

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership



Minutes of the 57th Steering Group meeting
16th January 2014, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield - Parks & Countryside Manager, IWC
Colin Pope – Senior Ecology Officer, IWC
Mark Larter – Natural England
Richard Black – RSPB
Jay Doyle - Forestry Commission
Lucy Temple - Hants & IW Wildlife Trust
Claire Hamilton – Fisheries & Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency
Tony Tutton – National Trust, Property Manager
Ian Boyd – Natural Enterprise
Tina Whitmore – Gift to Nature, Natural Enterprise
Fiona Hanna – AONB Lead Officer

Apologies: Belinda Walters (CLA); Richard Grogan (HIWWT); Sonia Lorenzo-Martin (FC); Peter Taylor (EA); Cllr Luisa Hilliard

SG14/01 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG14/02 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

There were no other items raised.

SG14/03 SINCs – Adoption by IWC Planning

Matthew described the previously ad hoc arrangement whereby SINCs were adopted by the local authority. Following current DEFRA guidelines, and discussions with the Deputy Head of Planning, a protocol has now been agreed whereby SINCs are formally adopted by the Isle of Wight Council. This has the advantage of defining the respective roles of the Biodiversity Steering Group and the Planning Department in the SINC designation process. A paper had been circulated with the agenda describing this process.

The role of the Biodiversity Steering Group is to judge whether or not proposed SINCs, or amendments to existing SINCs, fulfil the SINC criteria guidelines and therefore should be recommended for SINC status.

The recommendations of the Biodiversity Steering Group are then submitted to the Planning Authority for adoption. The planning authority will consult the landowner and local parish councils for their views. Following receipt of their views, the LPA will draft a report for council consideration. Once discussed by Council, the recommendations will be ratified and any new SINC then become formally designated.

New and revised SINC will be considered by the Biodiversity Steering Group at their meeting in January each year. Any members of the group can propose SINC for consideration by the group. They should present details of the proposed SINC, together with a map and reasons for recommendation, to the Chair of the Steering Group by the end of October at the latest. They should have discussed the proposals with the landowner, prior to submission.

There followed a more general discussion on the management and condition of SINC. The need for further survey to build upon the baseline condition survey (2010) was highlighted. There was a general perception that many SINC, particularly smaller ones in private ownership, were not being managed appropriately. Fiona said the East Wight Landscape Partnership may be able to assist with the management of a limited number of SINC.

SG14/04 New SINC for consideration

There was only one proposal for consideration, submitted by IWC. This was for an extension and boundary revision of C153, Sibden Hill. Following much discussion, the group voted unanimously in support of the recommendations.

During the discussions, a number of points were raised which would assist members of the group in reaching a decision on SINC proposals:

- Papers for new/revised SINC's should be sent out to the Steering Group by the end of November. This would give time for members of the group to visit the site and make their own judgement if necessary.
- Details supplied should include a grid reference, a scale and details of access.

SG14/05 Revision to Terms of Reference

Matthew introduced the topic. The Terms of Reference were set up when the Group first established. Although parts of it are out of date, the general principles have stood the test of time.

A revised version was circulated for discussion. The intention is to future proof it, to ensure that it stands the test of time. Thus, for instance, there is no explicit mention of the LNP but it is implicit that the group will work with the LNP, and other groups, to further nature conservation on the Island. Following discussion, the revised Terms of Reference will be circulated with these minutes.

SG14/06 East Wight Landscape Partnership

Fiona explained that interviews for a Development Officer would be held on Tuesday (21st January). Once the officer was in post, it would be possible to move forwards with the project.

SG14/07 Local Record Centre Report

- The Revision to the Ancient Woodland Inventory was progressing to time. The Wildlife Trust were asked for evidence to support the inclusion of parts of Bouldnor Forest within the inventory.
- The HLU habitat mapping tool to be used by Local Record Centres across the South-east is now working satisfactorily.
- Anne has visited the National Trust for information on habitats and condition on National Trust sites and is in the process of digitising the information.
- A new volunteer has been trained for entering data into Mapmate.
- The Recorders Conference is scheduled for 1st February. There will be topics on fish populations (from Environment Agency), use of Birdtrack on-line recording (from BTO) and the revised Ancient Woodland Inventory.

SG14/08 AOB

- Ian explained that he was leaving Natural Enterprise to set up his own consultancy. He asked if he could remain a member of the Steering Group. The group discussed his request in his absence and agreed that he should be able to attend in his own right but that the place was not for his consultancy.
- Mark outlined his work programme for the coming year, informing us that the assessment of SSSI units would be a priority for which he would welcome assistance from members of the group. His priority would be coastal SSSIs, Bridesford Woods & Parkhurst Forest. He outlined the current position with regard to stewardship agreements and to the forthcoming NELMS scheme (due to commence 1st January 2016).
- Jay outlined changes in the Forestry Commission, in particular, with regards to the Forest Estate which is likely to be hived off as separate, income generating and public service corporation, up and running by 2017. He said that he was in the process of arranging a meeting of the Red Squirrel Forum in March. FC had received representations with respect to deer on the Island and was looking to be involved in a round table debate on this issue.
- Matthew explained that there were plans for Parks & Countryside, together with many other parts of the Council, to be wound up and for sites to be disposed of under long-term leases. We are at an early stage in this process and the details of how this can be delivered are unclear.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 13th March 10.30 a.m. Enterprise House