

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 30th Steering Group meeting held on 21st June 2007, 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
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle, IWC
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer
Patrick Stephens, Forestry Commission
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB
Lucy Wager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust

Apologies: Tony Tutton, National Trust; Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council; David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust; Luke Stevens, FWAG; David Langford, Country Land and Business Association

SG07/10 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

SG07/11 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

The next BAP newsletter insert would appear in the AONB 'Finest Landscapes' issue due in August.

The forthcoming visit of the Southeast Biodiversity Officer's Forum (SEEBOF) has been postponed until 25th September. The plan is for an indoor meeting and working (early) lunch, followed by site visits to see Jigsaw planting at Newchurch and to discuss issues of management in the light of climate change at the RSPB reserve at Bembridge. LS, RG and HM all offered to help during the day with lifts and presentations. All members of the BAP Steering Group are invited to attend.

Action: CP to forward details of the visit on 25th September, when finalised, to Steering Group members

Local Records Centre progress. AG explained that he was optimistic that NE would be able to find funding for the first three years but an offer letter had yet to be received. He recommended MC to write to Wanda Fojt at NE, requesting confirmation of the offer.

CP explained that this, together with organisational change within the Council had delayed progress on signed working agreements with key partners.

MC spoke on the organisational changes affecting the Countryside Section of the Isle of Wight Council. The section is now part of Parks & Countryside within the Directorate of Environment & Neighbourhoods. Staff, excepting CP who remains at Seaclose, have recently moved to Engineering Services in Enterprise House. Due to the public realm aspirations of the Council, the section has received a significant budget to deliver and there is the potential for this to allow a modest relocation of budgets to the benefit of biodiversity.

Action: MC to write to Wanda Fojt (Natural England) for confirmation of funding towards developing a Local Records Centre.

CP attends the SE LRC Manager's meetings. The SE Local Records Centres are entering into a contract with NE to supply improved and standardised data sets of lowland grasslands in order to improve the existing Lowland Grassland Inventory.

JM asked about progress with the SINC review. CP explained that the organisational change had delayed progress with this.

The revised national UK BAP priority species and habitats review has now been released. 1149 species and 65 habitats are now proposed, a substantial increase from previously. There was a discussion on how this could be translated to a revision of our LBAP and priority species.

Action: CP to provide a discussion paper for the next Steering group regarding the way forward to revise our LBAP and Audit.

Action: Link to UK BAP report on species and habitat review to be sent out to the Steering Group.

SG07/12 Living Landscapes Project

RG spoke to the report of the Living Landscapes Project which had previously been sent around to all partners. The project had assisted with 38 (over half) the ELS applications from the Island and around 14 of 18 Island HLS applications. The great majority of these were successful and Richard reported on the substantial contribution that the management would make towards BAP targets. The report was well received and there was a discussion on the benefits of the Living Landscapes project and the future of the work.

Action: RG/LW to provide material for an illustrated article about the project and its contribution to the LBAP for the BAP insert in the December issue of Finest Landscapes.

SG07/13 Natural England's Coastal Access Programme

AG spoke about the recently launched consultation on Coastal Access and gave a brief presentation on NE's objectives. Their favoured option is new primary legislation. There was a discussion on nature conservation impacts and how the Island could be affected. It was generally agreed that a major nature conservation issue was disturbance to coastal birds and that much of the accessible SPA coast was already heavily disturbed.

Members of the Steering Group were encouraged to respond to the consultation, which finishes on 11th September.

Action: Steering Group partners have an opportunity to respond to NE's consultation by 11th September.

SG07/14 Guidance for Public Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty.

MC/CP outlined the new guidance which places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. This needs to

be seen as an opportunity to promote biodiversity within the organisation. One of the obligations is to raise awareness amongst staff and managers with regard to biodiversity issues and there was some discussion on how this could be achieved. It was felt that a high profile event from the BAP partnership could provide a chance to highlight biodiversity. Workshop type sessions were considered to be a useful approach. Contributions from statutory consultees would be particularly important. There was also a need for staff training through team meetings.

Action: Consideration to be given towards developing a BAP event to promote the new biodiversity duty.

SG07/15 AOB

Attention was drawn to the DEFRA Guidance on Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing Climate which has just been issued.

Action: Link to DEFRA guidance to be sent out to the Steering Group.

Buglife have completed their Soft Cliff Project and Andrew Whitehouse, Project officer, is looking to give a presentation on the Island in August. The Island's soft cliffs are considered to be nationally one of the most important for invertebrates.

Action: Details of Buglife Soft Cliff event to be finalised and sent around to all steering group members.

HM reported that he was hopeful that he may have found a new chair for the currently moribund IW Woodland Forum. He also intended to arrange a meeting with owners of Jigsaw plantings to discuss monitoring and future management. It was suggested that this could form the main part of a meeting of the Woodland Forum.

Action: HM to look into a meeting of the Woodland Forum; IWC to act as secretariat.

JM reported on reorganisation within the Environment Agency as a result of combining three area offices within the southeast region into two. West Sussex will be incorporated into Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It is likely that the Colden Common office will be closed and staff relocated to new offices, possibly in Havant. There will be budget cuts of 20%, to be phased over four years.

SG07/09 Date of next meeting

13th 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.