

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership

Minutes of the 39th Steering Group meeting, 9th July 2009, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Parks and Countryside Manager, IWC
Joel Bateman, AONB Communications Officer
Sam Buck, Island 2000 Trust
Richard Grogan, Conservation Manager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Caroline James, Environment Agency
Jackie Kelly, Natural England
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, IWC
Mike Pittock, Forestry Commission
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, IWC
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB

In attendance: Graham Roberts Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Natalie (Cowes High School Work experience student)

Apologies: Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency
Tina Williamson, Biodiversity Projects Officer, IWC

SG09/21 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG09/22 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

SG09/14 10th Anniversary of the BAP SG

The date of birthday event is confirmed as **10th September 2009** at Brading Roman Villa which can seat around 40. Representatives from organisations will be invited to attend.

Content of the event has been finalised with a series of short presentations from members of the Steering Group highlighting achievements in the last 10 yrs, presentation from Brading Town Council, exploration of the nature trail in the grounds of the Villa and a longer walk up to Brading Down. Tom Butterworth (Regional BAP co-ordinator) will be attending and giving a short presentation.

The publication is now with the designer. It runs to 28 pages and all were thanked for their input. It has been necessary to précis some of the articles but hopefully their sense has been retained.

SG09/15 Celebrating BAP - IW Photographer of the Year

The National Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Gift to Nature have donated prizes. Venues have been arranged for a travelling exhibition in various parts of the Island during the autumn/ winter.

SG09/17 Funding & Communication Strategy

Communications Strategy has been signed off and the Funding Strategy is almost complete

SG09/23 Water vole survey work Graham Roberts

Graham Roberts gave a resume of the three water vole surveys carried out on the Island in 1996 2003 and 2008 highlighting some of the changes in distribution which have been observed and some of the threats of water voles. The reports serve as a baseline and also as a starting point for targets. There was a discussion on the implications for wetland management and the need for a water vole SAP.

RG commented that the West Wight Landscape Partnership was interested in the sites supporting water voles within the project's area.

As the Wetlands HAP is due for review this year, actions for water voles could be included within it, or there could be a separate plan. GR was prepared to assist the Steering Group in producing an appropriate document.

Action: GR to look at national guidance on this and report back.

GR to provide GIS layer of water vole distribution to Parks & Countryside Section

SG09/24 Ponds HAP

The Million Ponds project has previously been drawn to the Steering Group's attention. The intention is create a new suite of large ponds across the country. Regionally, Important Areas for Ponds (IAPs) have been identified by Pond Conservation and the Environment Agency. Information for the Isle of Wight was submitted but it was not identified as an important area for ponds as few key species occur and those that are present, namely pillwort and great crested newt, have a limited distribution here.

Tim Sykes (Environment Agency) has proposed that a Pond HAP is written for the Island. He is proposing scheme where an IW Ponds Officer, in association with others, draws up a Pond HAP and then works with community groups to create a series of ponds over the next three years. RG has spoken to Tim Sykes and offered to take the matter forward and report back at the next meeting. A structure for the project is needed – for example deciding which ponds should be included. A meeting will be arranged with special interest groups and individuals on either 17th or 24th July. Funding could come via Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust, West Wight Landscape Partnership and AONB landscape grants (in their respective areas).

Action: RG to take project forward and report back to next Steering Group meeting

SG09/25 Catchment Sensitive Farming Project

Funding for the land management advice service operated by the Wildlife Trust dried up at the end of January. The England Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative is being developed in partnership with the Environment Agency. Advice will be offered on protection of water courses and aquifers and providing advice on the prevention of diffuse pollution. A website and publications will be developed.

A two year project has been agreed, with an emphasis on prevention of diffuse pollution. A steering group is required for the project and members of the BAP Steering Group were invited to fulfil this role.

SG09/26 Woodland HAP

The revision of this HAP is underway. CP has been in discussion with Colin Finlay and Patrick McKernan of the Forestry Commission. The revised draft needs to be discussed with Mike Pittock and then circulated for the next Steering Group meeting. It is proving difficult to set targets for this HAP as reliable baseline data on extent and condition of the habitat is not available.

Action: Revised draft woodland HAP to be circulated before the next meeting CP

SG09/27 SE Biodiversity Strategy and Business Plan

SE Biodiversity Strategy copies were made available. See www.strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/ for more details.

The work of the BAP Steering Group will be influenced by national and regional guidance. The BAP Steering Group has been asked to sign up to a document committing towards delivery of regional targets. These include a list of objectives related to maintenance restoration and recreation of habitats within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and using regional and local opportunity maps to prioritise action, and reporting on progress.

Although several of the targets were entirely reasonable and should be deliverable, there was concern on the emphasis upon working within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and that regional direction was dictating the role of local action on the ground.

Action: CP to talk to Tom Butterworth about revising the wording.

A Funding Strategy and Communications Strategy have been produced at Natural England's request and a Business Plan is now required (by December 2009) to provide a framework for the other strategies. This will set out priorities and develop a vision including the BoA map, targets and statements. This is to be developed over the next few months.

Tom Butterworth (SE regional co-ordinator) would like to speak to the next Steering Group meeting about the changing role of LBAPs. He will be invited to our next Steering Group.

SG09/28 National Indicator for Biodiversity NI197

AM reported that a figure of 54.5% had been entered into the reporting process for the proportion of SINC sites under some form of documented management scheme or advice. The database has undergone further work and it is now possible to produce reports of sites in management, or those where the scheme is about to expire, enabling targeted advice to be given. Assistance is requested in checking the data which is already entered. Although HIWWT is able to supply information about schemes they have assisted with, landowners are able to complete their own paperwork on line, so there may be other sites being missed. Supply of up to date GIS files from Natural England would greatly assist in collecting the required information.

There was a discussion on the wider biodiversity benefits of fulfilling our obligations towards delivering this target.

Action: AM to send reports to those who have supplied data for checking

Action: JK to ask about updates to Environmental Stewardship GIS files

Many LAA indicators have nationally imposed targets, with financial support being given where the targets are not being achieved.

Action: RG to talk to MC about setting targets for NI 197

SG09/29 Any other business

- a) GR enquired about a farm where IWC was the landowner and a signature was required for the HLS. MC to investigate
- b) CJ enquired about a list of IW BAP projects sent out in May which included IW Bats and Rivers Project. RG had added this project as a possibility but had heard nothing as yet from the Environment Agency as to whether funding would be forthcoming,
- c) RG reported that the WWLP and FC funded work at Bouldnor Forest had produced a dramatic change as 6 ha of conifers had been felled. Heathers were now visible in the cleared area.

SG09/30 Date of next meeting - Thursday 8th October 10.30 am at Enterprise House, Newport

Date of Ten Year Celebration Event : Thursday 10th September, Brading Roman Villa

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