

**DEVELOPMENT PLANS
HRA DATABANK
GUIDANCE NOTES FOR USERS**



Section

1. Why do we need a HRA Databank?
2. Who can have access to the HRA Databank?
3. Why is the HRA Databank on the Knowledge Hub?
4. What information can be saved onto the HRA Databank?
5. How do I save records onto the HRA Databank?
6. How do you search the HRA Databank?
7. Who do you contact if you want access?

1. WHY DO WE NEED A HRA DATABANK?

INTRODUCTION

Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) refers to the whole process, including the appropriate assessment step.

- 1.1. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 requires a competent authority to carry out an appropriate assessment where a plan or project is likely to significantly affect a Natura (European) site. This can be individually or in-combination with other plans or projects.
- 1.2. Practical guidance on how to undertake an HRA is available and is contained in '**Guidance for plan-making bodies in Scotland**' published by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2012. The SNH guidance aims to help plan-making bodies within Scotland and applies widely across a range of sectors and their associated plans.
- 1.3. In terms of HRA it can be difficult for practitioners to locate and share relevant HRA Records, as historically there has been no central depository for them, either at plan or project level. This has often meant it has been a time consuming exercise for Competent Authorities to undertake in-combination assessments, as it has meant searching for relevant reports on various websites, which may or may not be there.
- 1.4. The creation of a HRA Databank for Development Plans can provide an opportunity for practitioners to share their HRA Records and remove some of the difficulty associated with finding other relevant records. The Knowledge Hub has been selected as an appropriate host site for the HRA Databank. **To be successful and supportive the HRA Databank is completely reliant on members proactively loading their own HRA documents onto the site.** However, the benefits of the HRA Databank can only be gained if it actually makes it easier for practitioners to find relevant HRA Records, hence our naming convention (see Section 5).

2. WHO CAN HAVE ACCESS TO THE HRA DATABANK?

- 2.1. Officials from Scottish Competent Authorities, who are involved in undertaking HRA, can register on the Knowledge Hub. Once registered, access to the HRA Databank – for Scottish Development plans site can be applied for.
- 2.2. The HRA databank can be accessed via the following link:
<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/>
- 2.3. Registration on the Knowledge Hub is straightforward, with the user required to enter their first and last name, a valid email address and to create a meaningful security password.

3. WHY IS THE HRA DATABANK ON THE KNOWLEDGE HUB?

- 3.1. The Knowledge Hub is a professional network for the public sector, which can help those in local government to connect and share important information online and in a secure environment. It is already established in many Local Authorities and offers a cost effective means to support HRA practitioners, who want to share and locate HRA information with similar authorities, within a secure and accessible forum.
- 3.2. Once registered on the HRA Databank - for Scottish Development plans group - practitioners should be able to upload and download reports from the HRA Databank library and search for HRA material. As a new group it may take time to bed in and build up a wealth of HRA Records and data within the HRA Databank library. However, as members sign up and the number of users grow and become accustomed to the HRA Databank, it should hopefully become an invaluable resource.

4. WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE SAVED ONTO THE HRA DATABANK?

4.1. The vast majority of information that is likely to be stored in the HRA Databank library should relate to the HRA Records for Scottish Strategic and Local Development Plans, including Supplementary Guidance. However, other wider HRA Records relating to assessments, for example Local Transport Strategies or Core Paths Plans may also be useful for some in-combination screenings or assessments and authorities may wish to upload these to the databank.

5. HOW DO I SAVE RECORDS ONTO THE HRA DATABANK?

5.1. Saving HRA Records to the HRA Databank library is a relatively straight forward process. However, what is important is having a naming convention for electronic record storage that all members strictly adhere to. This can aid the search facility and ensure that relevant HRA-related information can be readily found.

5.2. The information to be outlined in the name for the each HRA Record is as follows:

- Name of Competent Authority,
- Area covered by plan,
- Type of plan (Local Development Plan / Strategic Development Plan / Supplementary Guidance/ Local Transport Strategy),
- Stage of plan (Main Issues Report/Proposed plan/Consultation draft/Adopted),
- Stage of HRA Record (Draft / submitted to Scottish Ministers / Finalised),
- Date of HRA Record.

e.g. Falkirk Council - Falkirk – Local Development Plan - Proposed plan stage – Draft – 11 December 2013

5.3. One of the most important elements of storing Records on the Knowledge Hub is the ‘tagging’ feature. Tags are labels entered by the author when uploading their Record and provide other users with a shortcut to identifying Records that contain information about sites they have an interest in. **Tags should reflect designations, which relate to those areas in the plan that have either been identified as having minor residual effects (MRE) during screening or that have undergone Appropriate Assessment.** Tags should include the full name of the European site, e.g. Clyde Valley Woods SAC. This can enable others searching the HRA Databank to find any relevant HRA Records that have considered the same site.

5.4. Poor spelling or inconsistent naming of sites can affect the search facility. Users therefore have to be careful when tagging records. In terms of Gaelic place names we recommend ignoring accents on letters, but include any apostrophes, for example Beinn a’ Ghlo would be tagged as Beinn a’ Ghlo.

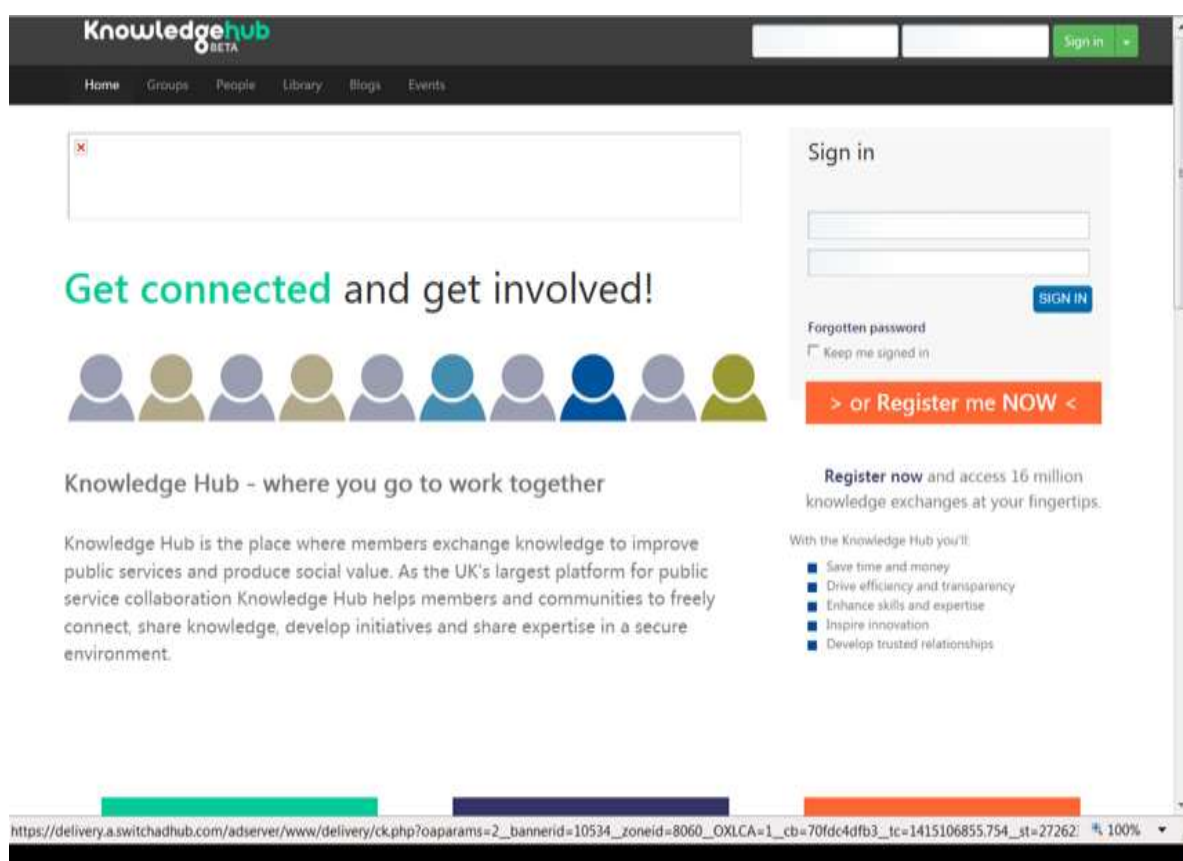
5.5. For information, one of the new boxes on the Knowledge Hub library, when uploading files is a box titled ‘public’. The drop menu then has two possible answers, ‘true’ or ‘false’. This feature provides the opportunity for those uploading a record to share it with a wider Knowledge Hub audience on their central library, if desired, by entering ‘true’.

6. HOW DO YOU SEARCH THE HRA DATABANK?

- 6.1. The new search feature on the Knowledge Hub has been simplified. The initial search is broad and must be undertaken in the 'activity' tab. The search at this stage is looking for the text within all the documents held within the library. This search is not as refined as the tag search, which is available later, but is capable of identifying key words, not only within the files title, but also within the Record itself.
- 6.2. This broad search is capable of locating documents with particular species or developments of interest, that can inform in combination screenings or assessments. The downside to this type of search can be that it is not refined and is capable of pulling out a large number of documents, some of which have concluded that there would no effect on any Natura sites.
- 6.3. After the initial broad search the user can then use the tags, which should be available down the right side of the page to filter the HRA Records to those of interest. The tags associated with each document, if undertaken correctly, permit the user to identify those important HRA Records that refer to a particular site considered in appropriate assessment and/or with MRE.

7. WHO DO YOU CONTACT IF YOU WANT ACCESS?

- 7.1. To access the HRA Databank you first need to register on the Knowledge Hub.



The screenshot displays the Knowledge Hub website interface. At the top, the logo 'Knowledgehub BETA' is visible alongside a search bar and a 'Sign in' button. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Groups', 'People', 'Library', 'Blogs', and 'Events'. The main content area features a large search input field with a red 'x' icon, followed by the heading 'Get connected and get involved!' and a row of ten colorful person icons. Below this, the text reads 'Knowledge Hub - where you go to work together' and describes the platform's purpose. To the right, a 'Sign in' form contains fields for email and password, a 'SIGN IN' button, and options for 'Forgotten password' and 'Keep me signed in'. An orange button below the form says '> or Register me NOW <'. Further down, a 'Register now' section highlights access to 16 million knowledge exchanges and lists benefits: saving time and money, driving efficiency and transparency, enhancing skills and expertise, inspiring innovation, and developing trusted relationships. The browser's address bar at the bottom shows a URL with various tracking parameters and a 100% zoom level.

7.2. Once you have done this you have to ask to join the HRA Databank group.

The screenshot shows the Knowledgehub BETA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo 'Knowledgehub BETA' and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there are links for 'Home', 'Groups', 'People', 'Library', 'Blogs', and 'Events'. The user 'William Carlin' is logged in. The main content area features a group profile for 'HRA Databank - for Scottish Development plans - Group' with 12 members. The group was started in Dec 2013 and has facilitators William Carlin, Johnathan Whittlestone, and Lewis Hurley. The group description mentions 'Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Databank - for Scottish Development plans' and aims to provide a central platform for Local Authorities to deposit their HRA. There is an 'Add to favourites' link. Below the group profile, there is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Activity', 'Forum', 'Library', 'Blogs', 'Events', 'Members', and 'Admin'. A search bar is also present. The activity feed shows a post from 10 Jul 2014 by Lewis Hurley, who uploaded a document titled 'Scottish Government - Scotland - National Planning Framework 3 - Final plan stage - Finalised Sites Annex - 23 June 2014'. The document is described as 'Sites Annex containing detail of the sites considered in the NPF3 HRA Record...'. The post includes a profile picture of Lewis Hurley, the time '15:50', and a 'View document' link. To the right of the activity feed is a 'What's happening?' section with a search bar and a 'Share' button. At the bottom right, there are links for 'Settings' and 'Online Connections (0)'.

7.3. Once your membership has been accepted you can access the features within the site. If you have any problems you should email the hradevelopmentplans@scotland.gsi.gov.uk for advice.