

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 34th Steering Group meeting held on 3rd April 2008, 10.30 a.m.
Seaclose Offices, Newport

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

Apologies: Rowan Adams, Landcare Officer
Ian Boyd, Island 2000 Trust
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association
David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Tony Tutton, National Trust

SG08/07 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG08/08 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

SG08/02BAP newsletter

Content is about to be sent to AONB unit for incorporation in May edition of Finest Landscapes. It includes a major article on soft cliffs featuring the work of Buglife, plus snippets on the Recorders' Conference, the revamped website and the Wildlife Trust Amphibian survey.

SG 08/05c Wild on Wight BAP website

Screen shots from the further development of the website were shown. In particular there will be a new front page, and the navigation around the site has been reviewed. You can view the revised website at www.wildonwight.co.uk

SG08/02Recorders Conference

This took place on 2nd February. It was well attended and the presentations were well received.

SG07/14 Promoting the NERC duty.

Merrick Denton Thompson, board member of Natural England has agreed to give a presentation to elected members and senior officers of the Council on 30th May in the Council Chamber. The Cabinet member for Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Chief Executive will also speak. Following on from this, the Parks and Countryside Section will cascade the information down to different parts of the Council to raise awareness of the duty and how it can be incorporated into their work.

SG08/02 Eco-Island initiative

The public event associated with Ecoland is the Big Green Picnic. It will take place over the weekend of 24th/25th May on the car Park by Newport Quay. The Parks and Countryside Section will be present. If other groups wish to be involved they should contact the Big Green Picnic organisers via www.iwight.com.

SG07/20 Species review

Quite a lot of feedback has already been received from local experts, including a very useful review of the bird species from the IW Ornithological Group committee. A revised list will be brought to the Steering Group in due course.

SG08/05b Water Vole SAP

Graham Roberts has been very busy and has not yet begun work on the Water Vole SAP. He will be invited to a future Steering Group meeting. A repeat survey, funded by the Environment Agency, is due to take place this summer, which will give three sets of data.

AG has received a suggestion from Island 2000 Trust that beavers could be re-introduced to Alverstone Marshes. In other areas this has caused considerable controversy. There was some discussion of the issues raised by this proposal, which is at a very early stage.

SG08/09 Local Record Centre progress

a) CP summarized the demands made in the last year. There were 43 requests from individuals or organisations external to the Isle of Wight Council from April 2007- April 2008. The requests related to consultants requiring information for development or infrastructure projects, Wildlife Trust (for ELS and HLS), land owners or agents, community projects, HLF, public, education. Work was also done in response to internal from Council departments. The total income was of the order of £1500 of which a proportion will go to IWNHAS for supply of species data.

A memorandum of agreement has been drawn up with IWNHAS.

A Service Level Agreement for £5000 per year has recently been signed with Natural England.

One function of LRCs is survey work and a collaborative project with the Environment Agency is about to begin. 25 wetland SINC sites will be surveyed (Environment Agency £9000 IWC £2800 + in kind assistance with mapping). This will assist in assessing the condition of wetland SINC sites. Wet woodland has been excluded from this survey. Ian Davidson-Watts has been doing some incidental recording when doing his bat survey work.

A service level agreement with the Environment Agency and Wildlife Trust will also be sought.

b) 1APP biodiversity checklist

A new planning application process is about to be introduced. A standard form will be on-line. There are national and local requirements, including biodiversity which can be modified to the local situation. Applicants will have to answer questions relating to protected sites, habitats and species and more information may have to be provided with the application. Registration of the application will not take place until all the documents are submitted. HIPOG (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Planning Officers Group) have discussed this and HCC ecologists have produced a local document which has been adapted for use on the Island. There is a requirement for a data search in some cases and an item on the form links through to a page on the Biodiversity website which explains the issue further and gives the LRC email for contact. Further development and refinement of the form will be required, and simple plain English guidelines will be required to explain how applicants can enhance biodiversity.

HM described a case in mid Sussex relating to the protection of a veteran tree as part of a planning application. Document to be circulated with the minutes - see points 20 and 21

SG08/10 Habitat Action Plans

It was agreed that the generic HAP is confirmed and can be published on the website.

The Maritime Cliffs and Slopes HAP has been revised but work now needs to begin on the other HAPs including quantifying targets for maintenance, restoration and re-creation.

An assessment of this is currently underway using various data sets in the GIS – IWC mapped habitats, BGS geology layer, NE SSSI condition assessments, Countryside Stewardship and ELS/HLS layers.

The chalk grassland resource has been reviewed, which is the most straightforward. All but 2 of the SSSI units are considered to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. The other chalk grassland lies within SINCs and any of these in CSS (under the appropriate option/s) were considered to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, together with several of the Island cemeteries which have conservation management plans. However the data on the CSS layer does not seem to be complete and although points are marked, there are no areas attached to them so there is some doubt about the extent of some sites. The data on the ELS/HLS layers is more comprehensive and the contribution of these schemes is easier to assess. Approximately 85% of the Island's chalk grassland resource is considered to be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition.

Schemes for restoration/recreation can be identified to area but are difficult to quantify for the reason described above.

The process will be repeated for acid grassland/heathland and lowland meadows, but as the rock types which support these vegetation communities are more diverse, it will take longer and the results may be less clear cut.

SG08/11 LAA Biodiversity Target

RG described the progress to date. Ecoland is the island's Sustainable Community Strategy; the LAA is a parallel process which has money (up to £60 million, but not necessarily 'new' money) allocated for its delivery. It is administered by the local authority, Primary Care Trust and other partners. There are 198 national targets and 35 of these have to be adopted for the sustainable community strategy. There is one national target for measuring biodiversity and this has been selected for inclusion as one of the Island's local targets.

The target is for Improved Local Biodiversity – the proportion of local sites where active management is being achieved. (Local sites refers to SINCs)

This is a task for the BAP partnership and involves the whole Island not just Council sites. There are no new resources as yet but we may be in a position to ask for them. A base line is needed. The target relates to monitoring of site condition and implementation of management rather than access or education.

From 2008- 2010 there is a target to declare three new LNRs; in the longer term

(2010 – 2020) a project could be developed

The Steering Group have a key role to play in identifying suitable sites for LNRs. Sites must have an intrinsic nature conservation or earth science interest or potential, with amenity and education value, with a commitment to manage the site. They should either be in Council ownership or the Council has an interest in the site. There was some discussion on the possibility of declaring an LNR in connection with the proposed Pan Urban Extension; matters are moving rapidly here in advance of a forthcoming planning application.

Full criteria for LNRs are on the NE website.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/designated-areas/default.htm>

Action

Names of sites suggested for LNRs to be sent to AM by May 31st

All

A paper to be produced for the next Steering Group meeting

RG

Following this, RG will take up the matter with the LSP

SG08/12 Biodiversity Memorandum of Agreement with Natural England

CP reported that a Memorandum of Agreement has been signed with Natural England to deliver biodiversity more effectively including

- establishing and maintaining the biodiversity partnership
- delivering projects on the ground
- Fundraising
- BARS
- integrating biodiversity into local policies
- representing the Island at regional level

£15000 over each of the next 3 years has been offered. It is proposed that delivery of this work will be taken forward by appointing a BAP project officer for 3 years. This will release CP and AM for more work on other areas, in particular in delivering LRC commitments. A job description for the BAP post was circulated.

Specific jobs would include

- LNR delivery
- '10 years of biodiversity' event/publication – highlighting success and failures
- Secretariat for BAP
- Working to the direction of the Steering Group
- Adding value to the partnership's work

JM offered to explore the possibility of the Environment Agency providing additional funding.

SG08/13 Role of BAP Steering Group in adding value to biodiversity projects by collaborative working

Possible sources of funding

- Eye of the Needle – West Wight Landscape Partnership
- Eastern Yar any progress? – Landscape scale project possible if a project can be defined and sources of income identified
- Landscape project with AONB
- Agency keen to continue Land Care project
- Projects which fulfill the objectives of several plans
- Forestry Commission will have schemes but not 100% funding

- NE will be discussing how their funds will be spent

SG08/14 Any other business

a) Wight Squirrel project, and red squirrel conservation on the Island generally, is receiving excellent publicity from Red Funnel. (See www.redfunnel.co.uk for further information).

b) RG reported that although funding for the Living Landscape project had ceased last year, work had continued. 49 landowners had been visited and 1640 ha had been entered into schemes, which translates into £1,190,000 of grant-aid for farmers and landowners.

c) HM reported that the IW Woodland Forum meeting on 8th May (7pm at The Countryman at Brighstone) would deal with Dormice on the Isle of Wight in relating to EPS obligations. Speaker Roger Trout, FC Mammals Section

SG08/15 Date of next meeting

Thursday July 3rd
Enterprise House at 10.30 am

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.