

## **Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan**

Minutes of the fourteenth Steering Group meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2003 10.30am, IWC Seaclose Offices, Newport

**Present:** Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside 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  
Marijke Ransom, AONB Planning and Information Officer  
Joe Stevens, Environment Agency  
Nick Cooper, DEFRA  
Les Street, RSPB  
Tony Tutton, National Trust

**In attendance:** Jonathan Cox, Consultant

**Apologies:** Debbie Wicks, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust  
Carrie Temple, RSPB

### **SG03/01 Minutes of the last meeting**

SG 02/22 The red squirrel survey will also include looking for signs of dormice. The minutes were then agreed and signed.

### **SG03/02 Matters arising from the minutes**

SG02/12 The GIS files have arrived from DEFRA.

SG02/14 Woodland Forum meeting was held. Some feedback has been received from the questionnaire, but it has not yet been analysed.

SG02/21 Letter sent to DEFRA and reply received from GOSE. Copies were circulated.

### **SG03/03 Wetland HAP**

Copies of the Wetland HAP were circulated. JS reported that the document had been well received in the Agency, but there were some points on which there was further comment. These have been incorporated into the text and a final amended Wetland HAP is attached as an addendum to the minutes. **Please substitute your copy for this one.**

### **SG03/04 Woodland HAP**

A presentation had been given to the Woodland Forum by JC in October, at which Jonathan Howe also gave a very helpful presentation dealing with practicalities and economics of conservation. A draft Woodland HAP was circulated at the beginning of January. Three sets of comments on the draft Woodland HAP had been received prior to the meeting, and detailed discussion followed.

The following points were made.

- a) HM queried the extent of the forestry resource, as there is a discrepancy between the recent Forestry National Inventory (which includes scrub in with high forest and the new woodland on the Undercliff) and the figures in the HAP. The source of the data needs to be quoted.
- b) Section 3.1.1. HM sees the retention of coppice in high forest as important.
- c) Section 3.6 Wet woodland: Some rewording required relating to historic management.
- d) Section 4.1.1 Site designation: English Nature has no plans at present to notify any of the sites listed. The situation can be reviewed; AG to check whether English Nature has any legal obligation to proceed with notification.
- e) Section 4.1.3 JIGSAW project is due to run for 5 years.  
Wet woodland management – the Agency has had some specific discussions re Parkhurst Forest.  
There has also been some discussion with the Home Office to acquire land for grazing (100ha adjacent to Parkhurst Forest). This is a trial project and could be extended if successful.
- f) The role of the Wessex Coppice Group.  
It has been suggested that funds be found for the Woodland Forum to join this organisation, as it is a source of expertise on management and marketing. Advice is required to encourage the best management practices to allow the best crop to be produced. A lot of new woodland with a high proportion of hazel has been planted and care must be taken that this does not become derelict in years to come. A lot of the work done on old coppice has been done in connection with shooting rights, which can provide a significant income. Coppice regrowth on the Island is generally good, but this benefit is offset by costs associated with transport, unless it can be turned into 'added value' products such as hurdles, fences, etc. The production of Island charcoal has not really taken off, and this avenue could be explored further. AG has contacts with experts in other areas of the country. There is a possibility of biofuels. Island Waste is looking at the possibility of as multi-fuel plant, including forestry leavings, and purpose grown crops. There are many low-grade trees at the moment, but this is not a long term supply.
- g) Schemes for management as well as planting are required, which would help to 'sell' schemes in the long term. Woodland Improvement Grants can be paid after 11 years, but from 2004, the way in which grants are paid will change dramatically. The woodlands that are being planted on arable soils are likely to develop differently from other secondary woodlands because mycorrhizal associations are lacking. Also the provenance of Island trees may be poor, and coupled with difficult growing conditions, means that the establishment of new quality woodland is difficult. Coppicing is not the only option, and development of existing woodland to high forest is a better option in some cases. This will result in a change in biodiversity, and intervention to manage natural forest events may be the most appropriate action.
- h) A revision and expansion of the marketing section of the Woodland Strategy is required, to provide a 'lever' for coppice management (In the

same way that the Marketing study accompanied the grazing topic report, and has helped it progress). Stands of coppice on the Island are relatively low value. Using the wood for manufacturing (establishing a secondary industry) and selling these added value products would increase the return. The two marketing studies produced previously have not stimulated commercial activity.

- i) Section 4.2 should refer to Wight Squirrel Project. Forest Research is initiating a project to look at the species colonisation of JIGSAW sites (Kevin Watts). Annual reports about Dormice are produced for PTES, but to date no papers have been published.
- j) Actions:
  - Notification of Briddlesford Copse as cSAC.
  - Favourable condition of SSSI woods: the EN target is 95% of **area** in favourable condition, rather than 95% of sites.
  - The possibility of producing a topic report on Woodland Management was aired. It was agreed to set up a small group to produce a scoping document, to collate presently known information relating to woodlands. RG to chair the meeting, and to set up the group. A meeting room can be made available at Seaclose. The recommendations of such a report might form the basis of a bid to Leader Plus.
  - Point 17 Further information on DEFRA website. There will be no CSS in the year 2004. There is now a new FWAG officer in Hampshire.
  - Establishment of a tree nursery. The minutes of meetings relating to the previous work to set up such a nursery would be helpful in refining this action.
  - Actions 32-34 The Agency does not see survey work, other than where there is a problem, as good value for money, because often reports are not put to good use. The extent and distribution of wet woodland on the Island is not comprehensively known, as there is no Phase 1 survey. This issue is to be considered by the subgroup.

### **SG03/05 Countryside Stewardship scheme and HAPs/SAPs**

NC drew the meeting's attention to a meeting on Stewardship, which will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> January at the NFU offices in Gunville Rd, Newport. A further consultation is available on the DEFRA website, which requires replies by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2003. (Agri-environment Schemes Framework Document)

### **SG03/06 Priorities for next year**

JC to return revised Woodland HAP to IWC by 5<sup>th</sup> February. Any further comments to be made to JC as soon as possible. Targets need to be set by agreement between the lead partners.

The Woodland HAP should be signed off at the Meeting in May. This meeting will also consider the draft Estuaries BAP, to be prepared by Sue Hawley, Estuaries Officer in consultation with JC. This document will be circulated by mid April.

The Estuaries HAP should be signed off at the July meeting. The main business of this meeting will be to consider the scope of the Farmland HAP. A draft document will then be produced for the beginning of September, to be discussed at the October meeting, and signed off in December.

The requirements for any Species Action Plans will be considered towards the end of 2003, once the main HAPs that have been completed.

The scope of the Community Biodiversity Strategy will be determined at the start of 2004.

### **SG03/07 Any other business**

- a) The Isle of Wight Flora is scheduled for publication in September 2003, by the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society. CP is the major author. A flyer describing the book was circulated and Steering Group members were asked to consider how they could promote it among their organisations.
- b) RG noted that a fish report from the Environment Agency had been made available, and queried one of the records. JS to investigate and report back.
- c) April 2003 is to be nominated as Wealth of Wildlife month through the Wight Summer Walks programme, and local groups are to be invited to submit walks and events for inclusion under that heading.

### **SG03/08 Dates of meetings**

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October  
Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December

All at 10.30 a.m. at Council Offices, Seaclose.