

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the twelfth Steering Group meeting held on 13th June 2002 10.30am, IWC Seaclose Offices, Newport

Present: Judith Beard, Environment Agency
John Brownscombe, AONB Officer
Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Sue Hawley, Estuaries Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Andy Gordon, English Nature
Richard Grogan, Wight Wildlife
David Langford, Country Landowners Association
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Tony Tutton, National Trust

In attendance: Jonathan Cox, Consultant

Apologies: Fiona Dixon, NFU
Joe Stevens, Environment Agency
Mark Stevenson, DEFRA
Carrie Temple, RSPB
Debbie Wicks, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

SG02/10 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed

SG02/11 Matters arising from the minutes

SG02/02 Folders for the HAPs were distributed, containing a revised species audit, Maritime Cliffs and Slopes HAP and the Grazing Topic Report. The introductory section and grazing HAPs will be available shortly. MC will make a presentation to the appropriate Council Committee once a suite of HAPs are available, as a way of raising the profile of the BAP. Other organisations may wish to endorse it, if appropriate, or recommend it to their members. It is an evolving document and relies on agreement and the partnership for its credibility.

Action: Plan folders to be distributed to members of the Steering Group not present at the meeting AM

Action: Arrangements to be made for presenting first group of HAPs to Council Committee MC

SG02/03 English Nature are unable to continue to fund the production of HAPs and their financial contribution of £5000 for 2002 is to be paid over the next two years. Island 2000 Trust has agreed to make a contribution of £1000.

SG02/04 Draft Wetland HAP has not yet been produced. Forestry Commission in attendance at the meeting, but Forest Enterprise not able to provide a representative. Sue Hawley present to discuss the Estuaries HAP. SG02/07 Red Squirrel SAP CP has attended the England Squirrel forum to see how the draft SAP relates to national plans. The draft requires some further work and will be circulated before the next meeting.

Action: CP to produce draft Red Squirrel SAP for next meeting.

SG02/08a RG reported that the Stewardship application for Whale Chine has not gone ahead because the scheme is too large. SG02/08b Further work is being done in the Castlehaven to Binnel Bay area (including Niton Inner Cliff) by Simon Colenutt, to complete the work required in relation to SSSI notification. Proposals are likely to be put to English Nature's Panel in March 2003.

SG01/33b Wealth of Wildlife month. AM reported that 9 events advertised in the Countryside Section's Winter Events Programme had taken place, with 129 people attending in total. In addition, the Environment Agency had staged a major event on the restoration of Newport's rivers, with participation from local schools.

SG02/12 Discussion of Grazing HAPs

Comments have been received and incorporated, and the document has been formatted. A small amount of further work is required in relation to the AONB management plan and current actions by the National Trust. JC to complete and send plans to AM for circulation with the minutes.

Action: JC to produce final version of grazing HAPs before end of June.

After discussion, it was agreed that the starting point for the areas of grassland specified for restoration should be those in the Audit. Figures are required for areas of land in various Stewardship options, so that progress towards meeting targets can be assessed. DEFRA to be approached. The targets for neutral grassland involve enhancement of existing grassland.

Action: DEFRA to be contacted for details of Stewardship areas AM

SG02/13 Confirmation of the scope of Wetland HAP and timetable

The plan will be wide ranging and be divided into open water habitats and wetland areas. A draft is to be produced by the end of July, and will be circulated for comment. It should then be possible to produce a revised document for the next Steering Group meeting in September.

Action: JC to produce first draft of Wetland HAP by end of July.

SG02/14 Discussion of the scope of the Woodland HAP

A discussion of the woodland HAP and its contents then ensued. A number of documents already exist which will provide a useful background.

HM talked about the National inventory of Woodland and Trees. This will be published shortly. For the Isle of Wight, it shows a total of 4549ha of trees, 12% of the Island land area. This compares with about 7.5% cover in 1890. 4490 ha are in woodlands over 2ha, 53ha are in areas of 0.1 - 2.0 ha and 6ha are in areas under 0.1ha. These figures have been obtained by analysis of aerial photographs. Semi-natural ancient woodlands account for about 47% of the area. Most of the woodland gain has been on the Undercliff. Some paper maps are available, but GIS files would be useful

Action: JB to check on the availability of GIS files with Forestry Commission

Woodland Strategy – HM explained that the Isle of Wight was the only County in the south of England to produce a strategy document and the Woodland Forum was an outcome of this process. Renewed affiliation to the Wessex Coppice Group would be desirable, but £1000 annually is required for this.

Priorities for Woodland Biodiversity on the Isle of Wight is a useful background document and should be included within the HAP file. It is the text of a talk given to the Woodland Forum in 2000 by Jonathan Cox, and subsequently published by the Isle of Wight Farm and Woodland Conservation Trust.

The Woodland Forum is seen as a key group in the development and implementation of the Woodland HAP. In the production of the HAP, an early meeting of the Forum was considered desirable to allow an input to the plan.

Following discussion, it was decided to arrange a Woodland Forum meeting in September, with Jonathan Howe and Jonathan Cox as speakers. JH would talk about coppice management and JC would put together a presentation to explain how a HAP is developed and what it aims to achieve. It was suggested that a questionnaire could be included with the invitation to gauge owners' priorities for their woodlands, this would help to engage them in the process and also to help in targeting advice to owners. The need for the production of management plans is perceived to be a problem by some woodland owners. HM agreed to put together a draft list of consultants who could help to produce woodland management plans. John Brownscombe reported that Regional AONB/Forestry Commission Officers are being appointed and they could be a source of advice. Funding opportunities for the Wessex Coppice Group subscription are to be explored

Action: HM to approach Jonathan Howe to agree date for Woodland Forum

Action: HM to produce draft list of consultants

Action: JC to prepare presentation/questionnaire for Woodland Forum

Action: MC to send invitations to Woodland Forum members

Action: Ian Boyd to be approached re funding opportunities for Wessex Coppice Group

JC then outlined a proposed scope for the Woodland HAP. Four categories of woodland are proposed:

Ancient woodlands: to include semi-natural ancient woodlands, plantations on ancient woodland sites, wood pastures, coppice with standards and high forest.

Recent semi-natural woodlands: e.g. Undercliff woodlands, Walters Copse

Recent (20th century) plantations: e.g. Brighstone Forest, Bouldnor, and parts of Parkhurst

New woodlands e.g. those planted in response to initiatives such as JIGSAW

The main issues for each type of woodland are:

Ancient woodlands:

- encourage appropriate woodland management
- management for species – mammals, flora, and invertebrates
- restore management in plantations on ancient woodland sites
- encourage more commercially based coppicing
- for areas which coppicing is not possible, encourage development to high forest
- re-creation/restoration of wood pasture where appropriate

The challenges include

Incentives to assist owners and managers in developing management which favours biodiversity - grant aid, policy, and markets, particularly in keeping sawmills going

Techniques and methods of management – need to promote advice and demonstration sites to show what can be done. Renewable energy may be a relevant consideration

Recent semi-natural woodlands:

Similar considerations apply, but there should also be the option to create high forest. The restoration of other habitats and ride management will be important.

Recent plantations:

Temporary open ground conditions will be a consideration, and improving the structural diversity to produce a mixed-age structure. There is an issue with red Squirrels and selection of species useful to squirrels will be important.

New woodlands:

There may be 185 ha of new woodland once the JIGSAW project has been completed. The establishment of a Tree nursery to provide trees of local provenance would be helpful.

Discussion included

the need for there to be a summary of available grants and the criteria of eligibility
the need to engage Forest Enterprise in the biodiversity process; in theory the Forestry Commission have to approve the design plans, but the locally based staff do not have the time to give.

mention of the proposals for Parkhurst being worked on at the moment; AG will circulate the details when they become available.

SG02/15 Scope of the Estuaries HAP

EN supports the Estuaries Officer post and the production of the Estuaries HAP is in this year's work plan. There are a number of documents existing or in preparation, which will inform the process including the Shoreline Management Plan, Coastal Strategies, Regulation 33 and schemes of management. The CHaMPS documents, which are in draft form, need to be consulted but they are liable to undergo major revision and will probably not be available until November. The revised Medina Estuary Management Plan is due to be produced soon, and a HAP would be useful to inform this process. CP has had contact with Alan Inder from Hampshire CC recently and there is scope for building on the work done there.

It was agreed that habitats to be included would be saltmarsh, intertidal mud and shingle features at the mouths of estuaries. Intertidal shores e.g. Thorness Bay, or the whole of the north coast could be included in line with the Environment Agency's thinking that the Solent is an estuary. It was agreed that saline lagoons should be considered as a separate HAP.

The issue of sea-level rise and its effects needs to be discussed, as estuarine habitat is likely to diminish in extent and mitigation measure will need to be considered. This will have implications for the grazing marsh habitat but the whole complex issue of implications for habitats as a whole will need to be addressed later.

Action: A scope for the HAP will be circulated for comment by SH, drawing on examples from other areas in the country by the end of July

Action: SH to produce draft estuaries HAP in readiness for discussion by the Steering Group on 10 December.

SG02/16 Any other business

TT asked that the effects of climate change on Biodiversity be debated within the biodiversity process in due course.

SG02/17 Date of next meeting 11th September 2002 10.30am Seaclose Offices