

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership

Minutes of the 40th Steering Group meeting, 8th October 2009, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

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

Apologies: Tina Whitmore, IWC & Tony Tutton, National Trust

SG09/31 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG09/32 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

SG09/24 Ponds HAP

RG reported that there was a promise of funding from the Environment Agency, matched by contributions from the West Wight Landscape Partnership and the Wildlife Trust. A project officer (3 days a week for a year) is to be recruited and should be in place by December. The intention is to continue the project if funding can be obtained. The Footprint Trust, Green Gym and Wildlife Trust will oversee the work. The work will be focussed in the West Wight as WWLP is a major funder but the officer will look Island-wide in some aspects of the project.

The work programme includes:

- Constructing 9 new ponds, the majority of which will be in the West Wight Landscape Partnership area. Five sites on publicly accessible land have been identified so far. The focus will be on creation of new ponds rather than restoration of old ones.
- Writing an Isle of Wight Pond Habitat Plan – this will be brought to the BAP Steering Group for discussion.
- Training for pond wardens
- Surveying ponds in the West Wight

SG09/23 Water vole survey work

CP has been in discussion with Graham Roberts and he has advised that the best way forward is to include the requirements for water voles in the revised Wetlands HAP. The final report on the most recent survey and the GIS layer are still awaited by the Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and the IW Council.

SG09/27 SE Biodiversity Strategy and Business Plan for LBAP

As reported at the last meeting a number of LBAPs had reservations about signing up to the strategy. Following feedback, the requirements have been revised and are now less onerous. They will be brought to the next steering group meeting. Tom Butterworth the regional LBAP co-ordinator would like to attend a steering group meeting to give an update on regional matters.

Natural England has core-funded the South-East Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF), the forum which represents biodiversity at a regional level on behalf of all partners. This money has now been withdrawn so the Forum is looking for other sources of funding. It has been suggested that all partners would make an annual contribution to running costs. For local authorities this has been set at £200 and for LBAPs £50. Natural England is giving LBAPs money to fund biodiversity work but in effect is calling back money to finance the regional work. This is being debated by LBAP officers regionally.

NE require all LBAPs to produce a Business Plan by December 31st. The LBAP Business Plan brings together all the other documents produced by the BAP partnership including the communications strategy and funding strategy. It helps to bring together larger scale projects and identifies priorities and gaps in funding.

Action: TW will approach partners in the next few weeks to request input to the plan

SG09/28 National Indicator for Biodiversity NI197

This indicator has been discussed at each Steering Group meeting during the last year and in April 2009 proposals for taking the work forward were discussed. The baseline figure for sites where there is a documented management plan is 54.5% (207 'sites' out of a total of 380).

We are required to demonstrate a year-on-year improvement. In the grassland Habitat Action Plans, there is a target of 85% of habitats being in favourable condition by 2015. To parallel this figure, the meeting discussed the proposal that 85% of SINCs should be in a documented management plan by this time.

At present 207 out of 380 sites are in documented management plans. Over the 6 reporting years (to the end of 2015) the target would be to have 323 sites in a documented management plan. This equates to 116/6 or 19.3 sites per year. At the same time, management plans/schemes will be expiring and the database is able to produce a list of these, which could be useful in targeting visits/advice. There is a period of 5 years before they 'fall out' of the system and become 'sites not in management'. The database also can produce a list of sites which do not appear to be in a management plan and these could be useful to target work or visits to landowners.

Work is ongoing – visiting landowners and farmers (as well as checking and updating information we have already) - but we are required to provide quarterly reports on the actions we are taking by the Corporate Performance Team. These reports are updates on how we are progressing our actions and also they require us to identify risks that we will not meet our targets. (We only have to provide a formal update once a year on the number of sites in positive management, at the end of March).

A formalised delivery plan needs to be agreed which can then be sent to the Corporate Performance Team, and reported on as required. A proforma for this delivery plan has been received and a first draft has been made at its completion. This was circulated for discussion.

The following points were discussed

- 1) The LSP looks principally at targets which are failing to be met. Money can then be allocated to help reach these. We are probably not at this level yet, but it will be progressively more difficult to produce year-on-year improvements as time goes on, because the remaining sites may not qualify for grant schemes or owners may be unwilling to enter management plans.
- 2) There needs to be an analysis of the all the resources going into the management of SINCs from all partners e.g. Natural England supporting advisers, FWAG, RSPB, Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust etc Current draft includes IW Council figures only. Some indication of the quality of data would be helpful.
- 3) Guidance has been issued on how sites qualify as being in positive management - being in an appropriate Environmental Stewardship scheme for example. National guidance for the different types of positive management is available.
- 4) It would be useful to determine what constitutes a management plan particularly for small sites and it was suggested that a simple template would be useful.

5) Supply of up-to-date GIS layers from Natural England and Forestry Commission which show sites in grant schemes greatly assists collection of data

Action: A copy of the draft delivery plan is attached to the minutes. Please look at this and return your organisations actions/costings/comments to AM by 23rd October so that a partnership delivery plan can be formulated and sent on to the Corporate Performance Team

Action: RG to produce a template for a site management plan for the next meeting

Action: AM to circulate the NI197 guidelines

Action: Natural England and Forestry Commission to supply GIS layers

SG09/15 Celebrating BAP - IW Photographer of the Year

The closing date for entries is 18th October. To date there are 114 entries in the biodiversity section (09/10/09). The award ceremony is on 21st November at the Quay Arts Centre and Ian Boyd has agreed to represent the Steering Group and present the prizes to the winners.

Action: TW would like to collect the prizes offered by Steering Group members in the next couple of weeks

SG09/33 Woodland HAP

Woodland HAP was previously circulated. The discussion concentrated on the targets. The extent and condition of woodland is difficult to quantify. On the Island we have an idea of the total ancient woodland resource but the ancient woodland inventory needs to be updated. There is a rolling programme in the south-east and CP has had preliminary discussions with Patrick McKernan. The Island would be easier to do than Hampshire. There are a lot of small woods on the Island which may not need management, and the present drive to wood chips as an energy source may be the driver to bring more woodland into management.

There are no targets for wet woodland at present. If such a target is to be set, there is a need for survey information to get baseline data and could be a joint project between Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and IW Council. A definition of wet woodland needs to take into account the age of woodlands and whether some are scrub encroachment on to habitat such as fen.

JD suggested two other documents to be included in the Reference list

Keepers of time: A statement of policy for England's Ancient and Native Woodland

This statement updates the government's policy towards woodlands and trees by re-emphasising their value, evaluating threats and opportunities and setting out a range of actions to improve their protection and quality. It is available at this link: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/Keepersoftime>

A Delivery Plan for the ETWF Strategy (England trees, woods and forest strategy)

Forestry Commission England and Natural England have lead the development of the Delivery Plan which was launched in December 2008. The Plan sets out what needs to be done to achieve the five Aims of the Strategy as a national level framework It is available at this link: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7DYC7Z>

Action: Any further feedback to be sent to CP/TW by 30th October for incorporation in the plan, which should then be ready for sign off at the next Steering Group meeting.

SG09/34 10th Anniversary of the BAP SG

MC thanked everyone for their contributions to the booklet the event and their attendance at the event. Good feedback had been received.

TW has sent out the document to the wider partnership, and put a pdf on the Wild on Wight website. <http://www.wildonwight.co.uk/partners.php>

There will be a 2 page spread in the Finest Landscapes newsletter due out shortly and an e – newsletter is being developed

SG09/35 Local Records Centre Development of Centre's Technical capability

Improvements to data handling processes

SINC sites database overhaul progressed further with the assistance of IW Council Software development team and is now complete.

National Indicator NI 197 reported that 54.5% of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation had evidence of positive management. This is a baseline figure.

MapMate is now installed on two IWC computers. The query to extract IW BAP species which was supplied by MapMate has been successfully loaded and run on a trial set of data on IW computers. However, even with the addition of this query, the current system used to extract data from the IWNHAS dataset is not efficient.

To progress this problem, a 'Schedule' (an Excel spreadsheet which lists all the required species and their conservation designations - RDB, Wildlife and Countryside Act, Biodiversity Action Plan, European Protected Species etc) to extract the required information has been prepared.

These data will be the basis of the subset of IWNHAS data to be held by the IW Council (and updated on a six monthly basis) to fulfil data requests for rare and protected species. A series of queries to allow data to be extracted by grid square and by taxonomic group e.g. bats needs to be developed. These queries will be shared between IWC and IWNHAS

Bat records have successfully been transferred to the IWNHAS computer at Ventnor. Work is in progress to transfer vascular plant data.

An application for funding to facilitate entry of hymenoptera records by Adam Wright has been made to the Defra Recording Grants scheme.

Collaborative meetings and projects

a) SE Local Records Centre Technical meeting took place on 28th July

The principal item for discussion was the development of the Habitat Framework, which will store GIS based habitat information in a common format across the SE region. A specification was discussed and this is being taken forward to Natural England to obtain funding.

b) There will be no work on the regional data set as a whole this year as there is no central funding. However there are two smaller regional projects

1. work on wetland habitats is under discussion
2. data collation on woodland extents (for monitoring purposes) is due to be completed by the end of October

c) Managers' meeting

Two meetings have been held in the last six months and we have been represented at both. We have discussed a range of collaborative projects as well as better understanding how the different record centres operate.

Funding/data exchange agreements with partners

Memorandum of Agreement with Natural England has now been signed. This outlines the progress which is required over the next two years (until March 2011).

Data exchange agreements will need to be drawn up with the Wildlife Trust, Environment agency and other relevant Steering Group representatives. Regular updates of Environmental Stewardship Arcview files need to be organised with Natural England

Work in progress

Species data – as per Natural England Memorandum of agreement, regarding mobilisation of data to NBN.

For March 2010

Vascular plants: ensure that data set 2003-2009 is submitted by v.c. recorder to BSBI for mobilisation in due course to NBN

For March 2011

- Fungi: Establish data exchange agreement with group and agree access position and data flow.
- Hemiptera / Homoptera: Establish data exchange agreement with group and agree access position and data flow.
- Fish Implement efficient data exchange mechanism
- Mammals: Initially, there is a need to establish data exchange agreements with the different species groups.

Website

As the development phase of the IWLRC comes to an end, it is proposed to develop a section within the biodiversity website, wildonwight.co.uk to promote the LRC's work and the services offered. There has been a page on this site for a year, signposting those looking for biological data to the local records centre e mail address lrc@iow.gov.uk

Other LRCs have a variety of routes for publicising their services depending on their host organisation, whether within a wildlife trust or a local authority. For example, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre's website is located within the Biodiversity pages of Hampshire County Council. The layout of this site has been used to assist the initial planning for the IWLRC pages. A first draft is now being developed and comments will be sought to help finalise the content so it is ready to go live in the early part of 2010.

The format of data supply is under review to look at the clearest and most cost –effective way of sending it to enquirers. An issue requiring some careful thought is setting of charges for retrieving data for commercial organisations, and the level of payments to voluntary recording groups to assist their provision of data.

Data supply	Apr	June	July-Sept	Total
<i>Requests for data</i>				
Development/infrastructure	2		5	7
Wildlife Trust/Agri-environment	2		2	4
Internal to IW Council	15		25	40
Partners	3		2	5
Community	2			2
Education and research	2		2	4
Landowners	1		1	2

Other

Maps produced for the IWNHAS annual glow-worm count has enabled volunteers to carry out more systematic recording.

Annual Recorders Conference has been booked for 6th February 2010 1.30pm at Arreton Community Hall. Speakers will give short presentations related to the Undercliff of the Isle of Wight

SG09/36 International Year of Biodiversity

2010 has been designated as the International Year of biodiversity, with 22nd May being highlighted as a particular date for events. The official launch will be in November 2009 This link gives more details: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/biodiversity/international-year-biodiversity/index.html>

IW LBAP could sign up to the partnership which would commit us to carrying out some events next year but would give some flexibility about the form that these events took. A logo would be available to 'badge' events in the Wight summer walks programme.

Action: TW to register IW BAP partnership with International Year of biodiversity UK

TW has had preliminary discussion with Andrew McIntyre of the parks officer who co-ordinates the Wight in Bloom competition, with a view to including a biodiversity category in future years. Meeting agreed this was a good idea

Action: TW to develop idea further with Wight in Bloom organisers

The following suggestions were made for local events:

- A week of walks e.g. in the Walking Festival
- Events linked to the RiverFest
- A 24 hour biodiversity event (dawn chorus to bat watch)

Details for Parks and Countryside Wight Summer Walks leaflet are collected mid January - mid February for publication towards the end of March.

Action: TW to include Steering Group members in her mailing to ask for event details

SG09/37 Update on new LNR progress

TW has been working on the plan for Brading Down and it is about to be submitted to Mark Larter of Natural England. Funding has to be secured, particularly for work to the car park. The Wildlife Trust has been approached to write an HLS application.

The proposed LNR at Pan is likely to be a Country Park initially, rather than a Local Nature Reserve. The planning application has been submitted. RG considers that the incorporation of this green space is a major achievement. When approved the construction will proceed in stages but the country park and the spine road will need to go in early. It is proposed that the management of the site will be done by the Parks and Countryside Section and a ranger base is incorporated in the building for the biomass plant.

SG09/38 Catchment Sensitive Farming Project

This is a collaborative project between Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trust. Initial meeting held last Monday and the Wildlife Trust is now working on a website and other literature. There will be an emphasis on prevention of diffuse pollution via ELS and HLS schemes which will also deliver other benefits. Nitrate Vulnerable Zone will be extended across the Island by 2010, and the project will address this issue.

SG09/39 Any other business

- a) Wight Winter Walks leaflets are now available
- b) JM asked about the review of SINCs for the LDF; CP advised that the boundaries have been revised and new sites suggested have been incorporated, so when the appropriate stage of the LDF is reached they will be submitted. JM asked that a copy of the shapefile be sent to Pauline Morrow at the Environment Agency' regional office.
- c) JK announced that this would be her last meeting as the Natural England representative, and that Helen Rawlinson would be taking over. She also will be involved with the AONB.
- d) JD reported that two consultations carried out by the Forestry Commission have now closed and a ministerial statements are awaited See <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-estatesstudy> and <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats-consultation>
- e) JD suggested that the Isle of Wight could have some input to a landscape ecology conference to be held next year in Brighton. This will be discussed further at the next Steering Group meeting.

SG09/40 Dates of next year's meetings – all at Enterprise House, Newport

Thursday 14th January 10.30am

Thursday 25th March 10.30am

Thursday 1st July 10.30am

Thursday 14th October 10.30am

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.