

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 26th Steering Group meeting held on 29th June 2006, 10.30 a.m.
Seaclose Offices, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Parks and Countryside Manager, IWC
Rowan Adams, Landcare Officer, Island 2000 Trust
Andy Gordon, English Nature
Richard Grogan, Conservation Manager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer
David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Lucy Sheffield, Environment Agency
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB

Apologies: Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust
John Brownscombe, AONB Lead Officer
Nick Cooper, Defra
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle, IWC
Carrie Temple, RSPB
Georgina Terry, Defra
Tony Tutton, National Trust

In attendance: Vicky Basford IWC Archaeological Service

SG06/23 Minutes of the last meeting

At the request of Georgina Terry, minute SG06/03 was amended to read ‘RDS across the region *may* be able to support records centre via the requirement for information for Farm Environment Plans’

SG06/24 Matters arising from the minutes

BAP newsletter

MC reported that the IWC in-house magazine Wight Insight which was distributed free in the County Press will no longer be produced in its current format. Options for the Council’s communications strategy are currently being reviewed. Other opportunities for disseminating information about biodiversity need to be explored. Editors of publications value good quality, regularly produced material. It was agreed that regular publicity is important; RG suggested that the LSP documents relating to the Community Strategy need more input on environmental issues.

Suggestions included:

- Leaflets in County Press similar to AONB Finest Landscapes
- BAP insert in Finest Landscapes

Action: AM to discuss opportunities to promote BAP with AONB unit

Various free magazines are available, for which the Steering Group could offer to supply content. However as these are financed by advertising we would need to look carefully at the message advertisers put across. Also we would have no editorial control over material we supplied.

- *The Beacon*, a free monthly magazine delivered to all Island households. This has a small page format
- *Island Life*, a bimonthly magazine available free from selected outlets e.g. Marks and Spencer. This has a similar readership profile to the Wildlife Trust membership, and the Wildlife Trust is supplying content for the next issue.
- There is a publication *Island Business* available on the Red Jet.

Other publications

- RDS publications could target owner-occupiers of land
- CLA has various membership publications

Wight Winter walks programme can be used as a vehicle for promoting biodiversity related walks and events.

Some funding is available from the English Nature funding to promote local BAPs.

Go Wild on Wight website

A launch event has yet to be organised. This could be linked to the newsletter.

SG06/25 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre/Local Records Centre

Essentially, the work programme for the Local Records Centre has been agreed with English Nature. However there is a problem with funding; this has been delayed until the successor body, Natural England, has been formed.

CP outlined the progress to date. As a number of aspects are on hold because of the lack of funding e.g. employment of a student to assist with backlog of data entry, he suggested that the extra £2500 of funding to promote the BAP given by English Nature at the end of the financial year could be used in the interim for events such as the proposed Recorders' Conference as this event is related to the BAP. Money could also be used to link the BAP into the regional agenda.

This was agreed by the Steering Group, subject to English Nature being happy with the funds being allocated for this purpose.

National guidance for revising the HAPs and SAPs has been delayed and there may be a need to re-negotiate the proposed timescale for this action.

MC has talked to Astrid Davies of Cultural and Leisure Services so that she is aware of the Local Records Centre initiative and opportunities to collaborate with relevant initiatives.

SG06/26 Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

CP referred to Defra's recently issued Local Sites Guidance Document which is aiming for greater national consistency in the local sites system. In particular it mentions the setting up of Local Sites partnerships.

The Isle of Wight Council designated SINCs are based on information from various sources, have been through public consultation and are published in the UDP. The criteria for selection are also published in the UDP.

The SINCs are mapped on the Countryside GIS and information is in an Access database. As new information becomes available the citations are revised.

Since the UDP was adopted, more potential SINCs have been identified, but none have been put forward for adoption as it was considered that the best time to do this was when the local plan was revised.

At present there is no group to review SINCs, but it is a task that could be done by the BAP Steering Group as a standard item on the agenda, with smaller sub group to progress the working issues. The delivery mechanism for favourable management is likely to be via RDS and Forestry Commission.

RG commented that landowners do not like designations. They may influence the way that points are scored for agri-environment schemes, but the decision on how to manage the land is with the farmer. It is easier to score points for hedgerow management rather than by putting in buffer strips. It is important to give incentives to manage land rather than to impose management, although there is an increasing minority of landowners who are interested in managing for nature conservation. HM commented that the planning and assessment grant for woodland could cover monitoring.

SINCs have a role in planning applications. The existence of the designation may prevent applications being made on a site. It may be possible to develop part of a site if the rest is put into a management agreement so enhance its nature conservation value.

Selection criteria need some review and in particular double designation of sites is an issue. SSSI citations sometimes miss nature conservation concerns and these could be picked up by SINC citations. 'Favourable condition' is geared towards the identified special interest features. Natural England may address this issue.

Action: A working group will be set up to report back to the Steering Group Its composition will vary depending on the focus at any time but the initial group was suggested as RG, HM, JM, CP, AM

SG06/27 Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP)

Vicky Basford gave a presentation.

It is based on the Historic Landscape characterisation (part of an English Heritage national programme), and it is based on the modal of the biodiversity action plan. It is a 2 year project funded by AONB and Leader +. It is concerned with the wider historic environment and not just individual sites. The land use polygons are characterised into 13 different types, and data sources go back to medieval times. Resources include old maps and aerial photographs. They are interpreted to see what has developed from the open field landscape. The technique has its limitations and could be refined.

The HEAP report will be modelled on the Habitat Action Plans of the BAP and there will be 13 broad habitat types, which equate with habitats in the BAP; archaeological sites associated with them will equate with species associated with particular habitats.

The HEAP will have a partnership approach with a Steering Group meeting 4 times a year. Management objectives and actions will be agreed by the group and there is a community aspect to the plan

The plan will inform landscape management, agri-environment schemes, major planning developments as well as parish and community projects. It will feed into the Island Plan, the AONB management plan and the County Archaeology Service Strategy.

The HEAP will have stands at shows during the summer, guided walks will be offered and there will be work with young people through the Young Archaeologists Club.

SG05/27 Any other business

- a) Solent Forum are establishing a metadatabase of sub-tidal information.
- b) There is a need to raise the profile of the Biodiversity Action Plan in the planning process, as current planning policies predate the BAP. An internal seminar may help in this process. PPS9 may be helpful - its implications need to be explained. Better Section 106 agreements may help in producing action for biodiversity. Training also needs to be available for members.
- c) JIGSAW Niels Brouwers is continuing his research on wood crickets. It would be good to get the landowners together to work out long term broader monitoring.
- d) The progress of the Forest Design Plans was queried. There will be one plan for the whole Island, and it is thought to be imminent.
- e) AG reported that the National Trust have SITA grant funding to put in more fencing on Ventnor Downs to allow more grazing by goats to take place. English Nature is contributing £5000 of funding. 20ha of chalk grassland are to be restored.

SG05/28 Date of next meeting

Thursday 28th September

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.