

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 20th Steering Group meeting held on 13th May 2004, 10.30a.m. IWC Seaclose Offices, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Senior Countryside Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Andy Gordon, English Nature
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council

Apologies: John Brownscombe, AONB Officer
Brendan Burley, Defra
Richard Grogan, Wight Wildlife
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle
Lucy Sheffield, Environment Agency
Les Street, RSPB
Carrie Temple, RSPB
Tony Tutton, National Trust

SG04/10 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed

SG04/11 Matters arising from the minutes

SG04/06 Woodland Bat SAP. CP has produced a draft SAP for Woodland Bats, and has sent a copy to Ian Davidson-Watts for comment. The intention is to circulate a draft document this summer.

SG03 Farmland Action Plan

This has now been finalised and printed. Copies will be circulated. It will be on the IW Council website shortly.

SG04/12 Monitoring of the Habitat Action Plans

Monitoring of the second year of the Maritime Cliffs and Slopes HAP and the first year of the Wetlands has just been completed. Summary forms are available showing progress.

Maritime cliffs and slopes

AG advised that on the MCS plan action 18 relating to phase 2 habitat surveys on the Undercliff should show that this action is now complete. Progress is being made although some actions have been delayed as central government guidance is awaited. Actions which have not been progressed are dependent on factors outside the control of Lead Partners.

Wetlands

Schemes for Brading Marshes and Cridmore Bog have been set up this year, largely due to partnership working. Both appear to be very successful.

Action: publicise these in next Newsletter

The pattern for future monitoring was discussed. A national scheme - Biodiversity Action Reporting Scheme (BARS) - is due to be launched in September. This is designed to improve integration and co-ordination between national and local plans, to allow good practice to be shared and to help priorities to be drawn up. The reporting will be more standardised so that a searchable database can be produced. However there is no information on the precise information which will be required as yet. The database will be web-based so information can be shared, but there will be ways of protecting confidential information. Data on areas of land entered into habitat creation schemes will be needed from Defra. It may be possible to obtain some data from the English Nature system.

In the meantime, it was agreed to continue monitoring the Isle of Wight HAPs by the method currently being used, so there is no loss of momentum. The Grassland HAPs monitoring forms will be sent with the minutes.

Action: Lead Partners to complete and return Grassland HAPs monitoring forms to AM by 30th June 2004. Report to be compiled for presentation at September meeting.

AG reported that 94% of SSSIs *by area* on the Island were deemed to be in favourable (or unfavourable recovering) condition; he would welcome any feedback on these figures. There is still a problem with a lack of comprehensive habitat data from the Island as there has been no complete Phase 1 survey. However a new high resolution aerial photography survey of the Island has been commissioned in connection with the LDF and e government targets. It is hoped that this fly-over will produce data which can be used to distinguish between different types of grassland, and can be checked by sample ground-truthing. A list of areas for detailed Phase 1 field survey work could then be produced.

AG raised the issue of a Local Biological Records Centre for the Island which English Nature is keen to progress. The practical difficulties of this were discussed by the group. There are problems with financing such a system on the Island as there is unlikely to be sufficient demand from developers to pay for it. A business case needs to be made, and it may not be feasible to run a full-blown Record Centre. Following further discussions, a paper will be brought back a future Steering Group meeting.

Action: AG to specify what English Nature would require of an IW LRC.

Action: MC, CP, AM to discuss possible IW Council involvement and produce a formal response to English Nature by the end of June.

SG04/13 Community Biodiversity Action Plan

AM reported that there had been little response from Steering Group members, other than CLA and IW Council Countryside Section, to the request for information relating to current activities being carried out to promote biodiversity to the public. DL reported that there is a lot of activity going on by individual landowners, much of it going unreported - for example farm ponds being dredged, hedgerows being planted. The AONB small grants fund had been particularly important in helping these projects to go ahead. They involve a lot of people, as work can be counted to match the financial funding, and a sense of ownership develops. AG commented that the focus of English Nature's work is likely to change to be more people-oriented, rather than science. There is a need to raise public awareness of nature conservation and to promote involvement of communities, which is a more sustainable approach.

Action: AM to produce and circulate a draft Community Biodiversity Action Plan for discussion at the next Steering Group meeting.

SG04/14 Biodiversity/Geodiversity October event at Dinosaur Isle

Martin Munt was unable to be present, so CP gave some details of the progress to date. There is a major BBC TV series to be screened in the autumn, The Natural History of Britain. Each programme has a regional slot at the end, featuring more local topics. Also events going on locally will be advertised, here and on the BBC and OU web sites. The major event planned locally is at Dinosaur Isle during the last weekend of October. (All Steering Group organisations should have been contacted directly by Martin on the subject of taking part in this event - if not please contact AM as soon as possible.) The Steering Group already has a basic display on biodiversity and there are some funds available to commission further panels (quote £370) and purchase more boards (quote £500). AG offered images from English Nature to help illustrate the display. AM to investigate further. A display will be commissioned from the IW Council Publications Unit before the end of June.

SG 04/15 Species Action plans

In the absence of RG, held over to next meeting

SG04/16 Marine HAP

In the absence of RG, held over to next meeting

SG04/17 Newsletter

It was agreed that a newsletter should be produced to go out in September, focussing on achievements and on community involvement.

Action: Articles for inclusion should be sent to AM by 7th August.

Ideas for items - Achievements at Brading and/or Cridmore; any initiatives by individual landowners; publicity about the HAPs on the Council website; Local nature reserve open days.

SG04/18 AOB

1) DL enquired whether anyone could advise on the best height for rabbit-proof fencing as he had requests for information. AG offered to ask GAP network.

2) DL enquired about IW Council Countryside Section involvement in Emergency Planning response to Chemical spillages. The Environment Agency would be involved in the immediate response; the Countryside Section might be involved in follow-up work, as required.

SG04/18 Date of next meeting

8th September 2004 10.30 a.m. Seaclose Offices