

# The Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland

## Getting data flowing: exploring the application of ‘verification’ to fungal records

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The Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI) will be familiar to many readers as the system for fungal recording developed and maintained by the British Mycological Society (BMS): <https://www.frdbi.org.uk/>.

The FRDBI in its current form (sometimes referred to as FRDBI2) is powered by Indicia, the open source wildlife recording toolkit developed by the Biological Records Centre (BRC): <https://indicia.org.uk/>. Indicia has been used to build many different biological recording tools and websites, so you may have noticed that FRDBI2 has a similar look and feel to iRecord (<https://irecord.org.uk/>), the website for recording and sharing wildlife sightings.

Using this shared underlying technology gives the BMS the opportunity to learn from innovations in other parts of the UK biological recording community and make use of additional tools that have already been developed and tested. The facility to overlay a ‘verification’ system and apply it to the FRDBI2 records is one such tool.

In the context of fungal recording, ‘verification’ can be a somewhat alarming word, having at its root that most elevated of concepts: *veritas*, or ‘truth’. Everyone reading this article knows how hard it is to approach an understanding of a fungal organism’s identity—even with the best skills, equipment and literature for observing, recording and keying out specimens, we are workers on the shifting sands of fungal taxonomy and nomenclature. To borrow a phrase from the physicist Jocelyn Bell Burnell, it is perhaps better to view science as a quest for *increased understanding*, rather than truth, as this leaves a way forward for future change.

BRC and its partners in the iRecord network have more than 10 years’ experience developing and applying a system for ‘verification’ of biological records which is more nuanced than a simple binary assessment of ‘correct’ or ‘not correct’. There are multiple levels of ‘verification status’, descriptions of which can be found at <https://irecord.org.uk/help/records-verified>.

Within the iRecord system, the people doing the

‘verification’ are mostly expert volunteers, working on behalf of national recording schemes and societies, which can develop their own bespoke guidance on applying the ‘verification status’ terms, appropriate to specific taxonomic groups. ‘Verification’ doesn’t have to follow an all-or-nothing approach: it can be broken down into manageable chunks, e.g. geographically or taxonomically.

In the wider UK biological recording community, ‘verification’ is a frequently applied concept / system which supports the flow and use of biological records, by giving end users some assessment of the reliability of the records and datasets that are being shared. The importance of improving and standardising verification of UK fungal records was highlighted in a recent report published by Natural England (Amy *et al.*, 2025).

The BMS is therefore keen to have a dialogue with the field mycology community to explore possible approaches to verification. We had an initial conversation with Fungus Group Leaders at a BMS meeting in June 2024. This will be followed up with a session after the BMS Autumn Open Meeting at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on Saturday 29 November 2025, which will be facilitated by Keiron Derek Brown from The Biological Recording Company (<https://biologicalrecording.co.uk/meet-the-team/>).

To inform discussions in November, fungus recorders are invited to share their perspectives through an open-to-all online survey, accessible here: <https://biologicalrecording.co.uk/2025/10/12/fungi-verification-consultation/>.

### Reference

Amy, S., Henson, M. & Harvey, M. (2025). Data Flow of UK Fungal Records. Natural England Commissioned Report 650. Natural England. URL: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6376073955377152>.

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