

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership



Minutes of the 45th Steering Group meeting
13th January 2011, 10.30 am Enterprise House, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield - Parks & Countryside Manager, IWC
Anne Marston - Assistant Ecology Officer, IWC
Claire Hamilton - Biodiversity Technical Officer, Environment Agency
Colin Pope – Senior Ecology Officer, IWC
David Langford – Regional Director, CLA
Helen Rawlinson - Land Mgt & Conservation Advisor, Natural England
Ian Boyd - Director, Natural Enterprise
Joel Bateman - AONB Partnership, Communications Officer
Les Street - South East Project Officer, RSPB
Mike Pittock - Beat Forester, Forestry Commission
Jay Doyle – Biodiversity Manager, SE District, Forestry Commission
Richard Black - Conservation Officer, RSPB
Richard Grogan - Conservation Manager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Tina Whitmore - Biodiversity Projects Officer, IWC
Tony Tutton - Property Manager, National Trust

Apologies: There were no apologies

SG11/01 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG11/02 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

a. 'Future Landscapes' IALE conference September 2010 SG010/02

JD reported back on a successful conference held last Sept in Sussex comprising two days of presentations and one day of site visits based on the Sussex landscape. Key themes included Ecological Restoration Zones and landscape-scale initiatives. The published Proceedings included the paper by Colin Pope on behalf of the partnership although, in the event, unfortunately it was not possible to present this paper at the Conference. The theme for the 2011 conference is 'Ecosystem Services and Landscape Ecology' and JD suggested perhaps the partnership could put forward a presentation/poster.

b. Biodiversity work reporting update

TW reported that majority of partners had contributed to the reporting and thanked them for their time but emphasised that it is important to meet with all partners in order to get an accurate overview of what's been happening on the ground Dec09-Dec10. This has been an extremely useful exercise in gathering together information of this nature and for the first time we have baseline of data which can be used to report progress against in the future. TW and AM are analysing the data and developing appropriate maps to accompany the spreadsheet and will be meeting with AONB to share the results. TW will then make the information available to partners probably via an online document storage weblink.

Action: TW arrange meetings with remaining partners

Action: TW/AM to continue analysing data and produce accompanying maps

Action: TW to investigate a central location accessible by partners where data can be held.

c. Local Nature Reserves progress update

Brading Down TW reported that LNR declaration plans were progressing well. The period giving public notice of the intent to declare the LNR was about to commence and will run until mid-Feb ready for the official launch of March 1st when there will be an event during the morning with refreshments and walk.

Action: TW to send out invites to all partners by end of Jan to launch event Tuesday March 1st

Golden Hill progress has been slow, awaiting feedback from NE on the draft management plan. However, a successful WWLP grant is currently funding scrub clearance work by contractors and viewpoint improvement and access work has been carried out by the Rangers, Green Gym and Learning Zone.

Action: HR to speak to Graham Johnstone NE re: feedback on mgmt plan

SG11/03 Wetland HAP draft update SG10/27

CP thanked CH for her input on the final Wetland HAP draft. A number of changes have been made and the bulk of the document has been revised with extended or modified targets/actions updated as discussed at the last meeting. A new discussion was held around the proposed targets/actions. A final draft is circulated with these minutes.

CH reported that 9 eel passes have been installed on the Medina in the vicinity of Matalan to ease passage for elvers at specific locations where the recent surveys highlighted blockages. The EA are planning to install cameras at these locations to monitor the success of the passes.

CH also queried the issue of reporting on HAPs in general and how this is achieved. CP suggested that the recent Biodiversity Work audit carried out by TW should help steer this in the future.



Pic: New eel pass at Matalan © Gift to Nature

Action: CP/CH to make final modifications to the HAP

Action: All to make any last comments on the final draft (circulated with these minutes) by 31st January after which time the Wetland HAP will be signed-off.

SG11/04 (a) IW SINC assessment project update & (b) Proposed Communities and Local Government Indicators.

(a) RG updated the group on the progress with the Island-wide SINC assessment project (*see the full report which has been circulated with these minutes). 216 out of 278 sites have been visited since June 2010 – the majority have had public access. The remaining 62 yet to be visited are likely to be woodlands so the Red Squirrel Monitor will do preliminary checks to see if further investigation/landowner liaison is required. It is anticipated that the site visits will be complete by the end of Feb 2011 then the final analysis of data by mid April/May 2011. RG is meeting CP/AM shortly to agree on how the assessment results can be recorded by the LRC.

Action: RG to update the SG when data analysis is complete.

(b) CP reported that the Coalition Government has abolished the pre-existing National Indicators set – measurable indicators that Local Authorities were required to report on, including the Biodiversity Indicator NI197. This was a useful exercise in gathering data with regard to wildlife sites and how they were faring and is unfortunate that this has been removed. However, the Government has decided that LA's will be required to report on a new reduced set of indicators. DEFRA are advising that the biodiversity indicator should be one of these.

A consultation is now open on what indicators should be reported on and if biodiversity should be one of them. **Consultation runs until Feb 4th** and more info can be accessed here:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/>

There was a discussion on whether the Partnership should support the principle that biodiversity should still be on Local Government agenda as it was previously. The SG agreed that it's crucial to make the statement that biodiversity is important as a partnership and to support what SINCs stand for and the opportunities they present in the wider landscape e.g. ecological networking.

Action: MC to make representations, on behalf of the partnership to the consultation.

SG11/05 DEFRA consultation on biodiversity offsetting

CP reported that AONB are formulating a response to this DEFRA led consultation with the main driver being planning. The key proposal is that developers would be required to make financial contributions to offset the impact of their development on biodiversity and that a 'mitigation pot' is introduced, held by local authorities, to be used for appropriate agreed mitigation projects.

Read more on the consultation here:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/offsetting/index.htm>

Action: ALL please send any comments to Mark Buckett, AONB Planning Officer
mark.buckett@iow.gov.uk or to TW who will forward them on before the end of January.

SG11/06 Future of the Biodiversity Partnership update

MC reported that the entire Parks & Countryside section at the IW Council are at risk of redundancy and whatever the outcome there will be big changes to the section and what services will be delivered. Out of the 700 members of IWC staff informed that their jobs are at risk, 500 or so are expected to leave (a number of these may chose to job share/ take early retirement).

It is currently unknown what will happen to services that Parks & Countryside provide and what will be given priority but it is proposed that within Countryside, the Ranger service is to be removed and three ecology posts be reduced to one. MC will be able to give more details when they become clearer over the coming months. It was therefore proposed that the next Partnership meeting be brought forward to **Thursday 10th March, 10.30am at Enterprise House** to discuss the position. At this time the IWC, NE, EA and FC may have a clearer idea of what the future may bring.

HR reported that NE were going through the same upheaval with a big restructure and expected job losses; these will then inform the budget for the next financial year. NE cannot say what Partnerships will look like after April, but we should look towards the Environment White Paper to define goals and the role of Local Authorities in biodiversity. The Lawton Review is a good indication of the sort of work that NE will pursue. A policy is expected to be in place by April 1st 2011. HR also reported that due to the restructure, she will be unlikely to attend further Partnership meetings post April, but another officer from NE may do.

JD gave us some feedback from the FC. Hefty cuts of 25% over next 4 years will take place with redundancies likely, but is hard to see where economies can be made. There will be a radical reduction in the Forestry Estate but FC have the dilemma of being told to retain sites that most benefit the public, whilst disbanding those that cost too much. FC Officers will know more post Feb 10th 2011. However, a big positive is the continuation of the woodland grant schemes until 2014.

CH reported that the South and Thames EA regions have merged and CH's job has been slotted and she hopes to continue attending SG meetings. EA funding budget for next year is currently unknown.

JB reported that AONB will continue to operate for at least the next 12 months but are undergoing an extra 5-6% cut (typical of all UK AONBs) on savings already made earlier this year. This means a reduction in the Sustainable Development Fund from 80K in 2007 to about 30K. AONB are hopeful that they will continue as a partnership in some form, but likely to deliver less projects and may have to start competing for other pots of money.

Action: ALL date for diaries – next meeting brought forward to Thursday 10th March, 10.30am, Enterprise House

SG11/07 Any Other Business

- **Munjac Deer SG10/34** – no further reports of Muntjac Deer since the last meeting
- **Grey Squirrels SG10/34** – the grey squirrel road casualty in Porchfield was sent away for analysis, awaiting results.
- **Soft Cliffs and Chines** - RG reported at the last group meeting it was agreed to continue funding the Breeding Birds Survey and to expand to include winter bird numbers. Since Dec 2010 there have been 2 monthly counts along the road and cliff edge from Chale Terrace to Hanover Point and this will continue until March 2011. RG will feedback results to the Partnership.

Adam Wright has been commissioned to continue the invertebrate monitoring study, originally carried out by IWC, of the cliff stabilisation scheme at Castle Cove. This is being extended by the WT for 3 years in order to provide a better understanding of the natural succession of the stabilised slope.

CP suggested that, in light of the current work on maritime cliffs, it could be a good time to revisit the Maritime Cliffs and Slopes HAP, perhaps at the July meeting of the SG, in order to assess progress against targets.

- **Forestry Commission update** - MP reported that harvesting activities at Parkhurst Forest were coming to the end of the 2 year cycle with approx. 13,000 tonnes of timber being extracted and 7,000 new native trees being planted. The firewood and wood fuel market is looking good on the Island currently and MP hopes that this is a good sign for the future.
- **Wight Walks publication** – MC reported with regret that IWC can no longer produce Wight Walks due to the embargo on non-essential publications plus it is unlikely that there would be an officer available to carry out the work. For the Summer Walks programme, the co-ordination of the publication will be handed over to the Wildlife Trust.

The forthcoming edition is underway. Please submit your walks/events to TW by **Tues Feb 3rd** for inclusion.

- **OPAL Biodiversity Champion Award** – TW reported that the Partnership were nominated for and won an OPAL Biodiversity Champion Award in November 2010 in recognition of the significant contribution made towards IYB 2010 & for supporting the OPAL learning scheme. The ceremony was held at NHM, but due to short notice, TW was unable to attend. Our award was accepted by Bob Ford from Open University (leader of the BioBlitz recording activity at Go Wild in the Woods). *Congratulations to all!*
- **Countryside 2011 initiative** – www.countryside2011.org.uk is now open for coast and countryside events you would like to showcase between 28th May – 12th June.
- **Recorders' Conference** – date for your diaries *next conference is being held on **Saturday 5th February, 2pm at Arreton Community Centre.**

Date of next meeting

- Thursday 10th March, 10.30am at Enterprise House