

## Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 25th Steering Group meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006, 10.30 a.m.  
Seaclose Offices, Newport

**Present:** Matthew Chatfield, Countryside Manager, Isle of Wight Council  
Andy Gordon, English Nature  
Richard Grogan, Wight Wildlife  
Tim Holzer, Environment Agency  
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association  
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission  
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle  
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer  
Les Street, RSPB  
Georgina Terry RDS  
Tony Tutton, National Trust

**Apologies:** John Brownscombe, AONB Lead Officer  
Nick Cooper, Defra  
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency  
Carrie Temple, RSPB

**SG06/01 Minutes of the last meeting** were agreed and signed

**SG06/02 Matters arising from the minutes** None

### **SG06/03 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre/Local Records Centre**

MC briefly introduced the paper which has been circulated prior to the meeting. The process it describes has been developed over the last year, and it is hoped that the project can now be taken forward. There will be a period of three years development before a fully fledged record centre will be operating. Much work with local volunteer recorders, Steering Group partners and Hampshire Biological Information Centre, as well as at the regional level, will be required. Various options for development have been considered, as per another document circulated at the meeting.

AG enquired about the level of political support from the Isle of Wight Council. MC informed the meeting that the development of a local records centre was in the Council's 'Aim High' policy document. It fits with other 'Aim High' objectives such as the production of the Local Development Framework. A local records centre enables information to be supplied for both strategic and day-to-day decision making. It will enable biodiversity to be delivered to the wider community.

AG informed the meeting that no budget would be forthcoming immediately from Natural England as there was a hiatus with the re-organisation process. However it is high on their agenda once the situation has been resolved.

Relatively small cash sums are required.

The IW Council has made a considerable investment in GIS technology and the Countryside section, AONB unit and Archaeologists are actively progressing data sharing and management at the moment. The focus of the records centre is

currently on biodiversity but other data could potentially come in once the systems to manage it have been developed.

DL asked what tie up with the County Records Office is being proposed. MC said that at present they tend to handle different sorts of data which is not digitised. The County Archivist is aware of the proposed development of a local records centre. MM reported that Archives and Museums are being combined with the aim of creating a one-stop shop for 'heritage' on the Isle of Wight.

**Action: MC to talk to Astrid Davies about the opportunities presented by these new developments.**

TH outlined the Environment Agency's views on the proposed development.

- Achieving 'critical mass' is important to the success of the centre.
- There must be benefits to users and politically.
- It is important that products can be delivered during the development phase.
- Are the time and money allocations sufficient, or are they spread too thinly?
- There is a need to assemble a high quality database to get biodiversity and a record centre valued widely within the Council.
- The Agency supports the principle of a local records centre but do not want to re-invent the wheel; it is important to take advantage of existing systems to be efficient. The Agency would support the running of a centre, but not necessarily the development costs.
- The need to maintain an Island identity is understood.
- The scope of the data needs to start with biological records and then become wider. The data needs to be accessible to outside users.
- Will the document as presented achieve these aims? Probably much more time will be required and the document will need updating to take this into account. The steering group needs to direct the process.

RG speaking for the Wildlife Trust congratulated MC on the production of the paper and said that the Wildlife Trust would be able to contribute funding. The Trust has some experience of working with HBIC and David Rumble would be prepared to be on the local records centre steering group if meetings could be held on the same day as BAP Steering Group meetings.

TH agreed to give some specific advice on how the process could be strengthened.

GT commented that the RDS across the region may be able to support records centres via the requirement for information for Farm Environment Plans which are required for the higher levels of stewardship. There is already a requirement to consult the Historic Environment Record to produce an audit of the farm which indicates suitable options for the holding.

Deleted: would

Memoranda of agreement need to be reached between the IW Council and each of the Steering Group partners over the coming year.

#### **SG06/04 English Nature funding for Regional BAPs**

a) Follow up to Northwood House event

Some talks have been given to community groups and a number of local initiatives are underway. MC gave a demonstration of the 'Wild on Wight' powerpoint which is

available to support talks and other presentations. Copies were made available on CD. The powerpoint includes supporting notes which may be useful.

b) Events and shows 2006

An event at Fort Victoria is being organised by the Leading Wildlife Ranger and the Estuaries Officer and local groups have been invited to participate. RG will be organising the conservation organisations' tent at Wolverton Garden Festival, and invitations will be sent out shortly. NR reported that the AONB Partnership will be having a tent at the Chale Show and the Biodiversity Partnership can be represented here.

c) Development of biodiversity website

MC presented the web site which is now 'live', and explained that Steering Group organisations are able to enter news items.

**Action: If you wish to do this, please contact MC for a password.**

The possibility of links to other sites was discussed and MM will arrange a link to the Dinosaur Isle website. The site will have a link from the Isle of Wight Council website, and all of the biodiversity documents will be on the Wild on Wight site in due course, with links to them from [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com). The possibility of a launch event for the web site was discussed. MM offered the use of the Education Room at Dinosaur Isle for this.

**Action: MC to investigate and put together a proposal for an event.**

d) Biodiversity Action Reporting System

AM reported that the original targets and habitat data have been entered into the system. Lead partners will have been notified by an automatically generated e mail but no further action needs to be taken until the HAPs and SAPs have been revised and new SMART targets have been produced in line with national guidance.

e) Additional funding for LBAP

There has been an underspend on the regional funding and another £2500 has been made available to the Isle of Wight LBAP. It is up to the Steering Group to decide how the money should be spent. Suggestions are invited from Steering Group members and decisions need to be made at the next Steering Group meeting. Any items must meet the criteria set by English Nature; see paper attached for criteria and work already agreed.

**Action: Proposals for projects to be sent to MC by the end of May so that they can be circulated for discussion at the next meeting.**

**SG05/21 Any other business**

a) European Islands Farm Landscapes Project

RG reported that the Wildlife Trust is running this project (to the end of 2007), looking at the problems of maintaining biodiversity and viable farming enterprises. There is a conference at Ventnor Botanic Garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April which involves various members of the Steering Group. The project is funded by AONB partnership and Leader +.

b) Coastal and fluvial strategy for the Eastern Yar

Discussions on this strategy are now beginning; there are interesting opportunities and constraints. Sea level rise and fluvial flooding threaten habitats and properties.

c) RSPB and National Trust land acquisition

These two organisations are in the process of acquiring land belonging to the Yaverland estate. The RSPB is intending to improve grassland and flood plain management, and the National Trust is intending to carry out some chalk grassland restoration.

Island 2000 Trust is also involved in a project in the Eastern Yar catchment, and there are potential biodiversity gains, if landowners are willing to be involved and suitable incentives can be offered.

d) RDS grant for woodland planting

HM reported that there is an option within the new RDS schemes that allows the planting of woodland to create wildlife corridors. Better funding is available via this route than via woodland grant schemes. Four farmers are talking about this and potentially 3 acres could be planted up in 1ha blocks.

e) Issues for the next meeting

1) Vicky Basford's Historic Landscape Characterisation Project is almost complete and she wishes to give a presentation of this and inform people how it can assist the management of land.

2) The Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system needs to be looked at to see how it can be taken forward.

**SG05/22 Date of next meeting**

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June

10.30 am Seaclose Offices Newport.

**Action: Anyone having an item for the agenda please send it to AM 3 weeks before the meeting date to that it can be incorporated and any necessary papers circulated.**