

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership



Minutes of the 53rd Steering Group meeting
24th January 2013, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield - Parks & Countryside Manager, IWC
Fiona Hanna – AONB Lead Officer
Colin Pope – Senior Ecology Officer, IWC
Jay Doyle - Forestry Commission
Mark Larter – Natural England
Richard Grogan - Head of Conservation, Hants & IW Wildlife Trust
Claire Hamilton – Fisheries & Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency
Peter Taylor – IW Catchment Co-ordinator, Environment Agency
Les Street – RSPB
Richard Black – RSPB
Tony Tutton – National Trust
Ian Boyd – Natural Enterprise
Carol Flux – Natural Enterprise
Anne Marston – Ecology Officer, IWC

Apologies: Sonia Lorenzo-Martin

Les Street announced that this would be his last meeting of the Partnership as he was retiring from work this year but would continue to be engaged in biodiversity in a voluntary capacity. The Chairman thanked him for his contribution to the Steering Group and wished him well for the future.

SG13/01 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG13/02 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

- a) Revision to Ancient Woodland Inventory The contract for the first stage of the project has been let to John Brownscombe. He is making good progress and will give a presentation to the Steering Group meeting in July.
- b) Grey Squirrel sightings There have been no further sightings of grey squirrels in the Osborne area. Helen Butler has been investigating.
- c) Deer control Mark Larter reported that there has been adverse reaction on the internet to deer culling on the Island

SG13/03 Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

Several proposals for SINCs had been considered over the year but just two were sufficiently advanced and complete for consideration by the Steering Group. In the event, both of these generated considerable discussion. The two proposed SINCs were:

!/ Newport to Cowes Cycleway.

Proposed by the Wildlife Trust. Richard Grogan introduced this. There was a general feeling that the site had both intrinsic nature conservation value and social value. Discussion centred around the concept of designating a linear SINC (this would be the first) and the merits or otherwise of including Medina Riverside Park and a Council owned riverside field to be developed as a high tide wader roost but currently of low ecological value. There was considerable discussion on the merits of including the riverside industrial land to the south of Cowes, privately owned and currently the subject of a contentious planning application for an asphalt plant. Because of the divergence of views, the proposal went to a vote. The results were:

Rejection of the proposal	Votes 0
Accept the proposal in its entirety	Votes 5
Accept minus the industrial site	Votes 5

In the light of this, the Chairman cast his deciding vote to accept the proposal but delete the industrial land.

2/ The Roberts Reserve, Haseley Manor

Proposed by the owner, Anthony Roberts. Both Colin Pope & Mark Larter presented this proposal. There was unanimous agreement that the site had substantive social value and importance as a site for scientific study. The constant effort ringing was particularly valuable. Discussion centred around the merits of the site in terms of substantive nature conservation value. It was considered that the site did not support significant areas of semi-natural habitats as defined by the selection criteria. The applicant had submitted long lists of species occurring on this well-recorded site. These included water vole, but the evidence submitted did not enable any judgement to be made on the significance of site to water vole populations. The results of voting on this proposal were:

Accept the proposal	Votes 1
Not to accept the proposal at this time	Votes 7
Abstentions	Votes 3

The proposed Newport / Cowes cycleway SINC will be submitted to the Isle of Wight Council for inclusion in the SINC register.

SG13/04 Ash die-back

Colin Pope suggested that it would be a good idea to pool our expertise to get a better understanding of the biodiversity importance of ash on the Island. This was discussed and it was agreed that this would be worth doing but that we should also include the importance of ash in the landscape.

Action: Please submit comments and thoughts on the significance of ash for biodiversity and landscape on the Island to Colin by 15th February **ALL**

Draft paper to be presented to the next Steering Group

CRP

SG13/05 Tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*)

Tony Tutton drew attention to the occurrence of the invasive tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*, but now renamed *Brachypodium rupestre*) which is appearing on West High Down, East Afton Down, Limerstone Down and St Lawrence Inner Cliff. On National Trust land, it has not responded to treatment with Roundup. Tor grass was previously not believed to be an Island species but it is likely that it is now being overlooked. It can dominate chalk grassland, ousting out smaller and more sensitive species. The general view was that it tended to take over following a change of grassland management or lack of management. It was less tolerant of cattle grazing than sheep grazing. There has been a suggestion that it is currently spreading on Hampshire chalk grassland and that the species may currently be going through a period of colonisation.

Action: Richard Grogan to investigate the experience of Trust grassland managers in Hampshire with respect to tor grass and report back to the next Steering Group meeting. RG

SG13/06 Marine Consultation Zones – DEFRA consultation

DEFRA are running a public consultation on proposed Marine Conservation Zones up until 31st March. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/12/13/marine-conservation-zones-1212/>

The Wildlife Trust have been working closely with the South-east Balanced Seas project to ensure that all eligible sites in the south-east were brought forwards. In the end, DEFRA have recommended that just 31 of the proposed 127 sites should be brought forwards. None of these were off the Hampshire / Isle of Wight coastline. DEFRA are talking about a second tranche of sites being brought forwards in due course.

The Wildlife Trust are encouraging individuals and organisations to respond to the DEFRA consultation. The Wildlife Trust's DRAFT position statement is attached with this mailing together with a map of the South-east region showing the recommended marine conservation zones.

Action: All are encouraged to respond to the DEFRA consultation on MCZs before 31st March.

SG13/07 Local Nature Partnerships (LNP)

Richard provided an update on progress of the LNP. The Wildlife Trust are employing a consultant to give strategic support to the process. He requested whether any members of the Steering Group

would wish to represent to Island on the LNP. Fiona Hanna said that she felt it would be prepared to represent the Island with regards to AONB landscape and biodiversity.

SG13/08 Recorder's Conference & Bioblitz 2013

Everything is in hand for the next Recorder's Conference on 2nd January. There will be presentations on lichens, the Parkhurst Forest bat project and HLS schemes on the Island and beyond.

Organisations were encouraged to bring displays.

The next Bioblitz event will be on Tuesday 28th May on The Green at Yarmouth. It is hoped that there can be a focus from participating organisations on recording with both specialists and the wider public.

SG13/09 Local Records Centre Report

The quarterly report for October to December was presented and will be circulated with the minutes.

SG13/10 East Wight Landscape Partnership update

.The revised application has to be submitted by 31st March. A decision will be made in October. If successful, there is likely to be an 18 month development phase with the implementation in 2015.

SG13/11 Any Other Business

AONB Management Plan Review

Fiona explained that the AONB Management Plan Review (2014-2019)

It was suggested that a discussion on biodiversity targets could form a substantial agenda item at the next Biodiversity Steering Group meeting.

Action: Fiona Hanna to advise how the Biodiversity Steering Group can assist with the biodiversity component of the AONB Management Plan Review. FH

Himalayan Balsam impacts

A Bournemouth University M Sc student, supported by the Wildlife Trust and Natural England, has completed a study of the interaction of Himalayan balsam and water vole populations on the Island. The student has concluded that waterside patches of Himalayan balsam greater than 10m, inhibit use by water voles. Richard Grogan said that he would make the results of the thesis available in due course.

Action: Richard Grogan to disseminate the results of the M.Sc. Thesis on water voles & Himalayan balsam. RG

Non-native species LAG

Survey is currently being carried along the Eastern Yar from Wroxall to Arreton (phase 1) and Arreton to Longwood Lane (phase view) with regard to Himalayan balsam control this summer.

Isle of Wight Tree Nursery

Natural Enterprise are setting up a tree nursery on a Medina Housing Site at Slade Road, Ryde, funded by the Tree Council. In addition to regular species, it is intended to propagate black poplar and small-leaved lime.

Artificial rockpools at Bouldnor

Natural Enterprise are constructing a suite of experimental artificial rockpools on the revetment at Bouldnor, to be used as a teaching resource. The work has been funded by an AONB SDF grant and by APEUK (<http://www.apeuk.org/>).

Climate Week

Jay Doyle said that Climate Week would be run from 4th to 10th March. He suggested that the Biodiversity Partnership should issue a press release to raise awareness of climate change and biodiversity. Details of Climate Week can be found at <http://www.climateweek.com/>

Action: It was suggested that stories / items for inclusion in a Press Release from the Partnership to be sent to Colin Pope before 15th February ALL

Natural England IW priorities 2013/14

Mark Larter explained that his priority over the coming year was to enter 20 -21 schemes into HLS. These included National Trust and Wildlife Trust sites. He will also be carrying out a review of all SSSIs on the Island and requested assistance from members of the steering Group who were familiar with sites. The review will look at improving condition and reviewing boundaries.

At this stage, it was unclear what NE priorities for 2014/15 will be.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 21st March 10.30 am at Enterprise House