

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 27th Steering Group meeting held on 28th September 2006, 10.30 a.m. Seaclose Offices, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Parks and Countryside Manager, IWC
Rowan Adams, Landcare Officer, for Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust
Andy Gordon, English Nature
Richard Grogan, Conservation Manager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle, IWC
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer
David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB

Apologies: Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust
Nick Cooper, Defra
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Georgina Terry, Defra
Tony Tutton, National Trust

SG06/29 Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed and signed

SG06/30 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

None

SG06/31 BAP Newsletter

AM has been in discussion with Fiona Hanna of the AONB unit. The BAP Steering Group has been offered the option of providing content for one page (out of 8) in the *Finest Landscapes* newsletter, which is issued three times a year. The cost will be £625 per issue and £1875 per year. The print run is 46,000 and it is distributed via the County Press in December April and August. The money to fund this has come from English Nature during the last year. Previously the newsletter has been produced approximately yearly and the costs (editing, printing distribution) have been absorbed by the Countryside Section. The proposed publication method will be of much higher quality and the distribution will be Island wide.

DL observed that publicity for the BAP to date had been generally low-key and limited, via Countryside News in Wight Insight, the two booklets and displays at shows. He felt that it is important to get the message out in an appropriate and accessible way. The most recent source of information, the web site, was funded by English Nature.

DL suggested that a page was a fairly small amount of space so it would be best to have a theme and then seek 2 or 3 short articles from members of the Steering Group. He suggested climate change and how it might affect the Island's biodiversity.

3 articles approx 300-350 words plus a picture should fit into a page. Countryside Section will collate and edit material before passing it on to AONB unit.

Items offered:

The changes we are seeing in locally overwintering birds: Les Street

Climate change and chalk: Martin Munt

Soils and catchment management: Rowan Adams

Action: Articles and photos to be sent to AM by 27th October please

A new Council publication (replacing Wight Insight) is under development, and it has space allocated to Parks and Countryside and it may be possible to include biodiversity items in this.

AG mentioned the possibility of producing resources for schools. AONB have been involved with a project at Brighstone Primary School. Dinosaur Isle produces a newsletter for schools and could include biodiversity content. There is also the Eco-challenger project on the Island.

This could be an agenda item for a future meeting.

SG06/32 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre/Local Records Centre

CP gave an update on various items

1 Securing signed working agreements with partners, particularly Natural England, Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trust, is seen as a priority, even in the absence of current funding provision.

Action: CP to progress working agreements with partners.

2 A Recordors Conference similar to that held in Hampshire is being planned for February 2007. Will include geological recording as well as wildlife. A date of 24th February has been set.

3 South East Local Records Centre regional Project

All records centres produce habitat maps to different degrees of accuracy. It has been agreed between LRCs in the Southeast to produce a regional dataset of BAP priority habitats, to assist regional spatial planning. The means chosen to standardise the data is the Integrated Habitat System (IHS) developed by Somerset Environmental Records Centre. AM has been on a training course in July with staff from the other LRCs in the south-east. Bill Butcher from SERC will be visiting all the LRCs to advise on translation of data into IHS. The Countryside Section GIS needs some technical support from consultants and is working with other areas of the Council to progress this.

Once produced this regional dataset will need to be managed and updated and a draft document has been received recently setting out the business case for this project. The recommendations are as follows

1. Establish a Regional Dataset Management Committee to overview the development and role of the regional dataset in the South East of England.
2. This committee should be composed of both data users and data providers.
3. Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre to act as the lead centre, with the responsibility of managing the dataset.
4. Transfer of updates from LRCs to lead centre should be governed under an English Nature/Natural England Service Level Agreement.
5. All LRCs in the region should transfer updated data to the lead centre twice a year, within a given timeframe.

6. An access policy to define availability to third parties should be published.
7. Development of licences between regional and local custodians outlining the terms and conditions under which the regional custodian is licensed to hold, manipulate and disseminate material on behalf of the local custodian. These licences should include or refer to the permissions from the original supplier to the local custodian.
8. Requests for information to be available on-line via a standard Information Request Form. The form must be signed.
9. A time limit should be placed on the usability of requested data and it is recommended that use is restricted to a 12 month time limit and the enquirer must reapply for permission to use the information beyond this period.
10. A clear line of authority to disseminate data is required.
11. Copyright ownership of the regional dataset is complicated and it may be necessary to establish a Trust specifically to own the associated property rights.
12. Further funding will be required for the management of the dataset and it is recommended that regional bodies are approached to provide this foundation funding.

4 Development of a system to handle site specific data

CP, AM and IW Council web team have been developing a pilot project to store information about sites. An access database holds information about site surveys and it can be searched via a browser facility. A sample of documents has been scanned and these can be viewed via the internal server as they would appear when it is possible to put them on-line. A copyright/disclaimer has to be agreed before viewing the documents. The wording of this will need to be scrutinised by partners before the system goes live. (See Appendix to the minutes). A demonstration from an internal server was used to show the potential of the system. Documents owned by third parties would not be available as scanned images, but would indicate how these documents could be obtained.

The database entries have been made over a period of about a year including time from a student placement. AM and CP have done some revision and checking as well as data entry and about 85% of documents held by the Countryside Section have been indexed. More refinements are planned, for example the facility to search by 1km grid square. The scanning has been done by information assistants from Planning Services as a trial but they do not have the capacity to undertake the work required to achieve a fully operational system.

Money is required to scan and index existing documents (including those held by members of the Steering Group); once the backlog is cleared, adding new documents will be a much simpler process as documents are now available electronically, and new information will be coming in at a manageable rate. Documents related to planning allocations are already held in a Council system and just need to be indexed in the ecological surveys system and a link made to the storage location.

MC summarised by saying that there was now a system which was able to handle the data, but that funding is required to clear the backlog.

Action: CP to write to AG and JM to see if funds can be released from either of their organisations

SG06/33 Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

CP gave a resume of the SINC system as it currently exists

The criteria for SINCs were developed and published in the UDP. Supporting information is held by the Countryside Section. The criteria and sites selected went through the UDP enquiry process and were adopted. As the LDF progresses there will need to be a review of these sites, as new areas have come to light and other areas may no longer meet the selection criteria.

DEFRA have recently produced a document entitled 'Local Sites – Guidance on their identification, Selection and Management'. This can be viewed at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/local-sites/index.htm>

The guidance aims to make the system more consistent across the whole country. It is recommended that a partnership is formed to oversee the process and the BAP Steering Group would seem to be an appropriate group.

Discussion of the paper circulated before the meeting raised the following issues:

1) All sites meeting the criteria should be identified. The majority are known but not all and as people visit farmers, new sites may be found. A question arises as to how this information should subsequently be handled. If it goes to Defra and public money is given for site management via HLS, then it is public information.

2) Do people view designations as a constraint or opportunity? When sites were selected and published in the draft UDP, this was the first notification that landowners had that their land had been designated. In some cases, there was a perception that it was a constraint being imposed without consultation. It is often seen as another level of management and interfering with other plans. If a site is identified as meeting the criteria but the landowner is opposed to designation how can the situation be resolved?

It can however be an opportunity if a landowner is applying for an agri-environment grant. RG commented that he did not mention SINCs when talking to landowners, but preferred to encourage them when they were managing semi-natural habitat well. The SINC system works to a point e.g. it may rule out a site at the pre-application discussion stage of a planning application, but other factors are needed to help positive management. If SINCs become damaged, neglect is perhaps the most frequent cause.

3) The 'social' value of SINCs and to 'sell' the concept. Dialogue is essential and there needs to be the capacity to deal with it.

3) The 'social' value of SINCs. At present the Isle of Wight criteria are scientific; other authorities may also designate urban green spaces as SINCs because of their social value. The new guidance suggests that the social value of a site could be one of the criteria, so long as scientific (habitat or species) criteria are met.

4) SINCs are used as a tool in the planning system. However, when planning applications come forward, if the land has a value for biodiversity it will become a material consideration whether or not the land is designated

5) Double designation of sites

There was discussion as to the merits of double designating SSSIs. It was considered that sites may be double-designated if the SSSI citation does not mention important features e.g. a geological SSSI may make no reference to its biological value.

6) Process to review the SINC's

Criteria for SINC's need to be reviewed and agreed

Information is needed to support designations

It is important that landowners are engaged in the process. Could this be done by having meetings to which landowners were invited to explain the nature, opportunities and constraints of the system? Landowners need encouragement to carry out beneficial management.

Action: Comments on criteria to be sent to CP by October 27th

SINC subgroup to look at criteria and report back to next Steering Group meeting.

SG06/34 Any other business

a) **Island 2000 Trust Gift to Nature project**

RA reported that a meeting has been held to discuss the project for 2008. A scheme to make bird nest boxes available to Island residents has been suggested but other ideas are welcome.

Action: RA to send list of past Gift to Nature projects and criteria to AM for onward distribution to the Steering Group.

b) **Review of national HAP's** still underway. They are due to be launched by 2nd November so information may be available at the next meeting. NR suggested that the launch of the revised plans might be a good time to promote the BAP to planners.

c) **Publicity for the BAP**

The BAP display has been at the following locations: Sandown Zoo, Chale Show, Fort Victoria Foray, the Garlic Festival, Wolverton Garden Show. If any Steering Group organisation would like to borrow the display please contact AM.

A request has been received from the Whippingham Community Association for assistance with developing the natural history aspects of a heritage trail. AM will be helping with a workshop on 11th November.

d) MM reported that Dinosaur Isle is developing **geological cycling trails** which will be downloadable from their web site.

e) **RIGGS system** Dinosaur Isle in discussion with the Centre for Coastal Management has a list of proposed sites. Seven are already designated as SSSIs, all are coastal and mostly they are in public ownership.

f) **BAP website** MC reported that this needs to have news items posted regularly; at present the number of hits per day is low. Members can either post items themselves (need to ask for password) or can send them to AM. It may be possible to publicise the website in the new Council publication.

SG06/35 Date of next meeting

Thursday 7th December 2006 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 so that it can be incorporated and any necessary papers circulated.

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Additional notes:

9. When searching for information by name, note that sites and species may be known by more than one name. They have been indexed under alternative names where practicable, and you are advised to search the database with this in mind.
10. Whilst most plans on this website are scans of scaled originals, the images will not appear at any particular scale on your computer screen or when printed. Figured dimensions, where they appear, are the only reliable method of obtaining measurements from these images. Unless a scale is given all plans must be assumed to be indicative only.