

# Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership



Minutes of the 58<sup>th</sup> Steering Group meeting  
13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

**Present:** Matthew Chatfield - Parks & Countryside Manager, IWC  
Colin Pope – Senior Ecology Officer, IWC  
Richard Grogan – HIW Wildlife Trust  
Richard Black – RSPB  
Sonia Lorenzo-Martin - Forestry Commission  
Belinda Walters - CLA  
Claire Hamilton – Fisheries & Biodiversity Officer, Environment Agency  
Peter Taylor – Catchment Officer, Environment Agency  
Tony Tutton – National Trust, Property Manager  
Ian Boyd – Arc Environmental  
Carol Flux – Natural Enterprise  
Fiona Hanna – AONB Lead Officer  
Cllr. Luisa Hilliard – IWC (arrived late)

Apologies: Mark Larter (Natural England); Jay Doyle (Forestry Commission)

## **SG14/09 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

## **SG14/10 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)**

There were no other items raised.

## **SG14/11 Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory**

CP gave a presentation on the progress of the Revised Inventory. Although we are slightly behind schedule, the work should be completed by the end of April, and the dataset ready for submission to Natural England. The final report, together with the site specific survey reports carried out by Vicky Basford, will be posted on the Wild on Wight website.

There was some discussion on the inventory and its findings, particularly in relation to planning and to SINC designation.

It was generally felt that the work presented considerable opportunities for interpretation and awareness raising. Matthew explained that the project was in the ownership of the Partnership. It was agreed that taking forwards the work would be a suitable topic for discussion at the next meeting.

**Action: Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory report and supporting documents to be posted on the Wild on Wight website before the next Partnership meeting.**

## **SG14/12 Local Record Centre Report**

The quarterly report has now been submitted to Natural England and the Environment Agency, as part of the requirement of the MoA (attached).

Anne is continuing to update the GIS habitat layer, incorporating information from Steering Group partners. She is well advanced with digitising information gleaned from the National Trust, and will be carrying out a similar exercise with the Wildlife Trust and RSPB in due course.

The Recorder's Conference, held in February, was well attended and very successful.

## **SG14/13 Deer on the Island**

Following high level representations from a member of the public to a range of organisations represented on the Partnership with regards to the desirability of introducing deer onto the Island for the purposes of hunting, it has been agreed to call a round table meeting to discuss the issue. A preliminary meeting, to which many of the individuals around the table were invited, was held on 4<sup>th</sup> March. Perhaps the most significant issue coming from these discussions is that we have no agreed policy or position statement with respect to deer on the Island. Although the Forestry Commission are clear in their opposition to deer becoming established on the Island, our Woodland HAPs and

Woodland Forum documents are all written on the assumption that the Island is deer free and make no explicit reference to the consequences of deer becoming established. It is proposed to produce a Position Statement on deer on the Island through the AONB Unit and it would be very useful if the Biodiversity Partnership were able to endorse this.

A draft Position Statement will be circulated for comment before the next meeting.

**Action: Draft Deer Position Statement to be circulated. Please provide feedback for incorporation in final document.**

### **SG14/14 Habitat Watch Project**

Carol introduced this topic. Natural Enterprise has been charged with working up a Delivery Plan for this project which is a component of the East Wight Landscape Partnership. She circulated a project summary (attached). Matthew said that a lot of what was in the Project Summary was in accord with the intentions of our Community Action Plan and she should refer to this in drawing up the document. Carol would appreciate feedback from partners in order to help her to draw up the Delivery Plan.

**Action: Please provide feedback to Carol on Habitat Watch Project**

### **SG14/15 The Future of the Partnership**

Cllr. Hilliard arrived at this point and began by outlining the financial difficulties which the Council finds itself in. The Council is looking to transfer the leases of all parks, countryside sites and other land to town and parish councils and to community groups, although, to date, the uptake has been poor. A lot of decisions have yet to be taken regarding the direction of the Council over the next three years, making it difficult to provide answers to questions.

Matthew referred to the speed at which decisions were being made. Although there is an intent to dispose of countryside sites, Fort Victoria should remain within the Council because of HLF funding constraints and the Estuaries Project will continue as this is a partnership project. Colin explained that the Planning Authority, as a statutory function, is not under threat but there will be moves to look at alternative and cheaper means of delivering the service. Richard Grogan asked for it to be minuted that he would wish for his Council tax to go towards the maintenance of the Countryside Section.

The upshot of all this is that the Council is unlikely to be able to service and host the Biodiversity Partnership and this change is likely to take place within months rather than years. Matthew expressed gratitude to Fiona, on behalf of the AONB Unit, and Richard, on behalf of the Wildlife Trust, both of whom had offered to take over the hosting and secretariat of the group.

There then followed a discussion on the role and direction of the group. The agenda has always been set by the Council and the Partnership oversee work and projects initiated by the Council. Other topics are slotted in to this format as and when they arise. For the future, there will no longer be any core work put forward by the Council. It was felt important that the Authority were represented on the group and there was some discussion on how this could be achieved. Matthew explained that with a shrinking work force and the fact that the group was not a statutory requirement, it would be difficult to justify Council support. The nearest was through AONB attendance; although not strictly part of the Council, there would at least be a mechanism to pass messages on.

It was agreed that these matters could be discussed more fully at the next partnership meeting.

**Action: Way forwards for the Partnership to be agreed at next meeting**

### **SG14/16 AOB**

- The next Bioblitz event would be held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May at Martin's Wood, Newchurch. Fiona encouraged everyone to attend and asked if they were able to provide activities.

**Action: Please provide feedback to Fiona on attendance and activities at Bioblitz event on 27th May**

- Carol brought to the attention of the group that three Island Rivers workshops were being organised. She also circulated Himalayan Balsam posters.

**Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was **CHANGED** in order to accommodate people's diaries. The next meeting will be held on:

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 10.30 a.m. venue to be announced**