

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the fifth steering group meeting held on 13th September 2000 10.30am IWC
Seaclose Offices, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Andrew Gordon Conservation Officer, English Nature
Richard Grogan, Wight Wildlife Officer
David Langford, Regional Director, Country Landowners Association
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Tony Tutton, Property Manager, National Trust
Debbie Wicks, Conservation Officer, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife
Trust

Apologies: Paul Airey, Policy and Environment Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Sarah Dawkins, Conservation Officer, RSPB
Fiona Dixon, National Farmers' Union
Angela Mawle, Local Agenda 21 Officer, Isle of Wight Council

In attendance: Jonathan Cox, Consultant

SG00/11 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed.

SG00/12 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

SG00/04 BAP document launch. This was agreed to have been a success. A report appeared in the County Press. Further complementary copies of the document have been sent out to neighbouring local authorities, utility operators, higher education establishments, and one has been buried in a time capsule on Ryde seafront. Publicity has been given by the CLA newsletter, the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society Bulletin and the RSPB newsletter..

SG00/13 Composition of the Steering Group.

CP introduced the discussion by asking if, a year into the BAP process, the representation of organisations on the steering group was adequate. Were there other groups who could contribute to the process who it might be appropriate to invite on to the Steering Group? The organisation which could be considered for invitation to join the group is Island 2000. They could well be in a position to assist in the delivery of the BAP as they have considerable experience in preparing successful bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Some of their projects are relevant to BAP objectives. RG felt that the nature conservation objectives of the Steering Group should set the agenda for the process, rather than the availability of money for projects already decided. Island 2000 do not have any ecological expertise, but act as an agency for distribution of funds. After some discussion, it was resolved to ask them to join the Steering Group and to ask Ian Boyd to give a short presentation to the next Steering Group meeting as to how they can assist the BAP process.

Action : MC to write to Ian Boyd, inviting him to sit on the Steering Group, representing Island 2000, and to make a presentation at the next Steering Group meeting.

SG00/14 Financing the project

Monies promised so far:

English Nature	£5000 for each of the next three years
Environment Agency	£2000 (verbally promised for this year)
Island 2000	£2000 (for this year, not linked to any of their projects)

The Isle of Wight Council is contributing “in kind”

Funds are to be transferred to the Isle of Wight Council, which has a holding account set up.

SG00/15 Programme for this year

a) A revised list of priorities was circulated to include the one which was originally delayed by e mail problems.

Discussion of the relative merits of splitting and lumping the habitats took place. The list used to produce an order of priority is that on page 46 of the audit IW BAP classification. If some habitats were grouped it might cause the order of priority to change. Some habitats need separate plans, but others would be better tackled as a group. Targets for habitats need to be related to national and regional targets. If the groupings are too large, this could be more difficult to achieve.

Jonathan Cox suggested the following scheme, but not in any order of priority:

- Calcareous grasslands
- Saline lagoons
- Wetlands/eutrophic standing waters/rivers and streams
- Saltmarsh/coastal grazing marsh/seagrass beds/sand dunes/vegetated shingle/coastal waters
- Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland/Parkland and pasture woodland
- Acid grasslands/lowland heath
- Ancient hedgerows/field margins
- Unimproved grasslands
- Rocky seabed/sublittoral rock
- Maritime cliffs

He felt that Plantation woodlands would be best dealt with either through species actions plans eg for nightjars, or red squirrels , or as areas restorable to other habitat types eg heathland.

b) The Steering Group decided to set a target of completing three Habitat Action Plans in the next 12 months. These were the three habitats which had achieved the highest scores in the ranking exercise.

calcareous grassland, maritime cliffs, wetlands (incorporating grazing marsh)

c) Discussion followed as to the procedure for progressing the calcareous grassland plan.

Points agreed:

1) It is important to involve landowners, managers and farmers from the outset, and provide encouragement and guidance on best practice.

2) The economics of agricultural practice need to be to the fore, with financial incentives for biodiversity explained, and potential for new markets to be explored.

3) An evening seminar on the lines of the Woodland Forum to be set up, for those involved in managing calcareous grasslands. The Isle of Wight BAP partnership would host the evening

i) The aim would be to encourage good aspects of present practice and introduce new ideas.

ii) There would be an invited speaker or speakers to talk about sustainable farming practice, including both economic and biodiversity considerations.

iii) Jonathan Cox could write a paper on calcareous grassland from a nature conservation point of view, to give a national/regional perspective.

iv) There would be the opportunity to contribute by responding to a draft plan/questionnaire which would be written as a result of the meeting, and there is the possibility of forming a Grassland Forum.

d) Setting of timetables for the year needs to be done, even if they are provisional and require revision at a later stage. It was agreed to start the calcareous grassland plan immediately, and review the situation for the other two plans at the next Steering Group meeting. Jonathan Cox would give further thought as to how he could most usefully contribute towards the process.

Action: Produce provisional timetable/costings for the next SG meeting : Jonathan Cox, in consultation with IWC and SG members as necessary)

e) Monitoring of the biodiversity process needs to be the subject of further discussion. Information needs to be collected, stored, updated and evaluated. There is no complete Phase 1 survey of the island, but there is a reasonable knowledge of the distribution and extent of semi-natural habitats. DL commented that the Countryside Agency is to carry out an audit; this data could be useful, but its usefulness depends on whether it is a sample or total audit, and also on when it will take place.

SG00/15 Education and awareness

AM spoke briefly to this paper, emphasising that it was a starter for discussion.

Comments/other contributions would be welcomed, to be distributed with the papers for the next meeting, so that it can form a major part of the agenda in December.

Action: Comments on education and awareness to Anne Marston by 31st October ALL

SG00/16 AOB There was no other business.

SG00/17 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 6th December 2000 10.30am Seaclose Offices