



Cambridge Conservation Forum Chair's Report June 2013

Summary

It's been an amazingly successful year for the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF). I am proud, as outgoing Chair after 4 years, to hand over to the incoming committee an organisation in good health with many important and well received developments completed and a path to an even more vigorous future clearly set out.

This year has seen the publication of the CCF Development Study report analysing what people valued in CCF, areas for improvement and levels of interest in becoming more involved in the community. This was followed by a consultation with CCF members and representatives exploring a number of scenarios for the future of CCF which led to the creation of the CCF Strategy 2013- 2018.

We've had changes in the committee and expanded the number of Committee roles to include a membership secretary with a remit to ensure all organisations are fully connected with CCF and an ever burgeoning array of social activities and policy debriefs.

I'd like to thank those who have stood down from their committee roles over the past year- Rebecca Lodge, Newsletter Editor; Holly Barclay, Social Secretary; Rob Pople, Web Manager and Rachel Austin, Secretary and also Toby Gardner who is standing down as Treasurer after 4 years. I'd like to extend a special thank you to Peter Herkenrath, for his energy in organising Policy debriefs, to Jason Cleeton for leading the CCF/CCI Carbon Task Force, to Ariadna Alvarez Perez for delivering the CCF Development Study and to Anthony Albertyn who has delivered the significant and well received development of the CCF website and newsletter. Finally I'd like to thank Mike Rands and CCI for continued support of CCF in hosting CCF Symposia and meetings and the CCF Co-ordinator Lisa Harris for her enthusiasm and expertise as she ends her year working for CCF this month. We are grateful to the seven CCI/CCF members whose donations of £500 each partly funded Lisa's time with us.

1 CCF Events

Since the last AGM on 14th May 2012, in addition to the monthly pub nights where attendance has regularly been in the 30s, we've had five social events and two symposia. A timeline in posters, all designed by Emily Chenery, is at the top of this report.

a) CCF Symposia

The Summer Symposium in June 2012 had the theme '**Novel technologies in nature conservation**' and was attended by 90 people. The interactive session was focussed on a horizon scan answering the question 'What new technologies would most benefit conservation?' that was published with Bill Sutherland as lead author. The technologies participants thought would make the most difference to conservation were technologies for "decarbonising" conservation (e.g. good videoconferencing). The **14th Annual Symposium** in January 2013 was

attended by over 100 people and was the usual stimulating mixture of members sharing their latest work and an interactive session which produced a list of exciting new ideas for developing CCF, some of which are already being taken forward such as a CCF student group. We collected information on how people travelled to the Annual Symposium and offset travel carbon by paying £25 to the Wildlife Trust's Great Fen Project. A Summer Symposium on **Conservation and Sustainability – 'Do we practice what we preach?'** is planned for **26th June 2013** and the **15th Annual Symposium** is scheduled for **9th January 2014**.

b) CCF Policy debriefs

There have been three Policy debriefs following major international conferences: Rio+20 in July, CBD COP11 in November, UNFCCC COP in January. All have been ably organised by Peter Herkenrath supported by speakers from BirdLife, RSPB, UNEP-WCMC and IUCN and have had around 50 attendees at each. We are looking for a volunteer to organise future debriefs.

c) CCF Social Events

The organisation of CCF social events has had two leaders over the past year with Holly Barclay organising the **Summer Social at Shepreth Wildlife Park** in May 2012 where 37 people had a highly enjoyable evening tour of the park and followed by a meal and an opportunity to meet the wildlife rangers. In November 2012, 44 people took part in the third **CCF working party at Hayley Wood** hosted by the Wildlife Trusts and organised by Louise Bacon. A fourth working party is planned for November 2013. Lucy Goodman took over as Social Secretary in time for the **Christmas Party** in December 2012 for which tickets sold out and organised an excellent quiz and meal enjoyed by 60 people. This year's Christmas Party is scheduled for 2 December. The Christmas Party was followed by the **Celeidh** in March 2013 which was the second sold out event in a row with 60 participants and novel discount ticketing to encourage the habitually late booking CCF community to get their tickets in good time. In early May 2013, 35 of us returned for a **guided tour of Hayley Wood** with renowned naturalist Oliver Rackham to see the how our winter coppicing had prepared the ideal habitat for a carpet of flowering oxlips, wood anemones and bluebells. This year's **Summer Social** starts with guided cycling or walking tours of Wicken Fen and the Wicken Vision followed by a **BBQ on 21st June** and we already have 30 people signed up to come.

2 CCF Major Developments

CCF Development Study (Published January 2013)

In January 2013, Ariadna Alvarez Perez completed her work as a CCF Intern delivering the CCF Development Study. This collated responses to a survey of all members which had over 200 responses and interviews with CCF's founders and current active membership. The report is available to download from the CCF website. The study showed what people valued about CCF and has informed priority activities for the past year in CCF including commissioning and implementation of the new website and newsletter, reinvigoration of the CCF representatives' network, changes to membership qualification which are detailed later in this section and employment of administrative support.

CCF Strategy 2013 -2018 (Published in June 2013)

Building on the development report and the CCF representatives' consultations, a small strategy group led by the CCF Chair created a strategy consultation paper with different scenarios for how CCF might develop in the future. Scenarios ranged from cutting back on activities due to lack of volunteer support to a step change in CCF activities with the employment of a senior conservation professional as Director. A Scenarios Consultation with CCF members took place at Council, an Extraordinary General Meeting and the Annual Symposium. It was agreed that the strategy should address the short/medium term issues identified in the Development Study as well as setting out the longer term ambition. The chosen scenario for immediate implementation was a modest increase in CCF activity with movement towards more ambitious objectives over the next five years.

The four short to medium term challenges and actions to address them were:

- Availability of human resources to maintain and enhance CCF governance, services, activities and events
 - Actions include expansion of the CCF committee and employment of Lisa Harris as CCF co-ordinator for 1 day a week from June 2012 to June 2013. Funding is to be sought for continuance of this role and is expected to be one of the key targets to be defined in the fundraising strategy
- Availability of financial resources to support achievement of CCF's mission/objectives
 - A plan to create a fundraising strategy, including a paid consultancy to fundraising expert Pete Johnstone, and apply for funding is being put to June 2013 Council for approval.
- Information flow among the CCF membership
 - New website and newsletter implemented, re-engagement with reps and addition of second rep for each organisation
- Limitations on access to CCF membership to the non-profit sector
 - New membership criteria agreed at January 2013 Council and applications received from 3 eligible 'for profit' organisations to be considered at June 2013 Council

In the strategy we also set out our ambition over the next 5 years to:

- Continue to hold the existing events at a minimum
- Increase diversity of participation from among the membership
- Create a feeling ownership of CCF so that each member maximizes the benefits they receive and is able to easily contribute with their own ideas and skills
- Increase the number and quality of collaborations among members
- Increase the access to information relevant to people's jobs and lives as members of the wider Cambridge community
- Establish a model that other conservation clusters could replicate

CCF Social Media Strategy

A draft social media strategy has been prepared by the CCF Web Manager Consuelo Sartori. It has been shared informally with some CCF members and was well received. It will be incorporated into a planned CCF Communication Strategy in the future.

Website and Newsletter development (Completed May 2013)

The excellent new website development was ably led by Toby Gardener, Holly Barclay and Rob Pople who created the initial specification and worked with Anthony Albertyn the web developer employed by CCF. The later stages of the development and the implementation owe a huge debt to the input from Consuelo Sartori, CCF's new Web Manager. The website went live in April 2013 and the new newsletter was launched in May. We have around 1200 subscribers and this is increasing daily, the split is roughly 850 for the monthly newsletter and 350 for the weekly newsletter. Only a month on from the launch of the website 9 people have posted news, jobs and events and many more have signed up to be able to do so.

Initial feedback from reps is that **'the newsletter is great'** and **'Already posted my very first news item. Very simple to use :)'**. We are well on the way to achieving the objective of improving and democratising the information flow in CCF.

CCF Representatives re-engagement

This has been another significant area of work this year and has been carried out in two phased. In the first phase, Sarah Lockhart, who volunteered for CCF in August 2012 and carried out a series of interviews with representatives. This supplied good evidence for inclusion in the CCF strategy and also showed the need for a

systematic engagement with CCF reps. In the second phase, Samir Whittaker, CCF's first Membership Secretary, assisted by the CCF Chair and Treasurer contacted all organisations inviting them to a **Representatives Event on 15 May**. This was attended by over 20 reps who received training on how to upload their organisations events and news directly on to the CCF website and newsletter. Reps also took part in a discussion about the changing role of the CCF reps moving away from being a post box for CCF information and towards being advocates and enthusiasts bringing their organisations opportunities to CCF by uploading jobs, events and information onto the CCF website and encouraging participation in CCF activities. We asked each organisation to nominate a second rep to improve communication and to date we have 44 confirmed first representatives, and 31 organisations with a second rep missing, 2 organisations with no representative and 6 organisations where representation hasn't been confirmed. Of these, just one month since launching the new website, we already have 11 new people who have contributed their news, jobs and events directly onto the website. In addition to 10 Representatives and one additional individual signed up as contributors.

CCF/CCI Carbon Task Force (Report published June 2013)

A report summarising successful carbon reduction strategies entitled **'Reducing the carbon footprint of conservation organisations: a review of experience and best practice in the Cambridge conservation community'** has been created by the joint CCF/CCI Carbon Task Force led by Jason Cleeton. It evaluates different activities to reduce carbon using a matrix of impact vs. cost and impact vs. effort and includes case studies on carbon reduction from member organisations and CCF itself. It has been published on both the CCF and CCI websites and will be launched at the 2013 CCF Summer Symposium on **'Conservation and Sustainability – 'Do we practice what we preach?'**

CCF and CCI agree that the conservation community should lead by example, and make a genuine effort to reduce our own ecological footprint and this report is packed with ideas and case studies.

CCF Fundraising strategy

In the CCF strategy, we identified the need to increase potential for accessing funds from UK trusts, foundations and government agencies by registering CCF has a Charitable Incorporated Organization. We acknowledged that creating a business plan and associated fundraising strategy were essential actions to enable CCF to take advantage of new opportunities emerging and to overcome existing obstacles. Funding will be initially sought for the employment of a part-time administrator to improve the information flow and a part-time coordinator to help increase the opportunities for individuals across CCF's member organisations to learn from each other and facilitate access to expertise. To facilitate this, the CCF Committee will recommend to the June CCF Council meeting that we employ Pete Johnstone of PJ Elements to create a fundraising strategy and provide advice on identifying funders and submitting bids for short-term funding.

Progress towards becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

The legislation necessary for CCF to apply to become a CIO was significantly delayed in its passage through parliament. However, the bill has now been passed and CCF Deputy Chair Roger Mitchell has worked hard to lead on CCF's application and has working to prepare CCF's constitution and administration to enable the application to be submitted this summer. This will allow CCF to apply to a broader range of funding bodies to achieve the objectives set out in the CCF strategy.

Changes to membership criteria and the replacement of friends with individual membership

The membership criteria were reviewed in 2012 in response to challenges from consultancies whose major focus was biodiversity consultation but who felt the constitutional 'not for profit' requirement for membership was inequitable. At the CCF Council meeting on 24th January 2013 the proposals for membership categories and criteria set out in the CCF Strategy were approved and the CCF constitution was amended. There are now two categories of membership:

a) Organisational member

This category is for organisations which meet the former criteria for membership **with the addition of ‘for profit’ organisations whose main objective is the promotion of biodiversity conservation. All organisations are expected to make a commitment to becoming actively involved in CCF activities.** In addition a new expectation was set out in the constitution under membership contributions that all organisational members with over 5 paid members of staff or consultants would be expected to contribute to the organisation of at least one CCF activity per year or to have one of their staff members elected to the CCF committee with attendance at 4 Council meetings a year. Examples of this could also be being on the symposium organising committee, helping to run or host a social event, or giving a talk at a symposium. These changes are proposed to maintain and enhance the energy and diversity of the organisation of CCF.

b) Individual member (formerly ‘friend’)

This category is for people interested in joining in CCF activities and receiving updates but who are not associated with any member organisation. Individual members would not have voting rights at council meetings. This is to keep the accountability for decisions with the organisational members who represent numerous individuals and meet the geographical and biodiversity conservation criteria for organisational membership. Individual membership is recognised simply following online registration for the CCF newsletter.

Previous applicants and newly eligible for profit organisations have been contacted and we have applications from The Biodiversity Consultancy, Arc – Ecological Services Ltd and PJ elements have applied. Cambridge Conservation Volunteers have also applied which would take membership to 56 organisations if approved by June Council.

3 Cambridge Conservation Initiative engagement and the Collaborative Fund for Conservation Success

CCF, represented by the CCF Chair, takes a full part in the **CCI Steering Committee**, the decision making body for CCI as well as actively participating in and supporting CCI events and working groups. CCF provides 4 lecturers for the **Masters in Conservation Leadership** course. Two CCF sponsored projects have been approved for support by the CCI Collaborative fund. One involves all CCI partners including CCF itself – the **Supporting IPBES Collaborative Project** which looked at ways to reach out and support IPBES as it developed, produced materials about CCI for the first IPBES meeting and hosted a reception for the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in March 2013. The other project **Attaining Aichi Target 11: How well are marine ecosystem services secured by protected areas?** with The Nature Conservancy as the CCF collaborator was approved at the June 2013 panel meeting.

Pamela Abbott
Chair
Cambridge Conservation Forum
13 June 2013

Addendum:

A testament to the success of the re-engagement with the diverse and dynamic CCF network is that the CCF AGM and Council meeting on 13 June 2013 was attended by 25 people representing 22 member organisations as well as the Cambridge Conservation Initiative to whom we are grateful for hosting the meeting. Apologies were received from 15 people representing an additional 6 organisations and 5 organisations voted in absentia. This represents a record 28 organisations and is a very solid base to build the further engagement with all of CCF’s 56 member organisations.

