven days down to four, then they’ve got something on one day, so it’s down to two and factor in the weather it becomes incredibly difficult.

**INT So, there are some that have sort of failed, they’ve kind of stopped doing any recording?**

P06 Yeah, it’s one of these almost, what do you call them, like self [unclear 00:24:14] things that if you can get everybody doing it every week and then you get the indices and the data there and you can do a bit of a report – even if it’s fairly pseudo-scientific, there’s more than last or fewer than last year it keeps the motivation going. But then when you start getting a couple of people miss a few weeks and you can’t generate the trend then you can’t do the report, or you can’t give any feedback.

And then, you know, people start thinking well what’s the point of doing it if they’re not going to use the data, so it all sort of – they’ve just started to sort of crumble, and if you start getting a couple of people drop out then you’ve got gaps later, and other people just haven’t the time to fill in the gaps, and like I say they just start – just sort of like degrading or falling apart really, and we haven’t got the people to come in and do the other surveys.

**INT Do you do some of that feedback to volunteers yourselves then in terms of showing people trends on site?**

P06 We try to give them some sort of feedback, yeah, I mean it’s not always sort of possible, but we will try and give it even if it’s a bit of verbal feedback, for some of the species, over the years, each year, and then we can give that to the volunteers but again some of those can become a bit time consuming and what not. We will try and feedback wherever we can in some – in some verbal or written –

**INT I guess you’re sort of acting like a middle man between [Species] conservation and the volunteers then aren’t you because that’s obviously – they’ll provide national perhaps regional trends, won’t they, or overall species trends but they can’t do that site by site analysis which – and I think it’s quite useful for organisations like yourselves to do if you can.**

P06 Like the transects we can get the data and I used to do a report, but it did become quite time consuming when we had seven or either transects to get all the data and draw graphs, and things like that, that – I think, again stop me if this is going off on a tangent, but one of the problems is that when we act as the middle man, middle ground, whatever you want to call it, that we’ve no control over the surveys. I don’t mean that in a dictatorial way but, for example, we work with a [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] using the breeding bird survey, the BBS to try and look at monitoring some of the trend for some of the priority bird species across the part.

So, we did an initiative with those, we’re 10 years into our conservation strategy, it’s just finished, so we ran a training day. We worked with them and we got all the gaps filled – basically they’re randomly selected squares across the country so we worked out which ones were in the park, which ones weren’t covered, and then we did a joint promotion. Now, they’re monitored by – sorry, they’re coordinated by local [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] reps and it ended up I think there was something like five different ones that covered the National Park.

So, in year one it’s great but then in year two, if too many people drop out we don’t necessarily know because we’re not seeing the data or anything like that, and then it has happened that suddenly – you think that everything is all right and then six years into it it’s like half a dozen people have dropped out. Because we don’t have overall control or anything over the surveys we can’t really go out and push for extra volunteers or something like that. So, it’s not a criticism of [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] or any of the coordinators.

It’s just that when we’re working with other organisations that we don’t have that knowledge of the ins and outs of what’s going on in either [unclear 00:28:28] or the data that’s coming in or, in many cases we’d have to have a special arrangement so we can actually get the data at the end of it. So, for example, there’s loads of surveys that go on. Big gardens birdwatch right through to more scientific ones, for want of a better term, that we could promote, which we could but unless we actually get the data back for the National Park then we are putting a lot of time into promoting them and we’re not getting any data back that we need.

So, there has to be some sort of reciprocal agreement so it actually delivers targets, and we can actually use the data, but it’s not always easy. If you’ve got one person coordinating a national survey, we accept that they won’t necessarily have the time to be lifting out data and reports just for the [NATIONAL PARK] so that is a – I wouldn’t say blockage, but we have to make sure that we can – if we’re going to try and use it for monitoring then we need to be able to access some of the data.

So, it works really well with the [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] that we get reports off them every three years, as we’ve agreed, and we work with [Species] conservation so it can work just it adds another layer of time and resource from both our end and also the organisation who’s coordinating. Many of these are on short term contracts, it’s just a year’s survey, or something like that. To be perfectly fair to them they haven’t got time to be lifting – all right, they might be able to do one or two requests but if – if every National Park or 25 groups turned around and said “Could you lift out all the data for our area” then they’d just be snowed under.

It’s a consideration when we’re – like I say there are so many surveys out there. There’s so many different ways of recording and different organisations asking for data, it is something we have to consider if we’re going to promote it officially as it were.

**INT You’ve got to prioritise what’s of most value to you in terms of your own data needs otherwise, like you say, there’s no point in investing your time and energy into something that you’re not getting something back from necessarily.**

P06 They’re all great surveys. They’re all brilliant at raising awareness, whether big garden birdwatch is for the beginner, the inexperienced, or there’s BBS transects you can do, there’s a whole load of surveys and they’re all great, they all provide data for national and regional. They’re great in getting people engaged but, you know, we only have limited time so we need to make sure that if we are going to sort and try and get involved then we need to get these agreements so we can actually look at getting some data back.

**INT This probably strays into a bit of what [Name] talked to you about in terms of data use, but in terms of your decision making in the [NATIONAL PARK] then, which are the data sources you use? Do you use any of the transect data or is it more kind of the species distribution data that you use?**

P06 We use both. We have old biodiversity action plans that finished last year, it was a 10 year plan, and that had a list of priority species, and we had a target, and this was factored into the National Park management plan which is a strategic document that by law each National Park has to produce. There was an objective in there about 90% of priority species are either stable or increasing. So, we use – that’s why we’ve been trying to work with existing frameworks, so using [Species] transects.

We’ve struggled a bit – one of the problems is that you end up with small sample sizes or, again stop me if this is going off on a tangent, but like the BBS, that’s randomly selected squares over the country and their sample sizes. In upland areas you’ll get curlew and lapwing, but you won’t get them in woodland and vice versa. So, over the area of Northern England or the UK, or a region, these sample sizes are big enough. So, the sort of weakness of it in the [NATIONAL PARK] is because I think – when we looked at it the first time [unclear 00:33:18] and we have had a boundary extension there was 63 randomly selected squares.

So, obviously some of the rarer or less widespread species, you know, basically the information we got from the [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] is the minimum numbers of squares they need a species to occur is 20, so they can generate a – so we have got trend data for things like curlew that were over 20, but again one of the problems is that – so, the last report we did, for example, there was curlew, it was indicative that they were stable, so we were saying that they’re stable, but then people, rightly so in some cases, well your sample sizes were very small so were they really stable.

And while it’s the best available data that we’ve got we accept that in an ideal world we’d have 80 squares that had curlew in, but in reality when we’ve got 100 and odd priority species you just cannot deliver survey work at that level, there just isn’t the resource. You might be able to do it for a nature reserve if you’ve got a big group of volunteers who are all close by, but trying to deliver it over a big area like a National Park – so, you know, it’s – in a way we will use it, but we’ll use it with the caveat that the sample sizes are small.

Again, one of the issues with all the survey work is how you get it so it’s actually, you know, statistically robust and all that side of it, so like I say if you aren’t careful you end up having to do so much, it’s just unfeasible to do. So, there’s a balance there to be found somewhere in sample sizes and what not. And again, we had looked at it, we don’t feel that using regional trends of [COUNTY] will reflect what’s going on in the [NATIONAL PARK].

So, across the county or the region, you know, there’s such big differences between upland areas like the [NATIONAL PARK] and lowland areas like along the [RIVER], the [AONB] that are lowland arable areas, they’re not even vaguely comparable at all. So, they will be thinking up like corn bunting, which we just don’t get. We’ve got good numbers of curlew, they might have two or three pairs, so it’s just – it’s a tricky one and we have to try and find – we want to try and monitor but like I say some of the – to do it – a survey that you were doing that would be at the sufficient size [unclear 00:36:13] a really strong statistical trend data on, it’s just huge.

**INT What do you think – I mean I guess you’ve done a lot of this already but is there anything that you think that could be done to encourage more people out into recording in the [NATIONAL PARK]? You know, this new, is it [AREA] initiative, like I guess part of that might be trying to get volunteers out, and have there been previous initiatives like that, that have been successful?**

P06 Yeah, over the years we’ve tried loads of different initiatives. The issue is that the people who are interested live a long way away, so I live just outside the south of the park so if I’m surveying in the north of the park it will take me, again depending on the road network, so it’s obviously not straight line distances, it can take me an hour and three quarters – maybe the far north of the park two and a bit hours to get there. So, some of the – BBS surveys, for example, and the black grouse surveys that require you to be there for the first hours of daylight is – the logistics of getting there are quite difficult.

Some of the sites like on the BBS that’s selected high up on the fells, so not only have you got an hour’s drive to site you’ve then got an hour and 20 minutes to walk up, before you actually get to the site that you survey. So, there is a lot of sort of logistical issues like that we’ve tried over the years to get a whole host of different species, different levels of surveying, and I think it’s always going to be a limitation that we’ve got, we’ve not got.

So, the big areas of population like [CITY] and [CITY], you’re looking at – if you set off early without rush hour traffic, a good half an hour or 45 minutes before you get to the National Park, and then if you’ve got another hour’s drive into the centre of the park, you know, you’re looking at considerable travel time to get from where people live to the areas where we’d like people to survey.

Many of them are keen to do it, but again, the [Species] transects, you factor in the weather side of it and it’s just – some of the bird surveys – if it’s a bit windy and it starts to drizzle a bit when you get there you can still do it, and it won’t hugely affect the results but things like butterflies, Northern Brown Argus is a species that will only fly when it’s sunny. So, if you leave home in bright sun and it’s cloudy in [unclear 00:39:02] it will impact on the count. So, we’ve got this issue of not a lot of people in the [NATIONAL PARK] all live a long way away, and when you factor in, like I say, some of the weather requirements for the methodology it becomes very difficult.

So, there’s a whole host of initiatives – like [AREA], or frameworks where we could get people to do it, but we have a very finite number of people, and the other issue is that it’s the same people, so we have quite a small group, they’re the ones that are likely to – do you want to bird surveys, yeah, great. Do you want to do a [Species] survey, yeah, great but I can’t because I’m doing the bird survey. So, it’s not that I’ve got a huge pool of people to select from.

**INT And there’s also risks that come from relying on small groups of people aren’t there, like if somebody moves away or fall into ill health, or just gets too old to be able to drive and then walk to a site that’s remote. And then are there younger people that are coming through to kind of fill those gaps?**

P06 It’s something we’re keen for a whole host of things to get. Unfortunately, the National Park has got a sort of – when they do the demographic of visitors they’re like White, retired, middle aged type, so we’re working very hard to try and broaden that demographic to other sorts of cultures, young people as well, so we are trying a load of different initiatives to try and bring a wide range of different people there.

But again, these people, whoever they are, whatever their age, whatever their race or religion, or whatever, they all live quite a long way away from the [NATIONAL PARK].

**INT What about visitors, has anything ever been tried with that in terms of – people kind of holidaying or taking weekend visits, like when I go over to the [NATIONAL PARK] occasionally to have a walk I guess that’s more the casual side of things.**

P06 We’ve done things like red squirrel sightings, so we tend to put press releases out every now and again, and we did an initiative quite a few years ago now for people to pick – report sightings of common blue butterflies, green hair streak, basically we only have holly blue and common blue in the [NATIONAL PARK]. So, if somebody reports a blue butterfly in their garden where there’s lots of trees then we know it’s not going to be a common, it’s a holly, and if they’re in the middle of a limestone grassland area it’s going to be a common blue.

So, they were distinct enough that we could be confident that the records we get were genuine. The problem is with some of the sightings is that the more rare or more difficult the species is to identify you’ve got an issue about verification. So, we know from past experience if we sort of say we want you to go out and record all the buzzards you see people will think people are looking for buzzards, there’s a big bird flying over there, I bet that’s one of those buzzards, so we’ll put it down.

So, there are issues about skewing the data and what not, and we’ve found from past experiences, with residents more than visitors, but if you put a press release about – let’s say we put a press release out today and say, “This weekend, when you’re out and about send us all your sightings of squirrels”. Monday morning, Tuesday, Wednesday we get a flurry of emails with records. Thursday it would die out. Next week we might get one or two. Three weeks down the line you get one.

We’ve found they soon – without having some constant reminder – we’ve tried things like leaflets in B&Bs and we have a visitor newspaper that people can pick up from National Park Centres that’s free, and we’ve tried in there, cut out boxes, we did it for the common blue and green hair streak surveys, if you’re visiting the [NATIONAL PARK] and you see either of these species let us know. I think, you know, in all honest you spend a disproportionate amount of time promoting for very few records.

**INT So, the data that you collect that’s more for your personal interest, that you kind of put on bird track and things like that, do you use that in any sort of personal capacity? You said you kind of look at trends over different years and things like that, do you kind of do some interrogation of that data yourself?**

P06 So, for the – one of the local birding areas I go to regularly, there is a project there, [conservation project] about breeding waders. So, I use all the records to produce an annual report, so I use my records and encourage – there’s two or three of us do it regularly, and then a few visitors, so we’ve got like a book in a hide where people can put sightings down, and we ask people to use bird track, so then I can lift them off to use. So, I will use them in that capacity.

Again, through my work for the – as county bird recorder I help write the county bird reports, so we use records that are collected through both local reports, published reports and records that come on to bird track as well. So, I will use those in a capacity. For my own individual personal use, it’s more about how many species you’ve seen in a year, and this that and the other, so it’s fairly general use but I do make, like I say, use of the records in doing the bird report.

And again, for the park I’ve got access for all the records in the National Park, so we’re encouraging – if people put records into bird track, especially in the fact that you can use the – some of the breeding categories, like a singing male, or a pair in suitable territory, we can lift records out of that, and that turns a sighting of what could be just one sighting of one bird that is fairly meaningless to if they say it was a singing male at least you can say, across the park, we had 17 different males, you can start to make more use of the data if it’s recording in a good way.

**INT And then that data ultimately gets passed on to [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION], are they the national –**

P06 So, that’s [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION]. So, again I think bird track is used by RSPB, so there’s a whole – if you get agreement from [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION], so a local recorder, so if you were a local recorder for your nature reserve you could agree with [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION], and you send them a boundary of your nature reserve, and then you’ve got access to extract all the records that fall within that reserve. So, you can say – I don’t know, group members or people visiting, if you put all your records in bird track you could then, at the end of the year, when you came to write the report, just extract all those, and they’re all in one place.

So, that’s one of the reasons why we’re trying to use these existing frameworks rather than getting 10 different people to send you records. One will be scribbled on a bit of paper. One will be neatly written on report cards. One will have invented their own spreadsheet. One will have used something else. So, it’s just the logistics of being a recorder that you end up spending hours re-doing spreadsheets or entering notes because – if in an ideal world, if everybody entered all their bird records into bird track (a) you’d have a consistent place to get them and you would know that they were all the records that were available, and they’re all in the right format that you can then use them and it makes any – analysis might be a bit of a strong term but, you know, writing bird reports and things like that, you can make better use of them.

**INT And then do you get any feedback from [WILDLIFE ORGANISATION] in terms of how they’re using that data at a national level, or the kind of things that they’re using that data for?**

P06 Yeah, they’re very good generically on social media and what not, putting out these are the report, it relates to a particular species, or things like that so you can see how your records are being used in sort of pulling that together.

**INT And then is that the same for the butterflies or would you say that there’s less kind of feedback from that?**

P06 There’s – so they – [Species] conservation produce an annual [Species] report of which there’s, what will it be, it will be on 10K square, sort of present or absent, so there are distribution maps that you can see. So, you can sort of, if you want to, roughly work out that’s 10K square where I am so that’s probably some of my records, if you wanted to do that. I think it varies between – and again, if people use a local report they can see in that how their records have been utilised.

So, some of it is direct from the groups themselves but others are sort of indirect in the form of a report written by another group or organisation.

**INT And then I guess just beyond just like the mapping of the records and those trends, do you get anything back in terms of how that data has been used? I mean you probably know this professionally, but do you have any idea how those data are used in terms of research or decision making, by conservation agencies, and that side of things?**

P06 Probably not specifically for bird track but, you know, when you do something like the breeding bird survey they do an annual report, and the population trends and indices, so you can see how your one visit has fed into that sort of process and feeds into the bigger picture, which I think is very – with volunteers they actually see some end product. Some initiatives including some of our own I think have not worked very well because they want to see something like that at the end of it.

If you just say, “Thank you very much, your data is really useful, it’s going into a trend report that you can’t see” there’s nothing that they can sort of relate to, then I think that is a – it is one of the limitations but again it depends on the time to actually write those sort of reports and produce the feedback, so there is a balance between spending too much time on producing reports that are not necessarily that – looking at trends, but feeding back and keeping your volunteers interested and what not. So, there is a balance there to be done.

**INT And is there anything that you think you wouldn’t want your data to be used for?**

P06 That’s – I think as an independent, this is what I’ve come across from various groups, is there is an issue about how they perceive their data is being used. So, I’m trying to think – if there was an application for somewhere and an individual felt that there was two pairs of curlew there, and they were vitally important to protect, and therefore there shouldn’t be any development they want to be able say that rather than a third party using that data and saying “There’s only two pairs of curlew, it’s not regionally significant, the national population is thousands of pairs, therefore the loss of these two pairs” and I think that’s a big – and I’ve been to quite a lot of meetings over the years about the data sent.

And all sorts of things like that, and data use, and it’s that – people are concerned about not having some sort of controlled record. One of them, you know, I know several people who are very reticent to submit their records of badger sets to anyone because they – and national recorder schemes, because they were concerned that at some point DEFRA might either purchase or force, or whatever, get an organisation to hand – if they did want to –

At the time when there was talk about rolling out the badger cull to a huge area away from the trial sites, people were saying “I don’t want my records potentially being used by somebody that might want to go out and kill badgers”. So, it might be a – you know that there’s some organisations that are never going to use your data in that way, but there’s all that – once you’ve handed data over to others then there is always that concern about – and again, it could be made public.

If an organisational group wants to keep, I don’t know, schedule 1 species quite, peregrine nest sites, that’s their prerogative and they’ve got control over that data but if you had it over to a – or if it’s handed over to a third party somebody else might be sitting there and thinking that’s not a sensitive site, and we can publish it, and things like that. So, that’s the – it’s certainly an issue about what the data used for a specific use but it’s just the fact that once it’s handed over then that individual or local group has lost any sort of control over it. I think that’s a big problem with – or a reluctance to use the data centres.

**INT Right, that’s interesting.**

P06 We’ve had a few issues as well and – again, stop me if this is going off on a tangent, but I remember one of the meetings about the data centre years ago when they were first setting up, and I think it was from [COUNTY], one of the local groups said, “We get three or four planning applications a year that ask for data for our particular area. We charge the consultant £50 a time, which is well below any commercial value of it, but that £200 pays for our village hall, the teas, coffee, and biscuits for our group every year.

So, that’s what keeps our group going. We have a raffle for a few quid and what not, but they were saying if we hand all our records into the data centre and the consultants start going to the data centre rather than us, we have to find £200 a year to keep our group going. And it’s little things like that, we’ve got no criticism with the data centres or – I don’t know what the answer is to those scenarios, and we’ve had it – some volunteers are not happy if they think that their data is being used sort of commercially.

We don’t use it commercially ourselves, or anything, but I know that some are – like the data centre, if they charge like a data handling fee or a data processing fee, then there are some volunteers who think that’s wrong. I collected the data in my own time at my own expense, and you are making money out of it. So, that is a – obviously, this is not a criticism of the data centres but that is some people’s perceptions.

So, we’ve had volunteers at work that have – occasionally well what’s it going for, is it – we don’t want to be gathering data that we think that paid staff or consultants, or what not, should be gathering. So, there is an issue there that I think is very complex and very difficult to get round really.

**INT Because then going back to your original point if that data is not then represented in decision making that’s a missed opportunity isn’t it, because, yeah, that species or whatever is not represented at that point on that map because that record has not been submitted.**

P06 There are – there will be people – some of them are very good, they will go to great lengths, but you do get it in consultant’s reports that we’ve checked this location for records, and we’ve checked that database and we’ve checked this. If you were reading it for the first time you’d think all right, fair play to them, they’ve made a good effort, but we know that there’s – there’s no point asking that group, they haven’t got any records. It’s almost like a – then the consultants in terms of planning, they can only go on the information that they can gather. So, if they can’t find any information on rare or threatened species there are developers who will make good use of that.

There are a number of legitimate ones as well, don’t get me wrong, but then you get the classic one that we had where the [Species] group complained that a woodland plant had gone on a Northern Brown Argus site, and we said, “Well, we didn’t know it was one” “Well, you should have done because we’ve known it for years and why didn’t you ask us?” so you fall into those type of scenarios that on the one hand if you want to protect something then you need to make sure that the people who are doing the relevant constraints or whatever know about it.

But then there is that fine line about handing your data over, and all those sorts of issues. So, they’ve rumbled on ever since I went to the first ever meeting 15 years ago, whenever it was, when the data centre first set up and they’ve been going on ever since.

**INT I was working at the Wildlife Trust down in [county] when the – I think the data centre there was very new, and I started, that was 2005/2006 and, yeah, very familiar conversation. And like you say it doesn’t change. In fact, it gets more complex I think because there are now so many other different ways in which people can submit data and the data flows are so complex and data ownership is really complex.**

P06 I think the negative side of it – these apps and everything work really but, you know, so for example, birds, there are a number of birders that use e-Bird, I don’t know why, I just go down the bird track level, but it means that there’s two data sets so again if you were an unscrupulous – you can go to one knowing that – well I‘ve got all my records off one of them knowing full well that – or having a sneaking suspicion that the records are on another.

And unless those two – and it’s coming up with things like iNaturalist and iRecord and there are – who does the verification. So, there’s a proposal for National Parks looking at iNaturalist and on that, I don’t use it, but looking into it, you know, somebody will post a picture of “What’s this?” and somebody will go on and say “It’s a so and so” but you’ve no idea whether that person is a national expert in [unclear 01:00:10] or whether it’s just somebody who’s just had a quick look on the internet and thinks it’s that species and put it on.

So, if we were going to use records like that to object to a planning application we need to make sure – we need to know that the records are legitimate. So, there’s a whole host of issues. The benefits of these apps and what not is that they’re easy to use but if records, and if there’s two different apps from two different organisations looking at the same species or area then that’s when it just becomes very disparate.

**INT Complex isn’t it.**

P06 Like I say, we’ve worked with the data centre for years and the principle that everyone submits their records to one place, so if you need to get anything you get it from that one place, is a brilliant idea but just trying to get it in practice. Another one that cropped up for us which we didn’t anticipate is you – nil returns are quite important. Not just a positive return. So, if you’re doing a constraints check the idea would be to know that somebody has visited that site, that area, and not recorded water voles, or whatever it is that you’re asking.

So, we don’t think there’s water voles in the park from various surveys and what not but there are these sort of scattered records that came up through NBN and the local record centres, so again some of them are unverified, and some of them have been historically verified but it’s not quite sure by who. So, again, probably water voles is a poor example on some of them but if you get this small scattering of – so if it was along a river and you’ve got one record, one record there, does that mean that there isn’t any on the stretch of river in between.

So, if there was some works to the river system you can say, “Right, crack on because there’s no”, you know, like crayfish for example, “You can crack on because there’s no crayfish there” or does it mean that somebody has surveyed and found crayfish here, surveyed them and found them there, but no-one has looked in the middle. So, in some ways you’re no further ahead than you would be if there was no record or anything else like that. So, they’re the sort of important ways of – we would use data in terms of constraints checking.

It’s difficult to if you were using it to pull together trends or distribution, or something like that. So, it’s some of those issues that become difficult for us in terms of – everyone wants the data to be used in the possible way that it can. It’s got limitations depending on how it’s collected but these are the sorts of things that do manifest themselves in planning constraints and woodland – again the amount of woodland that’s talked about being planted then if you just look at a – whoever, the record centre or NBN or bird track, or whatever, does it mean that just because there are no curlew on the map does that mean that there actually aren’t any curlew there.

**INT So how would you feel about your data being used as a model that – or to inform a model that would kind of highlight – instead of points on a map where species have been recorded, instead it was using the data that we have about where species have been recorded alongside other environmental information so you can kind of model the predicted distribution of a species, or even a group of species to highlight areas which might be of more value than others for biodiversity, would you kind of be happy for your data to be used in that way?**

P06 Yeah, I mean all our major data sets have to be made publicly available anyway under the – I can never remember what it’s called, there’s a piece of legislation that means that public bodies have to make their – is it the inspire regulations, is that what it is, I can’t remember what it’s called. So, I know all our habitat data, for example, is available readily for others to use. It’s a bit different, things like peregrine nest sites where you can actually put the bird or the species at risk by publishing it, so not all data has to be made available.

But we would look wherever possible, you know, we’re a public body so we would look wherever possible to make our records available. Personally, and professionally – again, once you hand somebody over a list of all the peregrine nest sites then you don’t know how it may be used. Again, even if it went to a data centre, what are their safeguards, what are their guidelines for allowing that – if somebody makes a request for that data.

It’s not a criticism but you just don’t know what another organisation’s way of handling that data is. Generally, we would, and this is why I was very, when I got the initial details I could check in on a regular basis. So, any model that can use up to – the up to date, the more recent the data the better it is for us in terms of – things like – we’ve tried not to be a data holding organisation because we want to use other resources that are out there but for one reason or another it’s not quite perhaps – there’s a lot of issues about data as we mentioned.

So, having one system that we could use where we could feed out data in and we would get back, as it were, far more data than we put in, if we’re looking [unclear 01:06:30] sort of thing, if there was a – we have to go to [Species] conservation and they have to provide us with an updated GIS layer and things like that. So, it is time consuming. Somebody at our end has to remember every year to speak to somebody at [Species] conservation and they have to have the time to re-do the layers, send it to you.

Again, it sounds fairly straight forward but if you factor in a whole range of different species and habitats it can just build up to a huge job, so for us I’m sure that, again this is what interested me so much about their initial correspondence, that if there was a system out there that was agreed that we could feed into, be it through the data centre or whatever, that there was readily available – going back to some of the earlier discussion, we have volunteers and staff time that we can put into a monitoring programme.

So, if there’s a framework there that’s got the methods, the resources for the analysis and we can feed into that then we would much rather use that than try and do anything independently on our own. So, again it’s a bit like I mentioned earlier, that if something like this came online we’ve have to look at it obviously and there would be issues to discuss. But if it met our needs, delivered something, like I say, we could use for constraints checking then we would look at it.

I mean we’ve tried to work over the years with the data centres as a single point of contact but again, through no fault of theirs, not everybody is submitting records to data centres, so this is where these things sort of break down slightly. Again, we’ve got the added issue of the national park covers [COUNTY], [COUNTY] and since the boundary review we’ve got 1% of the park in [COUNTY].

So, technically then that would mean there’s probably – there’s three different counties recording networks that we have to go through, so again with records, you had things in place. You’ve got three different county groups to go through, so again, one central point organisation or whatever would be, yeah, whether it’s achievable I’m not sure with all the logistics. The data centres have struggled over the years, but we would look at, within reason, working towards that and we could fit survey work if appropriate into that framework.

**INT So, what I’ll do, if that’s okay then, like we discussed, is I will pass your details on to [Name], and he will talk to you more about the data – like how you use data. I know we’ve covered quit a lot, so I apologise if that’s going to kind of repeat what we’ve talked about but then like I said before the next stages are kind of this co-design process with recorders and data end users to think about what the tool might look like, and testing it. So, if you’re happy to – for us to keep your contact details to re-contact you about that as well –**

P06 Yeah, fine.

**INT And it might be that you can kind of, I don’t know, perhaps use your volunteers or colleagues to engage in a bit of that testing as well if that’s appropriate.**

P06 I would be welcome to discussions. If it’s something that, again without sounding sort of parochial, but if it’s something that’s going to potentially be of benefit – it’s like these surveys, if there’s a national survey that we can feed into and get results back that helps us on our day to day work, either being monitoring trends or constraints checking, then that’s something we would look to try and work with others towards. The idea would be that, like I say, everybody submits records to one point and then they’re available.

So, that is something that we would potentially – obviously, we’d have to check – but we do have the potential to run trials here. We have volunteers. If it fits in with our core areas of work then there’s no reason why we couldn’t use our recording and volunteers, to try and test something. Generally, we probably wouldn’t want to do something specific that wasn’t related to the other work that we’re doing but again if the two were mutually exclusive then that’s something we could look at.

**INT I’ll – I might have to send you the link to sign up to the kind of mailing list but it’s just like a simple form for you to fill in your contact details. And then you’ll be on the kind of list about general updates about the project and then opportunities to get involved. And then, like I say, [Name] will get in touch with you about talking more about the data end user side of things, if that’s okay.**

P06 Yeah, I think we could – like I say we do use it regularly, so we’ve got a good handle on what works, what doesn’t, what’s missing. So, if we can – if it will help out in just providing that then – I mean it’s great – there’s nothing worse than something like this being – and we’ve had in the past with things where it’s – people sort of try and second guess, oh right, if someone is constraints checking what do I think they need to do, and it’s like they need to do that and that.

Unless you involve them there’s areas that – like I say nobody thinks about nil returns and negative, is it negative data, it’s all about positive records and presents, but knowing that an area has been surveyed and something has not been found can be just as important as knowing where something has been found. That’s one of the generic areas where, like I say, people who are not doing it or are not aware of the issues often – it’s like we use it for the raptors.

It’s very easy to say how many peregrine nest sites have you got, but it’s important to know how many peregrine nest sites, or traditional nest sites are there, that aren’t occupied because that shows you where the problem is. So, without that, those nil returns –

**INT And that’s something that I think the existing systems are just not set up to handle because you can’t submit a negative on iRecord, can you, and I think that’s where bird track has got the right idea probably, in that if they’re asking people to submit a list then they can infer from that that you didn’t see X, Y and Z. I think that’s what this project is moving towards trying to encourage people to do, so it would be kind of making recommendations of places could visit.**

**But asking them when they’re there to collect a full list of what they’ve seen so that we can infer from that absences. And then use that to inform the models that we’ll be producing. So, that’s the kind of way that it’s looking like it will be going, is encouraging people to go to a particular site and make a full list of what they’ve seen.**

P06 Are the models intended to be predictive models based on extrapolating over a bigger area or when I say just are they likely to be saying we’ve surveyed here, presence or absence, is more of a – like I say, that first model in –

**INT So, it’s using all different types of environmental data, so climatic data and land cover data, and land use data, and things like that to – alongside the species records to then predict the overall likelihood that the species occurs in a particular area. And one thing that we’re looking at is whether those models will be individual species models or whether they’re an aggregate which shows areas of relatively higher biodiversity, or potentially higher biodiversity value overall, rather than saying we think there’s a high chance that Northern Brown Argus is here, and a low chance that Northern Brown Argus is there.**

**But again, it’s all – this is why – like you were saying, you need to talk to people who are using the data because we don’t at the moment I guess have a good handle on which of those two would be most useful, but then obviously we’ve got our own constraints within the project as to what we can achieve.**

P06 So, we have had habitat suitability models done for curlew and lapwing. [City] University, a PhD student did them a number of years ago. We’ve got one for bats. And there are a whole host of issues that – that have cropped up on that, especially when you come to constraints checking, so the way it’s currently done is there’s either some sort of survey information to say that in that field there are two pairs of curlew.

You can then, and again there’s a problem here is to, if that was going to be planted with trees is it okay that – is the woodland more important than two pairs of curlew. Does three pairs mean you can, or you can’t plant. But one of the issues I’ve found, because I use the habitat suitability models a lot is equating the probability to actual density. So, what does it mean when you’ve got a 28% probability of a curlew being present in a field, you know, does that mean you can plant woodland. You can’t.

So, I think in my experience there’s a piece of work to do somewhere with strategists and what not, [environment organisation], [government department ], to work out how you actually make use of those – it works very well if you talk about low, medium, and high probability. So, if you’re looking at targeting curlew, the areas are high, right we’ll target our work there, but how do you define high. Is it 75% and above, is it 50% and above. That’s where – I mean in anything you’ll always have difficulties with thresholds.

But we are used to collectively talking about pairs, colonies, number of plants, things like that and like I say I do think there’s a piece of work to be done to work out how we interpret the suitability models. Again, things like Northern Brown Argus, the records we have for Northern Brown Argus, there were a number of sites that were known pre-2000 that we re-surveyed in 2000 by [Species] conservation, so we’ve got them as the baseline colonies. So, if we get a woodland, we know there’s a colony, we can adapt our advice to that.

It’s likely that or potentially Northern Brown Argus could occur in any area where the larval food rock rose is, which is a relatively common species in calcareous grassland but it needs to be a certain [unclear 01:18:54] height, and this that and the other, so that’s where I think we will have to be careful about how we use predictive mapping because if it said there’s a 75% probability of Northern Brown Argus being there, again woodland planting, does that mean we – do we need to do a survey first.

Or does [unclear 01:19:17] first, does that mean that the woodland can go ahead, it can’t go ahead. The higher the probability obviously the more likely the species is there and the more you confident you are that – but it’s like – what do you do with 50% probably of something being there. When the person – you have to make a decision on whether or not you say yes or not to that woodland. And it’s like that the owner or the – might well object or put an appeal in.

If you’ve got something like well it was surveyed and X pairs or whatever were found, then that’s a concrete thing that can be looked at whereas, like I say, where the work is needed is how you equate the probability side of it to – and getting organisations, even ourselves, [environment organisation], [government department ], to look at some sort of agreement about these thresholds for probability maps.

**INT So, I guess this project is perhaps the first step in that process because it’s – I mean it’s basically having that conservation that we’ve just had to say how could you potentially use those maps, and what support do you need in interpreting those models, and how would you interpret them and what other information would you need. What sort of decisions could you make with them, and when would you need to do an extra survey, that kind of thing.**

**So, it’s walking through that process with data end users like yourself to understand how that data is used in decision making, and – so I guess this part of the project anyway isn’t going to come up with any solutions or answers, but it’s a first step in that it’s trying to understand who’s using that sort of data, and how they’re using it, and the challenges that come from using that sort of data which will then hopefully be used to kind of think about well if we are going to encourage the use of these sort of models how do we support people in using those models.**

**So, yeah, I think you’re experiences will be really valuable in inputting into that, and alongside – you know we’re talking to wildlife trusts and other land owners and academics, and all sorts of different people in terms of how they use that sort of data as well, so we get kind of a – hopefully quite a broad cross section of the types of people that are using that sort of data, and the types of decision that they’re using it to make.**

P06 The more these habitat suitability models come, and the more of them for different species there’s going to have to be some – in an ideal world all the sort of conservation bodies that use it would look at it and come to some sort of – have guidance or – for example, there’s guidance now for breeding waders and woodland planting, so it’s looking at survey work and it doesn’t [unclear 01:22:47] but it’s basically looking at either regionally or locally significant numbers of breeding waders present in that area to try and help the step process of determining whether woodland should be planted.

There’s still issues – and you’ll always get down to should we stop at two pairs, three pairs, four pairs, where is that threshold but it’s a lot easier to do with pairs or a colony than probability and that’s where I think there needs to be some sort of guidance or at least steer on to – I mean it might even be if it’s – again, you end up plucking numbers at random. Anything over 75% probability then you assume that the species is there and therefore you tailor your advice accordingly. 55-74% it might not be there, so you have to have a survey done to determine whether or not it’s there, and assume that if it’s less than 50%, even if it’s there, it’s probably not a functioning population or a sustainable population.

Just something that sort of gets some sort of agreement on that because at the moment everybody – and I’ve done it, you end up making an independent gut decision on whether or not – if this process can help facilitate or even separate to or run in parallel to it that would be a bit step forward because it’s something that – I wouldn’t say we’re struggling with but it’s just what is the – and we’re looking at the park, we’re looking at developing like a woodland opportunities map.

To looking at – because woodland plant – it’s basically lowering of the constraints layers and developing a scoring system to try and identify and help land owners and look at where – there’s either – so things like blanket bog are just a no go. Blanket bog will be totally excluded. Things like, and this is where we’ve got to make sure we’ve got to get the scoring system right, good wader habitat, you can plant gills, or you can do very specific planting that won’t affect the waders, but it does need very tight controls and there’s only certain things you can do.

You can’t just stick a block of – fence an area off and plant it with mature trees, or trees that will grow tall because that will ruin the wader habitat. So, it’s trying to get various scoring – and there’s areas, if it’s steep sliding slopes there’s going to be no breeding waders there so you can sort of plant without any constraints. So, it’s looking at all the archaeological features, priority habitats, priority species to try and sort of score those. So, things like I think up to date data that could be factored into those in future that can help shift – update the models either automatically or at the end of every year will be beneficial.

Rather than, you know, the old fashioned one, the current way of doing it, you go out and do a survey and then through the paper side of it, and it takes ages to sort of filter in –

**INT Three years later you might see the data come back to you.**

P06 That’s right, yeah. By that time, these areas could have been planted or planning applications granted, things like that, so that’s where I think the up to date idea of – and how new records, especially records and new sites could be very important, so that would be a sort of key way to go on that really. But again, we are looking at how we try and factor habitats suitability models into this woodlands opportunity mapping. So, you know, again when would you say the probability is too high to allow planting or what thresholds would you put on for requiring a survey.

I’m not sure there’s a definitive answer but it would be good to get sort of collective agreement. So, [environment organisation], we were doing a wader survey, the work we’re doing is to get the areas that are good for waders in order to be eligible for agro environment scheme need to be on – are you familiar with the magic website that Leicester have got for the –

**INT Yeah.**

P06 So, basically there’s a – it’s a UP2 layer which is the, what do they call it, countryside stewardship priority breeding area for waders. So, to be eligible for the wader you need to be on that particular layer. So, what we’re doing is – some of our volunteers, we’re working with farmers who are about to come into agreement or agreement end, we’re surveying the areas that we think would be good for waders so we can then, based on the criteria that we’ve got from [environment organisation], so it’s so many pairs of different species whatever that makes it eligible for going on to this UP2 layer.

We have just got a habitat suitability model done for curlew for the whole of the National Park but there’s no way of equating the probability of curlew being there [unclear 01:28:26] being able to go into the agro environment scheme because it’s – the principles just aren’t there. It is still, and always has been, on the actual fact that somebody has gone out, surveyed, found X number, and therefore you have a threshold. If it’s above X number it goes on, if it’s below it doesn’t.

So, that’s where I think the work in terms of the suitability and the probability is can you have a – could you check a suitability map and say, “Right, if it’s over X percent it will go in, if it’s below it won’t”. And that’s where I think nationally there needs to be – for the suitability models to be as useful as they can be it’s that sort of information that needs to be some sort of collective agreement by stakeholders who are – especially like [environment organisation] and the [government department] who were administering the scheme.

So, if this process can either assist, help or like I say something can be recommended or work in parallel then that would be ideal.

**INT Yeah. Fab. Okay. Thank you so much for your time.**

P06 No, it’s all right.

**INT Really, really helpful and, yeah, I’ll get [Name] to get in touch with you about a follow up on the data end user side of things if that’s okay and I’ll send you an email at some point to get you on the mailing list as well so we can keep you up to date with what goes on in the next stages. Thank you so much, that was really, really helpful.**

P06 If you need anything else you’ve got my contact details so just don’t hesitate to get in touch.

**INT Great. Thank you so much.**

P06 Okay. Cheers then. Bye.

**INT Take care. Bye.**

P06 See you later.

**Audio ends: [01:30:18]**