



BRISC

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND
Scottish Charity No. SC0224418

BRISC Wildlife Counts Project Annual Report 2006



*Bird watching at Cambusbarron (6 May 2006)
© Claire McSorley, BRISC*

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The Wildlife Counts Project is supported by:



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List of acronyms

AES	Amateur Entomologists Society
BatML	Bats and the Millennium Link
BC	Butterfly Conservation
BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
BRISC	Biological Recording in Scotland
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
BSBI	Botanical Society of the British Isles
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust
WCP	Wildlife Counts Project

1 Introduction

1.1 *The key objectives of the BRISC Wildlife Counts Project*

The BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) Wildlife Counts Project is designed to address one of the key objectives of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

“Increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity, and engage many more people in conservation and enhancement”

The Project aims to do this through increasing people's understanding of local wildlife, specifically through engaging them in identifying various plants and animals and thereby building an understanding of the diversity of living things found around where they live. The target audience is beginners and non-naturalists with an interest in wildlife but without, or with only limited, recording experience.

Knowing which species and habitats occur locally, and how to identify them, is the foundation upon which a deeper knowledge of biodiversity can be built. The Wildlife Counts Project aims to introduce people to observing and studying wildlife with the aspiration that for some participants this introduction will develop into a lifelong interest.

1.2 *How the Project activities will be delivered*

The Project will engage with people through offering hands-on experience in observing birds, collecting and identifying terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, identifying flowering and lower plants, learning about and looking at tracks, trails and signs of mammals, amphibians and reptiles, and generally accessing and channelling others' skills and knowledge in wildlife identification.

As no single individual can possess the broad range of skills needed to provide a balanced introduction to biological recording, the Project will enter into contracts and agreements with specialists who can deliver specific parts of the programme. However the groups of species covered by the Project will be determined by the availability of available skills and the specific demands for information.

The role of the Project will be to co-ordinate the specialist inputs, manage the programme of activities and check that they adhere to high and consistent standards. The Project will also ensure that the principles of biological recording are adequately conveyed to participants and that suitable supporting materials and equipment are prepared and made available. The Project will also provide ongoing support and advice to participants and the wider community.

1.3 *Where the Project will take place*

The Project will be delivered in the three adjacent local authority areas of Falkirk, North Lanarkshire and Stirling where active support has been received. In each case the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) partnership, through the local authority Biodiversity Officers have been the key contacts and supporting bodies. Organisations in each of the three areas have contributed funds, and the Project may develop slightly different ways of working in each area as it responds to input from local partners.

However the concept, aims and proposed activities are the same for each area and the Project is designed so that it could be delivered in any area of Scotland.

Support was received from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF); Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH); BTCV Scotland; Stirling and North Lanarkshire Councils; and Falkirk Environment Link (Appendix 1).

A small Management Team, comprising representatives from BRISC, BTCV Scotland, representatives from the local authorities and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), will oversee the project. There are no separate formal partnerships governing the Project in the three council areas, although it will work closely alongside the Biodiversity Officers and engage with others who are working locally, such as Countryside Rangers and SNH staff. This will ensure that existing community contacts and knowledge are used to best effect, that the profile of the Project is maximised, and that its outcomes in terms of community engagement and data are widely understood and supported by local stakeholders.

The three areas, although adjacent to each other, are quite different in population size, area covered and local habitats. Table 1 shows the difference in population size and area covered between the three areas; Stirling is the largest but least populated, Falkirk is the smallest and North Lanarkshire is the most populated. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** show aerial photos of part of Stirling and North Lanarkshire displaying the differences in urban development and urban and rural greenspaces.

Table 1 The population size of the three council areas covered by the Wildlife Counts Project with values shown as a percentage of the total population size of Scotland, 5,062,011 people (taken from Scotland’s census 2001; www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files/key_stats_chareas.pdf)

	Population size	% population size of total Scottish population	Hectare
<i>Falkirk</i>	145,191	2.9	29,737
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	321,067	6.3	46,981
<i>Stirling</i>	86,212	1.7	218,735
Total	552,470	10.9	295,453

The Biodiversity Officers were consulted with to choose three towns in each of the three areas as places in which the councils would like wildlife work to be carried out, namely;

STIRLING	Thornhill, Cambusbarron and Fallin/Plean
FALKIRK	Stenhousemuir/Larbert, Falkirk/Polmont and Bo’ness
NORTH LANARKSHIRE	Cumbernauld, Airdrie and Motherwell/Wishaw/Newmains.



Figure 1 Aerial photo of Stirling taken from Google Earth www.earth.google.com

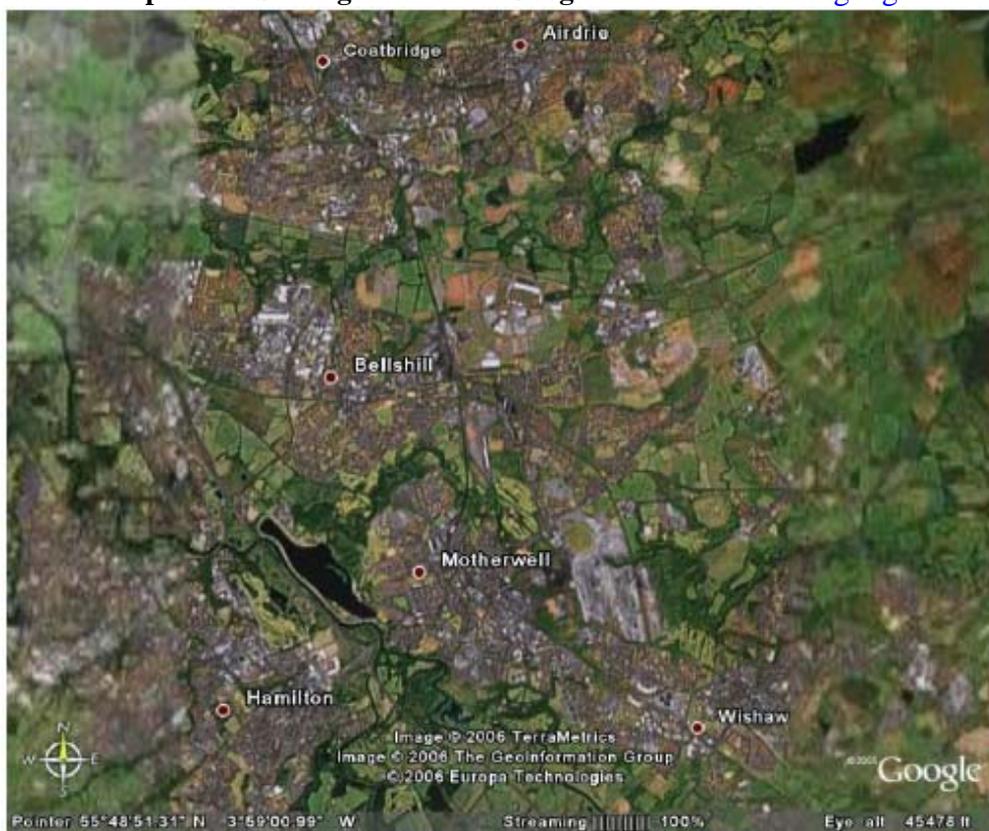


Figure 2 Aerial photo of North Lanarkshire taken from Google Earth www.earth.google.com

1.4 The demand for biological records

Learning about wildlife identification contributes to people's knowledge, understanding, skills and commitment to the natural heritage: it also generates information on species in the form of biological records. The Project will seek to address real requirements for these data and will promote biological recording and the use of biological records as a useful and relevant activity, as well as an enjoyable one.

The sharing of data, including information on what has been identified, where, when, and by whom, is an important part of the Wildlife Counts Project. In each of the council areas there is an identified need for more information on local biodiversity, although the exact requirements vary according to local circumstances. The Project will ensure that the data collected are widely disseminated, particularly within the local communities. However, in many cases the records collected will not necessarily meet the immediate requirements as identified by the LBAPs and others: the Project is not intended to act as a substitute for professional surveys.

The data collected will be used by local people such as the Biodiversity Officers, local societies and schemes etc. but BRISC will also be putting these data on the BRISC website (www.brisec.org.uk) and also onto the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) so that they may contribute to national and even international conservation.

1.5 Outline of the activity programme

The Project will deliver an integrated programme of workshops including indoor and outdoor learning in the spring and summer, with participants encouraged to attend the full programme of events.

Workshops will include introductory 'taster' sessions aimed at a wide audience. Further outdoor sessions will provide a more focused approach and will look in detail at particular groups of species.

The Project will help to establish three self-sustaining Local Wildlife Recording Forums as a means to continue to support biological recording and promote the sharing of skills and knowledge.

2 Key Objectives

2.1 *Developing a marketing strategy*

To develop a successful marketing strategy interested groups such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), Biodiversity Officers, Community Groups, Volunteers networks etc. were first identified to promote the project with. Links with these groups were made and liaison made with key partners including SNH, Biodiversity Officers, BTCV Scotland, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), SWT etc. on the most appropriate marketing strategy. The Project Officer composed a leaflet, to be widely disseminated across the three areas (Falkirk, Stirling and North Lanarkshire), and advertised the project in many local newsletters.

2.2 *Liaising with local partners*

The Biodiversity Officers were key contacts in the process of setting up the project; jointly we decided on the three communities within each of the three council areas, and the species/habitats we hoped to work on. After this was completed the Community Councils for the nine areas were contacted and the project presented in writing to them; this was also done verbally at meetings of six of these.

Liaising with the community councils and the Local Authorities ensured that the most appropriate sites within each community were chosen. Through conferences and meetings the Project Officer met up with representatives of to discuss sites and species surveys: SWT; SNH; Countryside Ranger Service; BTCV Volunteer network; individuals involved in recording; BRISC members; Butterfly Conservation; BTO; Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB); Amateur Entomologists Society; Plantlife; Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI); Bat Conservation Trust; Bats and the Millennium Link (BatML); Stirling University; SNH Best Practice workshops etc).

Discussion took place with the Management Team, key partners and Biodiversity Officers to identify the priority species to be targeted during recording and it was decided that starting off with the basic and most common species was probably the best route into recording as well as identifying species that may be easy to identify and give useful data initially (e.g. the Springwatch species, LBAP species, birds of conservation concern, invasive plant species etc).

2.3 *Obtaining and producing resources*

Training materials were obtained for the events by either using existing, new or borrowed resources. At all workshops packs were given out, including BRISC recording forms, logo-ed notebook and pen, grid reference reader, recorders guidance (a short guide to what is expected from a recorder written by Claire McSorley and Julie Stoneman, adapted from a larger BRISC document on the BRISC website), guidance on how to take a grid reference, Springwatch postcards, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 2004, a project programme and leaflet, a demonstration of the NBN, Health & Safety, and a recording equipment list.

Many resources were obtained, including Recorder6 and an Excel-based species recorder (Species Recorder), GIS software (ArcMap v9.1), and OS 1:25,000 map tiles for GIS (under licence from the three Local Authorities), RAM for the computer, OS

maps, grid reference readers, notebooks and pens, guide books and leaflets (including FSC guides), torches, bat detectors (including loaned ones), binoculars, GPS units, stationary, hand lenses, sampling trays, nets (butterfly and sweep), and bug boxes. Loaned material was obtained from the Jupiter Project (Grangemouth), Butterfly Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust and BTCV Scotland.

2.4 The Workshops

All trainers were contacted; all venues were booked; and the programme was fixed by mid-March 2006. A poster was created as well as an A5 single-fold leaflet (published professionally) containing the programme and registration form, which was distributed widely throughout the three areas and was also promoted widely in local newspapers, newsletters, libraries, volunteer centres, council events and buildings, community groups, SWT events, Universities and Colleges, SNH, contact lists held by various organisations, BTO, BC, BCT, websites e.g. BRISC, Spring into Action, Local Authority websites etc.

The programme included; three introductory workshops in April to enthuse participants and give them background information on recording, and twenty-one practical workshops running from May to October 2006 across the three areas. A further two workshops were added in August due to popular demand. One workshop in Airdrie (9 July) was cancelled due to lack of attendees.

The three introductory workshops were given by Claire McSorley and Julie Stoneman (WWF) on the definitions of recording, why we record species, LBAP species and identification tips, how to record species including practical exercises on taking a grid reference, what we will do with the data, and what to consider when going out to record their local wildlife. To date (Sept. 2006) twenty-one practical workshops have been completed including sessions on birds, mammals, insects, wild flowers, common plants survey and bats.

Attendance at the twenty-four workshops was mixed ranging from 3 to 26 attendees; Table 2 shows the mean attendee number for each type of workshop. Although the results are quite difficult to interpret due to large variations across the three areas, it appears that the wild flower workshops were consistently the most popular, except for one workshop in Airdrie that only attracted three participants. The mean number of attendees to all workshops held in North Lanarkshire was significantly lower than in Stirling ($t = 2.37$, $p_{2\text{-tailed}} = 0.03$).

Table 2 The mean number of attendees at each type of workshop across the three areas. The mean attendance at all workshops in each of the three areas is also shown. *1 cancelled; 1 in October, making the total for North Lanarkshire 9. ^a = in collaboration with SWT; ^b = in collaboration with Plantlife.

Species Group	Falkirk	North Lanarkshire	Stirling	Mean
<i>Bats</i>	11	7	17	
<i>Birds</i>	12	11	15	
<i>Butterflies</i>	11	9	13	
<i>Common Plant Survey</i> (i)			7 ^b	
(ii)			9 ^b	
<i>Insects & wildlife walk</i> (i)	9		15	
(ii)	8			
<i>Intro</i>	14	6	21	
<i>Small mammals</i>			8	
<i>Trees</i>		11		
<i>Wildflowers</i> (i)	16	3	26 ^a	
(ii)		17	26 ^a	
TOTAL ATTENDEES	81	64	157	100.7
TOTAL WORKSHOPS	7	7*	10	8
MEAN ATTENDANCE	11.6	9.1	15.7	12.6

The “Common Plants Survey” training day was carried out in Stirling only because it was a joint venture by BRISC and Plantlife (based in Stirling). There was a limit on the numbers for this event due to available space at the venue (Plean Country Park).

2.5 The Volunteers

Figure 3 shows a map of Falkirk, Stirling, North Lanarkshire and surrounding areas with the individuals (N = 223) interested in the project shown as red dots. **Figure 4** shows the same map with the individuals who attended one or more workshops (N=174) shows as blue dots. Although these maps show only the central region workshop participants came from Aberdeenshire to the Borders, with 64.9% of attendees coming from within one of the three areas (Table 3).

There were 49 people who expressed an interest in the project but who did not attend workshops. Some of these people had previously booked on workshops but did not turn up or cancelled, and others never booked on any workshops either because they were unavailable on the workshop date or contacted me too late but wanted to be kept on the database for future events.

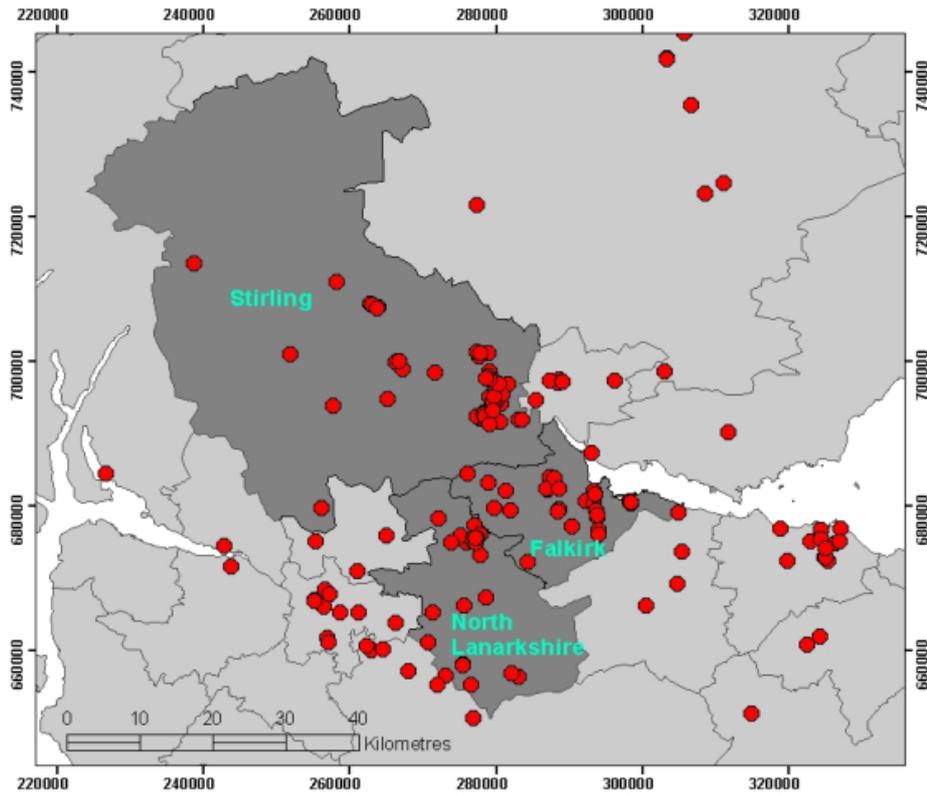


Figure 3 A map of Falkirk, Stirling, North Lanarkshire and surrounding areas with the people (N = 223) interested in the project shown as red dots.

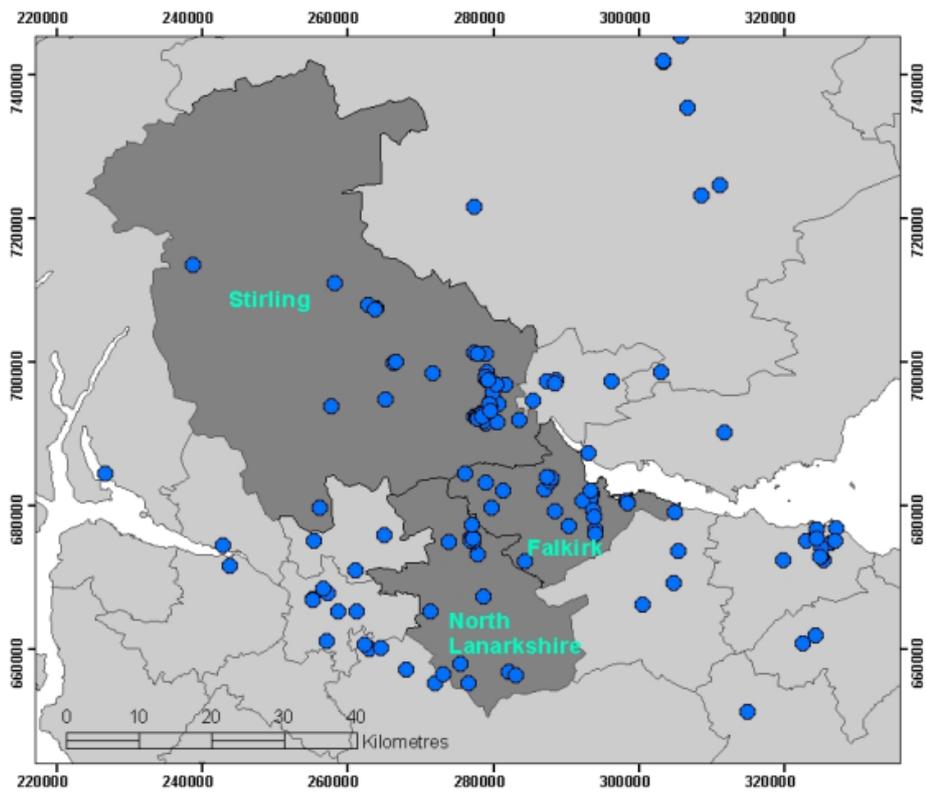


Figure 4 A map of Falkirk, Stirling, North Lanarkshire and surrounding areas with the people who attended workshops (N=174) shown as blue dots.

The number of individuals who attended one or more workshops from the three council areas was variable with Stirling having the highest number of individuals attending workshops and North Lanarkshire the lowest. Considering that North Lanarkshire has the largest population size and Stirling the smallest of the three areas, this result is surprising.

Table 3 The number of separate individuals who attended one or more workshops from one of the three local areas; these are expressed as percentages of the total number of attendees from Scotland (N=174)

	N attendees	% attendees
<i>Falkirk</i>	28	12.6%
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	22	16.1%
<i>Stirling</i>	63	36.2%
Total	113	64.9%

Of the one hundred and seventy four individuals who attended workshops, sixty-five people (37%) attended more than one workshop; one participant attended nine workshops (Figure 5)!

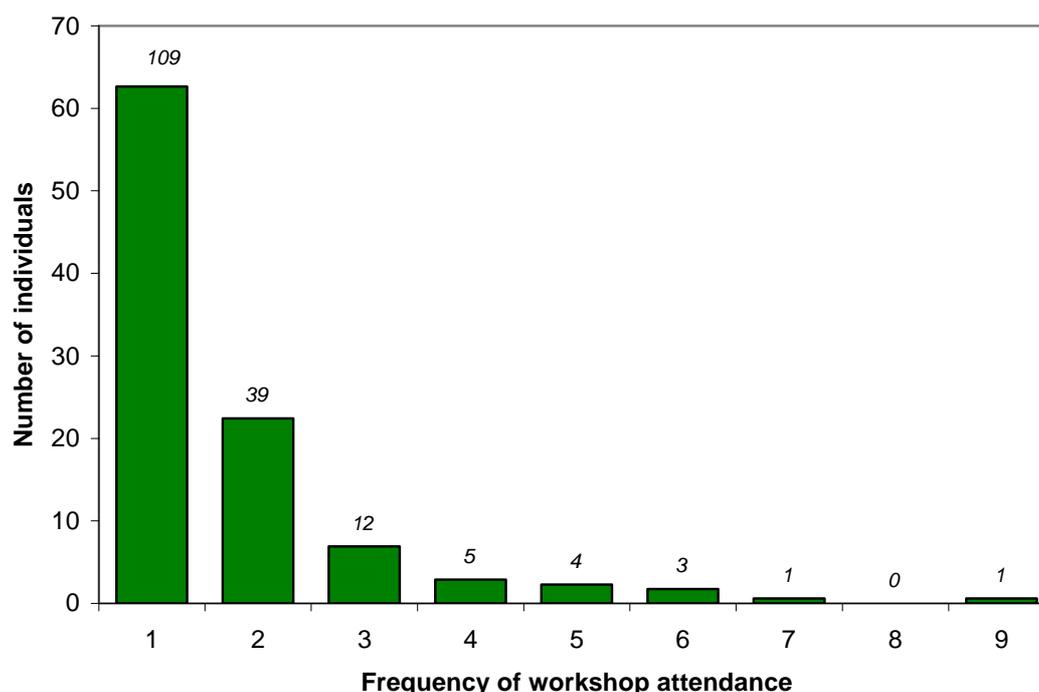


Figure 5 Frequency of workshop attendance (number of workshops attended by an individual) expressed as a percentage of the total number of workshop participants (N=174). Italicised values are the actual number of attendees for each frequency category.

2.6 The Feedback

The followings section contains data taken from the workshop feedback forms from April to the end of May. The feedback from the workshops was very positive. Approximately 80% of workshop attendees were new to recording (Figure 6), and as

Figure 7 shows, everyone has gone away from the workshops being enthused to continue recording.

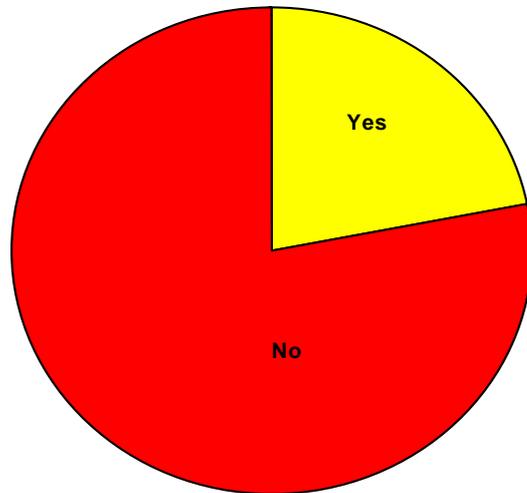


Figure 6 Feedback responses from participants on whether they had been involved in wildlife recording or not prior to the workshops.

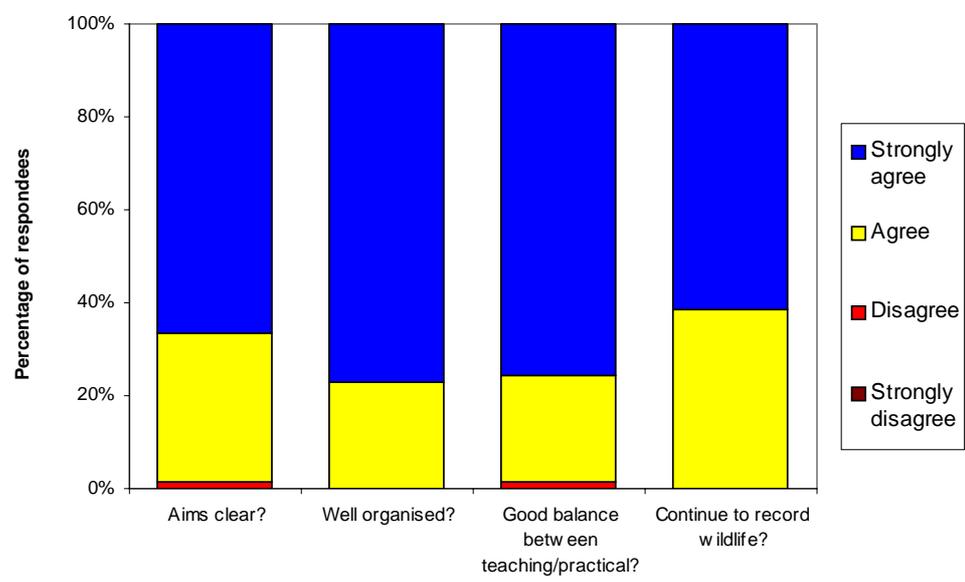


Figure 7 Feedback responses (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; and strongly agree) from workshop participants on a range of questions about the workshop.

Justification for the project have been aptly demonstrated below by the volunteers' questions (in bold) and organisers' comments:

“Should I record everything - I'll be there all day!!”

We have tried to encourage the project participants to start off simple; to record those species that they are interested in instead of trying to write down everything and getting frustrated. We have taught the participants the basics so that they can build on their knowledge and helped them to understand that we are all learning new things every day and they are not to be put off by trying to learn too much initially.

“What's the bird that says 'teacher teacher teacher'?”

We have helped participants to use all their senses when recording wildlife, and to ask questions. Our aim was to get people to realise that they knew more and noticed more than they gave themselves credit for. On these basic building blocks and with encouragement to look things up and ask questions we hoped that participants would increase their knowledge of wildlife.

“Sometimes I feel lonely and would like to know other people doing the same thing as me - who can I contact?”

Some people were very enthused to continue wildlife recording but felt lonely and needed to have some support from like-minded others. We have put participants in touch with each other, helped them to contact local and national interest groups e.g. Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife etc, and put them in touch with local specialists who run field trips e.g. several of the workshop participants attended a Badger course, run by Scottish Badgers and North Lanarkshire Council. This has enabled people who would like to do recording as a group to get together and learn from each other. This is the forerunner to forming forums across the three areas.

“We were taught this at college, never understood it and have had a mental block about it ever since!”

Some peoples' experiences of learning about wildlife and recording have been from school, college/university, television, books or they have never had any teaching. In particular there was a large body of participants who did not know about taking grid references – they may have never been taught it or had been taught it in a formal setting at college or school. We tried to give people a learning environment that covered many of the learning styles by a) giving theoretical background in the form of a presentation, b) practical sessions to practice their new found skills, c) hard copies of information for people to take home and read, and d) question and answer sessions to try and clear up any queries or problems. Several people gave feedback on the grid reference sessions saying it was the best part of the workshop, they actually enjoyed it and that they now felt confident to find a point on a map.



Figure 8 Workshop participants learning how to take a grid reference © Claire McSorley

“I thought that I would look stupid if I came along and said I didn’t know anything about recording”

Many people lack confidence in their own abilities and knowledge base; at the beginning of each course the trainer and Project Officer would ascertain the level of knowledge of participants to ensure that everyone felt confident enough to ask questions and take part. There was a certain amount of nervousness by some participants that others on the workshops would know more than them; although this was sometimes the case people were willing to help each other and give support to those who needed it. The pace of the workshops was generally just right, and no-ones expectations were disappointed (Figure 9).

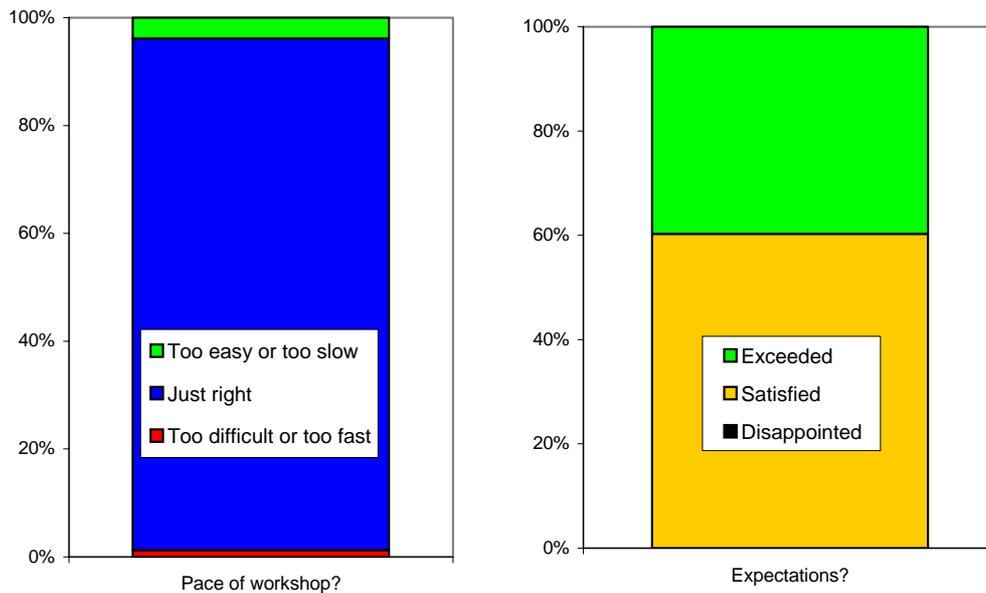


Figure 9 Feedback responses from workshop participants on the pace of the workshops and their expectations

People found out about the project through a wide variety of different sources. Nearly 20% was through word of mouth from friends and family members; a further 18% was picking up leaflets from local shops or venues (Figure 10).

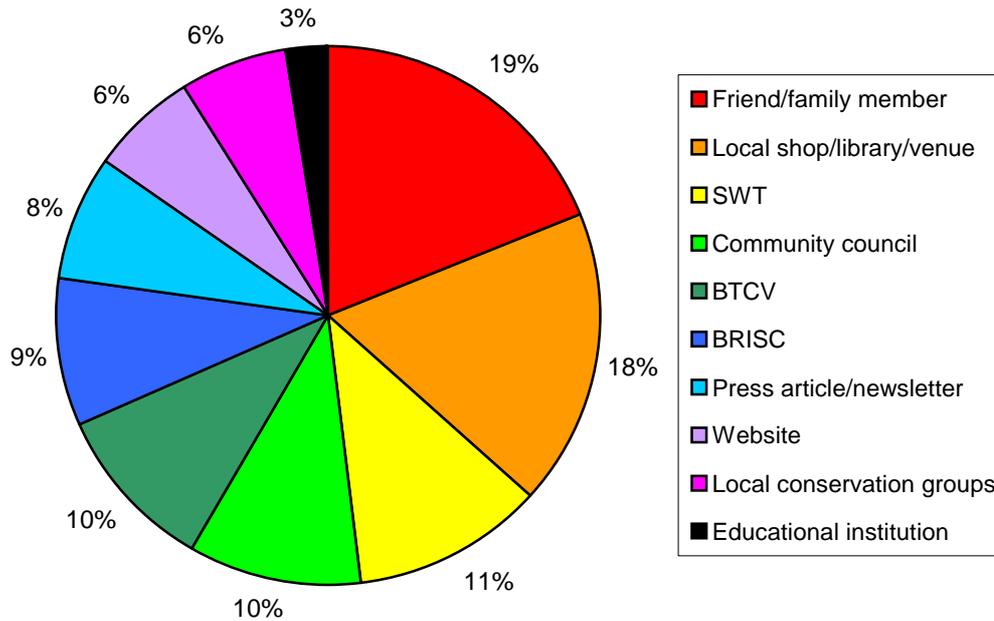


Figure 10 Pie chart showing how workshop participants found out about the Wildlife Counts Project.

There were another eight sources of information for the Wildlife Counts Project. Therefore, advertising the project in as wide a range of venues, websites, organisations etc. ensured that as large a range of people attended as possible. To get new people to become involved in wildlife recording it is important to take the project to places that people frequent regularly like local shops and venues, but also to talk to local people at community council meetings and attending local events.

2.7 The Data

There have been few data returns although after some encouragement by the end of August a few more started to come in and there are now 20 data sheets submitted to the project. These data will be entered into Recorder6. Volunteers have been slow at submitting their records, not because they have not collected any, but probably because they are still learning and feel a certain lack of confidence in submitting their records. The Project Officer has talked to several of them to try and boost their confidence and have since had some more recording sheet returns.



Figure 11 A hummingbird hawk moth at Bo'ness © David Broughton

Just ten recorders have sent in recording forms so far, with the recorders in Stirling being the most prolific (Table 4). There has also been an encouraging number of recording form returns from North Lanarkshire. The high number of recording forms from Stirling is mainly attributable to one person who has become a very active recorder. Sadly, only one recording form from Falkirk has been returned, however

there are some very active recorders from Falkirk, and it is only a matter of time and encouragement before they submit their records.

Although Table 4 shows quite a low number of recorders who have submitted their forms it is highly likely that once the summer is over many more forms will be sent in as people will have more time to write them up. Hopefully these totals will build exponentially!

Table 4 Table showing the number of recorders who have sent in recording forms, how many forms they sent in and the number of records they collected.

	N recorders	N recording forms	N records
<i>Falkirk</i>	1	1	16
<i>North Lanarkshire</i>	3	6	58
<i>Stirling</i>	4	10	135
<i>Other</i>	2	3	42
TOTAL	10	20	251

Some of the highlights of the workshops were; a white-tailed eagle over Larbert; a lizard on the carpet inside the venue at Thornhill; juvenile newts at Polmont; the rare golden tortrix moth (*Lathronympha strigana*) at Fallin bing; the greater butterfly orchid at Plean; nuthatches and kingfishers at Motherwell; two species of relatively scarce shieldbugs – the blue shieldbug (*Zicrona caerulea*) in Larbert and the heather shieldbug (*Rhacognathus punctatus*) in Thornhill; and a hummingbird hawk-moth in Bo'ness (Figure 11). This short list shows the great biodiversity in central Scotland and reinforces the need for more records to be collected and submitted.

2.8 Other events

The Project Officer attended the BRISC Annual conference on the 8 April and gave the AGM a progress report on the project. The Project Officer attended the NL Biodiversity Forum on the 2 May and discussed the project with communities from North Lanarkshire. The Project Officer attended the 'Breathing Spaces' event on 4 June 2006 in South Lanarkshire (organised by BTCV Scotland) as a volunteer leader and displayed the WCP poster board. She gave the first presentation and took the WCP poster board to the SNH's 'Sharing Good Practice' event about community involvement in biodiversity projects on 6 June 2006 in the Hidden Gardens, Glasgow. Feedback from this event was very good. The Project Officer attended the North Lanarkshire Tree Fest event on 4 July and became a member of the Stirling Environmental Group, which meets on the first Wednesday of every month and aims to bring together environmental organisations to share ideas and discuss collaborations. The Project Officer gave the first presentation at the Stirling Biodiversity Forum on the 23 August 2006.

3 Where to go from here

On the whole the project has been a success in its first year, with a good start in getting people involved in counting their local wildlife. People have been enthusiastic about the workshops and keen to get involved. Several people have been attending local field trips to collect data and also joined some of the supporting groups such as SWT, Plantlife Common Plants Survey, and Butterfly Conservation. There are key people in the three areas that have been particularly enthusiastic and attended several of the workshops. It is very important for the success of the project that we maintain a relationship with these and all the other people who have expressed an interest in the project.

In particular, more needs to be done to build on the success of the first year. The major issues to be dealt with are:

- a. to try to get more people involved in Falkirk and North Lanarkshire,
- b. to ensure that momentum is not lost over winter 06/07, and
- c. to encourage participants to submit their data from both the workshops and any other recording they have done.

3.1 *Getting more people involved in Falkirk and North Lanarkshire*

More marketing needs to be done in Falkirk and North Lanarkshire over winter 2006/07 to raise awareness of the project. Although there was a big marketing push over the whole of these two areas with targeted marketing in the towns selected, very few local people actually attended workshops compared to Stirling. Why this is the case is probably complex; however, socio-economic issues and travel problems may be contributing factors.

Travel to workshops is a problem particularly in North Lanarkshire. In Stirling many of the workshop participants had access to a car, but in Falkirk and North Lanarkshire many people were relying on public transport, which posed some difficulties. This issue is not linked with travel expenses, since these are offered to participants, but rather to do with availability of public transport links. Several volunteers have said that the bus links north and south between towns in North Lanarkshire are poor, e.g. three buses must be caught to get from Motherwell to Cumbernauld taking 2 hours. However, this does not explain why there were few people from some of the towns targeted particularly in North Lanarkshire e.g. Airdrie and Wishaw.

People from Falkirk and Stirling were willing and found it easy to travel from their own area to either Stirling or Falkirk. However, hardly any of these people would or could travel to North Lanarkshire. Equally people from North Lanarkshire, except Cumbernauld (the closest large town to Falkirk and Stirling), found it difficult to travel to Stirling and Falkirk and even within their own area.

Falkirk and North Lanarkshire are quite industrialised and have far more urban development than Stirling; it is possible that there simply is not a culture of people being interested in wildlife issues in these areas which has to be overcome. Stirling has a much more rural population; people may have been brought up with a cultural link to the outdoors and wildlife. Some people may not perceive their local greenspaces as being important for wildlife. If this is the case, it is important that more events are organised which perhaps are not completely wildlife-centric but

which may bring something else to people such as exercise (dog-walkers, cyclists, people with health issues), 'food for free', target allotment owners, outdoor arts and crafts, kids activities (Eco-schools, wildlife face-painting, pond-dipping, nature hunts etc). In this way a wider audience would be attracted along and then introduced to wildlife recording.

There have been a few children attending the courses – they have mentioned that they would like some more child friendly workshops perhaps including their schools. The community councils would be a good start in trying to do this since they usually have contacts with and experience in working with schools. The Project Officer has been in contact with Eco Schools and they are really keen to be involved in the project. For the 2007 programme of workshops some courses tailored for children should be incorporate.

Collaborative workshops (such as those with Plantlife, Butterfly Conservation and SWT) have been very successful in that they attract a wider audience. For the future it would be good to do more collaborative workshops.

3.2 Ensuring that momentum is not lost over the winter

The winter months are usually perceived as being poor for wildlife watching, but in central Scotland there are still plenty of wildlife recording opportunities to be had, e.g. wintering waders, divers, grebes, seaducks, and geese; identification of trees in the winter; lichens and fungi; tracks, trails and signs of mammals in snow, mud etc. (e.g. squirrel dreys are more easy to see in winter). There is also the possibility of doing workshops on how to store your wildlife data e.g. sessions on how to use databases such as Recorder6.

There are also plans to hold a recorders event over winter 06/07 where all the 'trainee' recorders can get together with specialist volunteers and trainers at a large event to exchange stories and queries. This event would launch the forums or recorders network enabling exchange of ideas, common practice, and lessons learnt. Presentations by active recorders would show people what they can do and what they can contribute to. Presentations by the Wildlife Counts Project Officer on the data already received and by the people who contributed the data would show participants what they have contributed to and how important their data are – presentations will also show how much fun has been had over the summer, learning about wildlife, thus hopefully enthuse people to carry on recording.

Making volunteers feel "valued, included and involved" (BTCV Mission Statement) is crucial in maintaining the project momentum. Although there are over 200 people interested in the project it is really important to keep in touch with them and send them updates and information particularly over the times when there are no workshops.

Feedback forms from July onwards incorporated a question "what other species of groups would you like to learn more about". These feedback forms should be used to steer the content of the future workshops within the context of maintaining the focus on LBAP and other priority species.

3.3 Encouraging participants to submit their data from both the workshops and any other recording they have done.

A letter was sent round in late July to over 200 people, who showed an interest in the project, to encourage them to submit any wildlife records they had collected. Since then several data sheets have been returned but there are still many, many more to come in. Several people said they were waiting until the end of the summer before they submitted their records so that they could submit them all at once. Others said that they felt they needed some more practice before they submitted records. It is imperative that all people on the database are contacted regularly to encourage them to submit their records; additionally it is equally important that any records are entered into Recorder6 and the results disseminated in the form of maps and reports on the “Wildlife on your doorstep” to those who collected and use the data.

The forum meeting to be held in November or December of 2006 would be an ideal place to ask for data sheets. Presentations on the importance of the data may spur recorders on to submit their records to the project.

3.4 Lessons learnt

The courses that went particularly well were the wild flower courses; there were many more people attending these workshops than other workshops and indeed extra workshops had to be laid on to accommodate those people who could not attend the first ones. There were seven wild flower workshops (including the Common Plants Survey workshops); four of these were done in collaboration with other organisations (SWT and Plantlife) therefore reaching a larger audience.

The half-day workshops seemed rushed and people said they would have preferred a full day; half-day workshops took almost as much preparation as a full day workshop. Future workshops should be for a whole day at least. However, for courses tailored for children, e.g. Eco Schools, it is best to be flexible and keep them to a maximum of half a day.

For some of the advanced workshops we need to consider two-day courses; several participants have said they would be keen to do two-day courses.

Some participants commented that it would attract them more to workshops if the programme leaflet had more information on it about individual workshops, e.g. itinerary and more information on location.

3.5 Summary

The first year of the Wildlife Counts project has gone very well with 223 interested people, 174 workshop participants, and very positive feedback from events. Everyone has expressed an interest in continuing with wildlife recording; considering that 80% of people were new to wildlife recording this is a great success.

Although record returns were initially disappointing, there are now 20 returned recording forms. It is imperative to maintain contact with all interested people to ensure more data continues to be returned and momentum is not lost over winter 06/07. It is important to try and engage more people from Falkirk and North Lanarkshire in the project; therefore, more marketing needs to be done these areas and

consideration given to organising slightly different workshops targeted at a wider audience.

3.6 Future of the Wildlife Counts Project

The Wildlife Counts Project is currently based in Falkirk, North Lanarkshire and Stirling; funding is for the 2005-2007 period only. BRISC are hoping to get funding for a continuation of the project in other areas. Possible local authority areas to approach are West Dumbartonshire, South Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire. Obviously funding needs to be sought to take the project to new areas, however, with the success of the first year of the current project it is hoped that funders would see the value of taking the project to new areas within Scotland.

4 Acknowledgements

The BRISC Wildlife Counts Project would like to thank Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF); Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH); BTCV Scotland; Stirling, Falkirk and North Lanarkshire Councils; and Falkirk Environment Link for their funding and support.

The workshops participants and specialist volunteers have been wonderful; their enthusiasm has been instrumental in maintaining the momentum of the project. The expertise and approachable personalities of the various trainers involved in the workshops have ensured that participants feel valued and involved.

Thanks to the following organisations for their advice, support and loans of equipment: Amateur Entomologists Society; Bat Conservation Trust; BatML; Botanical Society of the British Isles; British Dragonfly Society; British Trust for Ornithologists; Buglife; Butterfly Conservation; Central Scotland Forest Trust; Clackmannanshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian Councils; Community Councils for Thornhill, Cambusbarron, Fallin, Stenhousemuir, Polmont, Bo'ness, Cumbernauld, Airdrie, Motherwell and Wishaw; EcoSchools; Friends of Cumbernauld Glen; Friends of Kinneil Estate; Greenlink; Jupiter Urban Wildlife Garden; Larbert and Stenhousemuir Environmental Response group; Mammal Society; Plantlife; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Stirling Environment Group; Stirling University; Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre; Sustrans.



Figure 12 Photos of workshop participants in Bo'ness (left) and Airdrie (right)
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Appendix 1 – Funding and expenditure

The total funding to BRISC for 2-year Wildlife Counts Project is shown in Figure 13.

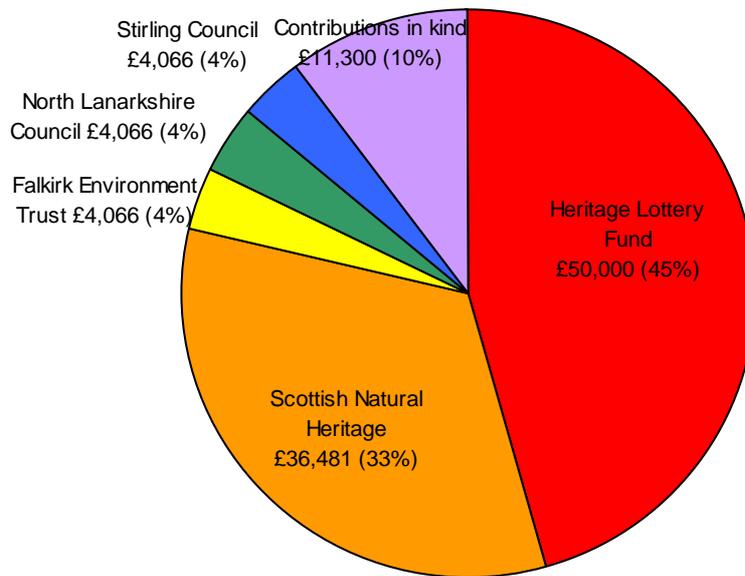


Figure 13 Pie chart of funds contributed to the Wildlife Counts Project (2005-2007), making a total of £109,979

The expenditure to date (end of July 2006) is shown in Figure 14.

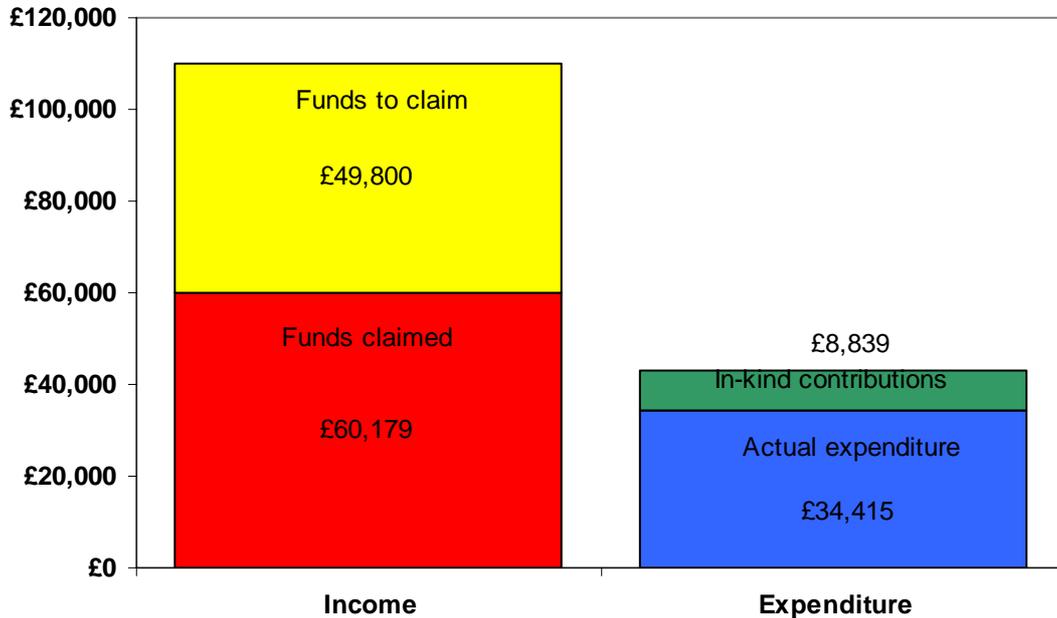


Figure 14 Chart showing the project income (amount of money claimed and to be claimed), and the project expenditure (amount of money spent and in-kind contributions).

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