

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

Minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Steering Group meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2005, 10.30a.m. IWC Seaclose Offices, Newport

**Present:** Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Zoe Colbeck, National Trust  
Nick Cooper, Defra  
Andy Gordon, English Nature  
Richard Grogan, Wight Wildlife  
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association  
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency  
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission  
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle  
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Marijke Ransom, AONB Unit  
Les Street, RSPB  
Georgina Terry, Defra

**Apologies:** Carrie Temple, RSPB  
David Rumble, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

**SG05/01 Minutes of the last meeting** were agreed and signed

### **SG05/02 Matters arising from the minutes**

The *Woodland Bat SAP* now complete and copies were made available to Steering Group members.

*Go Wild on Wight*. An article relating to last autumn's 'Go wild on Wight' event appeared in the January 2005 edition of Biodiversity News, a publication put together by Defra and circulated nationally.

### **SG05/03 Community Natural Environment Action Plan**

A small working group has written the text for a booklet relating to Community Action for biodiversity. It is with the Council's Publications Unit for design at the moment. The launch event initially planned for June has been postponed until September on the advice of the Council's civic affairs office, to allow time for training of new Councillors and the publication of the Council's meeting schedules.

The key target audience is Isle of Wight Councillors, LSP members and Town and Parish Councils.

**Northwood House has been booked provisionally for 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005** for a lunchtime meeting. The booklet will be available for those attending and there will be a series of short presentations of community biodiversity projects. There will be the opportunity for displays by various organisations, including the Steering Group, together with groups such as the Pond Wardens.

There was discussion of alternative venues, but it was felt that Cowes because it is easily accessible, can cater for large numbers and is regularly used for this type of event. Additionally, there are a number of sites nearby which can be visited at the end of the presentations which show examples of community projects.

A headline speaker was suggested - such as Alan Titchmarsh, Chris Packham, Elliott Morley, the local M.P. or a representative from Common Ground. Other suggestions for presentations included RSPB, Environment Agency (Newport rivers or Fisheries?) AONB. Suggestions for site visits/activities to follow the meeting included Northwood Park, St Mary's churchyard, Moorgreen Rd reservoir, Mornington Woods, Cowes Golf Course WGS, the Ecochallenger mobile field centre.

**Action: AM to confirm date of meeting as soon as possible. At that time, can SG members confirm whether they will be able to provide a display for the event please?**

### **SG05/04 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre**

The paper prepared by CP, based on guidance from the National Biodiversity Network Trust, and circulated before the meeting was discussed. Some preliminary work has been done but it is felt that a business plan is required to progress the project. This needs to be produced by someone independent of IW Council Countryside Section as the Section is involved in holding and supplying data.

JM raised the issue of why the Island needed its own centre; could it not be part of HBIC?

There are disadvantages in this from an Island perspective; there is likely to be more enthusiasm for the project by local recorders if the project is Island based.

GT suggested that there is the opportunity to be inclusive of a wider range of groups to hold data as an environmental records centre, rather than just biological records.

User groups need to be identified. There is some demand from developers seeking to identify environmental constraints on development sites, from the landowning/managing community in preparing grant applications, and from the academic community (student research). It is also important to be able to contribute to the reporting process on the UK BAP. Information can be supplied at the moment, but it could be done more efficiently and comprehensively if systems were in place for third parties who may be prepared to supply information. Not all the people recording are using the same systems but this need not be a major hurdle.

The Countryside section of the Council would be the lead partner, as there is a nucleus of habitat data held here already. Freedom of Information issues need to be taken into account, and clarified as part of the process. There may be information which is already public but not accessible.

RG reported a number of comments he had received from David Rumble of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. The Trust experience of HBIC suggests that independence from the Council is important and that the project must be a true partnership. The IW records centre should not be a subsidiary of HBIC as there are governance issues. The Centre needs to work towards financial independence and should know its market in terms of data outputs, and its providers in terms of data inputs. Consultants were used to set up HBIC and this is probably the best way. They should conduct a feasibility study in relation to customers. DR could supply information about the setting up of HBIC if required.

There will not be enough demand to produce a large income stream, so independence is unlikely to be viable. No individual organisation can afford to do

things separately but a partnership approach which is representative of the contributing groups is a possibility.

There may need to be a management group - possibility drawn from the BAP Steering Group, with representation from data providers. Proper structures for the handling of data need to be put in place.

Some funding from English Nature and the Environment Agency, and time commitment from the Isle of Wight Council is currently available. Members of the Steering Group/their organisations will need to commit time to discuss with the consultant the input they are able to make and the outputs they would expect from a records centre.

A costed development plan would enable the long term viability of the project to be assessed. The plan could be finalised within 6 months and drafts available earlier. An independent person needs to be appointed to do this as this is NBN guidance, and the Countryside Section time input is required to progress the improvements to the system which are already underway. JM stated that the Environment Agency would require full details of the consultant's role before agreeing that its financial contribution could be used for this purpose.

Progress so far

Considerable investment by IW Council and AONB unit in upgrading GIS system and acquiring aerial photographs.

Advice from Somerset Environmental Records Centre how the currently held data sets can be improved and upgraded. Advice from SERC is expensive and any further work on a development plan needs to be done by someone with local knowledge and experience.

IW Council IT expertise used to refine Access databases on SINCs and species to provide a more efficient data retrieval service.

Review of habitat data sets carried out by Countryside Section to identify where a targeted study needs to be done to improve knowledge of island habitats.

### **SG05/05 Local Geodiversity Action Plan**

MM reported that a meeting was held last week to discuss the draft. The final document along with an audit of Isle of Wight geology will be made available shortly.

### **SG05/06 Biodiversity Action Reporting System**

The aim of the system is to streamline BAP reporting countrywide. AM has registered with the administrators as the contact for reporting on the IW BAP but has had some problems with accessing the website. No specific instruction has yet been received to enter data, although an article in the latest Biodiversity News suggests that this should take place between July and September of this year. So far, a list of the Island HAPs and SAPs has been entered and the Island SSSIs (the latter from a checklist on the website). Entering other information such as SINCs will take much longer, as will all the proposed actions and reports of progress, and these tasks will have to be prioritised (there is some guidance on this on the website). It is necessary to be registered to enter data, but it is possible for anyone to view data.

These links give an entry point to the system for anyone interested.

<http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/>

Calcareous grassland

[http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/search/targets\\_lbap\\_numeric.asp?X=A18E80BF-0E4B-487F-B49B-F758A65D0903&C=3&txtLogout=](http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/search/targets_lbap_numeric.asp?X=A18E80BF-0E4B-487F-B49B-F758A65D0903&C=3&txtLogout=)

Red squirrels

[http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/search/targets\\_lbap\\_numeric.asp?X=A18E80BF-0E4B-487F-B49B-F758A65D0903&C=3&txtLogout=](http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/search/targets_lbap_numeric.asp?X=A18E80BF-0E4B-487F-B49B-F758A65D0903&C=3&txtLogout=)

A weakness of the system at the moment is that not many of the targets have been quantified, and there will be a review in the coming year to make these targets SMART.

David Rumble (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) has commented that the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership do not regard BARS as particularly user-friendly and consider that it has limitations for national biodiversity reporting.

### **SG05/07 Any other business**

1 JM asked if there were any datasets available which could be used to quantify habitat loss on the foreshore. AG reported that aerial surveys of the Solent had been undertaken (CASI survey), which would include the Island's north coast. Such baseline data is required for the Habitats Regulations. Chris Pirie at English Nature is the best contact to provide this data. Some survey work is being done on the Western Yar and the Archaeology Service has done some measurements at Newtown.

2 MR reported that the AONB has been circulated a planning guidance note on equestrian developments for comment (deadline 17<sup>th</sup> June 2005). It is also available on the AONB website. A draft paper on rural diversification and whole farm plans is being prepared for the Planning work group meeting in June.

3 MC commented that following the recent elections there were a large number of new Councillors, who may not be familiar with the Biodiversity Action Plan, and he encouraged Steering Group members to take the opportunity, should it arise, to explain the Plan.

### **SG05/08 Date of next meeting**

**Provisionally 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005 at 10a.m. Northwood House, Cowes.**