

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 23rd Steering Group meeting held on 15th September 2005, 10 a.m.
Northwood House, Cowes

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside Officer, Isle of Wight Council
John Brownscombe, AONB Lead Officer
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
Chris Sprackling, NFU
Les Street, RSPB

Apologies: Ian Boyd, Island 2000 Trust
Zoe Colbeck, National Trust
David Rumble, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Carrie Temple, RSPB

SG05/09 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed

SG05/10 Matters arising from the minutes None

SG05/11 Launch event and follow-up

CP outlined the programme for the public event; delegates would arrive from 12 noon for lunch. There would be time to look at the displays and make contacts over lunch and the presentations would start just before 1pm. The public meeting was to be chaired by Canon Palmer, Chairman of Newport Area Forum and there were four speakers - Andrew Ashcroft, Head of Planning Services IWC, Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust, John Brownscombe, AONB Lead Officer and Les Street RSPB. There would be time for questions and the optional visits would take place from 2pm onwards. People would be encouraged to sign up for the visits when they arrived.

The question of follow-up was discussed and it was agreed that talks should be offered to organisations. Requests for talks or other assistance could come initially through the Countryside Section, and a number of Steering Group members offered to assist as necessary, either with giving talks or with advice on grant-aid schemes. It was suggested that a Powerpoint presentation could be put together to help promote the biodiversity message, and it was agreed to produce this for the next Steering Group meeting, so that it was available for meetings from January onwards. The laptop and projector from Planning Services could be loaned for presentations. DL asked if he could borrow the presentation for his members.

Action: Countryside Section to circulate ideas and call meeting as necessary to develop the presentation

It was suggested that a presentation be made to the Isle of Wight Council and it should also go to the Local Strategic Partnership. IW Councillors may well become aware via the Parish Councils and Community Partnerships.

SG05/12 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre

LS outlined the consultation process and gave a broad outline of the findings. Although a questionnaire was developed, information was collected mostly by face to face meetings which gave respondents the opportunity to discuss issues related to each question. There was broad support for the principle of a local records centre but there were areas where there was divergence of opinion, or issues needing to be addressed.

A summary of the responses is attached to the minutes.

The next steps in the process

Other south coast LRCs are to be consulted

The issue of why HBIC is not a viable alternative needs to be clearly addressed. LS commented on the strong local identity which has emerged from the consultation. The administrative, biological and geographical boundaries are identical, which is not always the case on the mainland. Most of the data input will be via people on the Island. CP expressed the intention that the service would not just provide raw data but would offer interpretation as well. English Nature has tried to localise its service on the Island, which has been helpful. RG stated that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has found problems with HBIC and do not consider to a satisfactory model to use. Reference to NBN guidelines stresses the importance of active participation of contributing groups.

A costed development plan, with milestones of achievement is to be completed by October and circulated round the Steering Group for comment and modification. An extra meeting may be required; a decision will be made when the draft plan is developed. The business plan will include a service level agreement with English Nature and proposals for long term funding and sustainability. SLA needs to be agreed by November and will include the progress of the development of the service and what will be provided once the centre is fully operational. Initially the service will be limited.

Data input of the backlog of data is seen as a priority; the English Nature funding could be used for this. A work experience student, Adam Boulton, has spent approximately 2 months working on Council data over the summer, and has made considerable progress.

Action LS to produce costed development plan by October.

SG05/13 Biodiversity Action Reporting System

AM reported that some progress had been made with entering habitat action plans, although it was initially a time-consuming process, in the long term it should save time as those with responsibility for actions will be able to enter the progress directly. Another problem occurs because the targets are not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited) in most cases, and the system requires numerical inputs.

SG05/14 Revision of HAP targets

CP circulated a paper relating to this item. A small amount of money is being made available from Defra, via English Nature to assist the BAP process. The national

plans are being revised and the local plans need to be brought in line with this. Setting SMART targets is seen as a priority. There will need to be negotiation with English Nature as to what can be achieved over the next three years and a Memorandum of Agreement drawn up. This will be an item for the Steering Group meeting in December. JB asked about the source of the funding; it may be possible for the AONB match fund if they are awarded money for their sustainability fund.

SG05/15 Any other business

a) Woodland Bat SAP

CP reported on the need for a better understanding of the biology of rare bats like Bechstein's and barbastelles. Ian Davidson-Watts has carried out survey work recently for various landowners and a two year project is being developed in conjunction with the Mammals Trust UK, and PTES. The project would sample a number of woods and aim to develop management guidelines. The budget for the project is £20,000 and MTUK may be prepared to contribute £10,000. Private landowners such as Michael Poland have already put in money. Forestry Commission are probably not in a position to contribute at the moment, but the Environment Agency should be able to contribute through the review of consents process and water level management plans. English Nature could be approached via Tony Mitchell-Jones.

b) MC drew Steering Group members' attention to the new direction of the IW Council. The administration is aiming to cut the budget by £ 9 million. Thirty-eight parts of the Council have been identified for cuts, including Museums, Archaeology, and Countryside Section. MC has to go before a panel in October for a 15 minute interview (5 minutes presentation, 10 minutes questions). The Countryside Section which provides a lot of 'back room' support for projects is under threat from this process. If organisations are concerned that this will affect their operations on the Island, they are urged to make appropriate representation to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. The Council's change management plan can be viewed on the Council web site.

SG05/16 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 6th December 2005 10.30am at IWC Seaclose Offices, Newport