

## **Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan**

Minutes of the 28th Steering Group meeting held on 7th December 2006, 10.30 a.m.  
Seaclose Offices, Newport

**Present:** Matthew Chatfield, Parks and Countryside Manager, IWC  
Richard Grogan, Conservation Manager, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust  
David Langford, Country Land and Business Association  
Anne Marston, Assistant Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency  
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission  
Martin Munt, Dinosaur Isle, IWC  
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council  
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer  
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB

**Apologies:** Rowan Adams, Landcare Officer, for Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust  
Ian Boyd Island 2000 Trust  
Andy Gordon, English Nature  
David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust  
Tony Tutton, National Trust

**In attendance:** Luke Stevens FWAG

The Chairman congratulated David Langford on his appointment as High Sheriff of the Isle of Wight for next year.

### **SG06/36 Minutes of the last meeting**

HM pointed out an inconsistency in the numbering of some items.  
Otherwise minutes were agreed and signed

### **SG06/37 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)**

SG06/31 BAP Newsletter

Copies of Finest Landscapes, due to be distributed with this weekend's County Press, were made available by NR. There was general agreement that the page had come together well. The articles will be put on the 'Go Wild on Wight' website.

The next issue is due in April and after some discussion, it was decided to make recording of species the theme. Content will be needed in the second half of February. Suggested items: Wildlife Trust survey of Stoats and weasels; IW Natural History and Archaeological Society recording project relating to six species; report of recorders' conference.

**Action: Articles/photos to be with AM by 26<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

SG06/34a) Island 2000 Trust 'Gift to Nature' project  
Information was sent out with the agenda for this meeting. **Please send any ideas for sites and/or projects directly to Rowan Adams or Sam Buck at Island 2000 Trust.**

SG06/34c) Publicity for the BAP

AM conducted a natural history day for the Whippingham Community Association.

### **SG06/38 Isle of Wight Biological Information Centre/Local Records Centre**

CP gave an update on various items:

#### **1. Securing signed working agreements with partners**

A 3 year funded working agreement with English Nature had almost been reached when cuts in Defra funding were announced. It was thought necessary for this to be in place before agreements were concluded with other organisations.

Natural England has now agreed that the LRC is a good idea in principle and that a document of intent (agreement in principle but without financial obligation) can be signed. Similar agreements will be sought with other partners. Funding agreements will be sought for the financial year 2007-8 onwards.

#### **2. South East Local Records Centre regional Project**

Priority Habitat data from the Island has been sent to the Somerset Environmental Records Centre for the SE Local Records Centre Project. The data have been put into the Integrated Habitat System, but some counties cannot provide GIS layers as yet, and the timetable has slipped somewhat. SERC is not handling the coastal data sets; these will be taken forward through the BRANCH project (**B**iodiversity **R**equires **A**daption in **N**orthwest under a **C**Hanging climate), but this will not provide complete coverage for Isle of Wight habitats.

Expertise is being brought in to assist with the Ecology GIS, in collaboration with AONB, Planning Policy and Archaeology.

#### **3. Recordors Conference**

A half day conference is being arranged for the afternoon of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2 - 4.30pm at Arreton Community Centre.

Topics/speakers

Solent High Tide wader project - HIWWT for Solent Forum  
Butterfly and moth recording - Andy Barker, Butterfly Conservation  
The brown hare survey - Richard Grogan, HIWWT  
The development of the IW LRC - Colin Pope/Anne Marston  
IWNHAS recording project - Colin Pope

It would be helpful to have displays there. Unfortunately, there is an unforeseen clash with the Annual Hedgelaying Competition.

**Action: Invitations to be sent out by 15th January CP/AM**

**Action: If you wish to provide a display please notify AM by 2<sup>nd</sup> February**

### **SG06/39 Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation**

A draft document relating to revised criteria has been circulated, and MM has suggested some further wording in relation to the geological sites. Once the criteria are agreed they can be published on the 'Go Wild on Wight' Biodiversity website. The criteria in the UDP are fairly brief, and other published criteria have been consulted in

preparing the revised draft. References to the Biodiversity Action Plan have been included.

The Defra guidance refers to these sites as Local Sites, but the planners prefer the use of SINC and RIGGS as these are more descriptive terms and are already understood. It may be possible to call the document Local Sites but then refer to these two subdivisions.

The question of multiple designations arises - can a site be both SINC and RIGGS, or should one citation be written to cover all the interests? There are sites which are biological SSSIs but also have geological interest e.g. Shide chalk pit and Ryde Sands west. If there is geomorphological interest this will change over time, but stratigraphy shouldn't change. 'Buried interest' e.g. peat deposits presents a variety of problems including what is the precise nature of the interest and what is its extent? The citations for Gatcombe Withered bed and Alverstone Marshes could cover the peat deposits.

There are now additional reasons for designation if the site has a community benefit; however the designation of a site as a SINC does not imply public access. There may be a desire to expand access to the coast, but this has the potential to result in damage to a site.

The management of **Wetland sites** is critical in determining whether a site is grazing marsh or reedbed. Botanically interesting grassland can be degraded if it develops into reedbed, but reedbed is valuable to some birds. Most of the reedbeds on the Island are neglected grazing marsh.

Scrub management is likely to become more difficult as cattle grazing on the Island is likely to be less in the future.

**Hedgerows** and other linking features are not listed. These should be covered by robust nature conservation planning policies which prevent fragmentation and protect the landscape. Ancient hedgerows could be protected by the HEAP. The Hedgerow Regulations do not offer blanket protection; there is a requirement for a landowner to notify the local planning authority before a hedgerow is removed, and a hedgerow retention notice is served if the hedgerow qualifies as important under the regulations. Hedgerow management is now covered by ELS and HLS schemes and should provide incentives for farmers to look after them.

**Unimproved/semi-improved grassland** classification is currently not clear and a better definition is required.

Is the use of NVC communities helpful in the criteria?

The drawing of SINC boundaries around an OS parcel of land may include some land which is of lesser merit than the area for which the land is designated. RG commented that the Wildlife Trust would argue that all land within the SINC boundary should be conserved. It may be negotiable that some development may be possible within the SINC boundary if as a result there is a gain in biodiversity e.g. the sustainable management of the remainder of the land. Losses and gains can be reported via the development control process. A weakness is that planning enforcement action may be required to ensure that appropriate management is being carried out. PPS 9 requires that steps are taken to avoid harm as a consequence of development.

Citations can be modified if there are changes. For example changes in water vole distribution between the two surveys of 1996 and 2003.

**Action: Please send feedback on draft criteria to CP by 20<sup>th</sup> December. ALL Action: Revised criteria to be sent out before the next Steering Group meeting. CP**

**Action: If there are new areas which may qualify as SINCS/RIGGS please send details to CP. ALL (31<sup>st</sup> January 2007)**

#### **SG06/40 The work of FWAG Luke Stevens**

FWAG has some members on the Island, but there is not an active group. FWAG has sources of income from membership, charitable trusts and chargeable work, such as preparing grant applications. The Hampshire office has carried out 26 visits on the Island and 16 of these have resulted in applications for ELS or HLS. LS would be interested in setting up events for Island farmers.

On the mainland, events and project work are the main thrusts. Island farmers are invited but it would be better to offer similar things here.

- Events for contractors - advising contractors (as opposed to landowners) on land management, cross-compliance etc
- Hampshire FWAG and Hampshire Ornithological Society BAP bird survey
- North Wessex AONB and Hampshire Farming Group run events for /farmers such as bird and butterfly identification
- Surrey FWAG is working with smallholders and people who own horse paddocks to advise on sensitive land management.
- Arable 'weed' management within stewardship schemes
- Management of land up to boundaries of sensitive sites such as NNRs
- Catchment sensitive management - to include the production of soil, manure and nutrient management plans

Some of these workshops have been funded by Defra, and the Wildlife Trust was successful in getting funding for the Loddon/Eversley catchment.

**Action: To assist the work of FWAG on the Island it was suggested the LS sit on the BAP Steering Group. Discussions could take place with the Wildlife Trust (RG, and Lucy Wager) and the Environment Agency Land Care manager (Rowan Adams) to work up collaborative projects. It was agreed that Luke Stevens represent FWAG on the BAP Steering Group.**

#### **SG06/41 Any other business**

1) CP has attended the South East England Biodiversity Officers Forum. The group would like to visit the Island for a meeting in 2007 and to see action on the ground.

Items suggested included the JIGSAW scheme, the Red Squirrel initiative, coppice management and coastal sites at either Compton or Yaverland.

**Action: CP to progress visit of SEEBOF in spring/summer 2006.**

2) Revised habitat and species targets have now been received. They are based on  
Maintain extent/population size

Prevent deterioration of habitat/population

Achieve favourable condition/Restore habitat

Expand habitat/populations

BARS will be the reporting system, and the baseline will be the period 2000- 2002.

We will have to revise the IW targets to make them SMART.

Revised plans are due in April of next year (new priority habitats will be included but they may not be present on the Island) and a revised priority species list will be produced.

**Action: CP to produce a discussion paper for the next meeting.**

3) LS reported that Sheila Street is setting up a Wessex Lichen group. They will be meeting on the weekend of 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> April to look at the New Forest and cliff edge communities at Freshwater.

4) RG reported that the Island office of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has relocated to the Forest Office in Parkhurst, PO30 5UL Phone number remains the same.

5) RG commented on the incident at the Great Crested Newt pond at Petticoat Lane, where a digger was driven into the pond. The incident was investigated by the police wildlife liaison officer, and the problem appears to be a lack of communication between the site manager and the contractors. Prosecution would have to have been under the Wildlife and Countryside Act as under planning legislation it was not possible to rectify the damage. As the damage was not seen as wilful, the police were not willing to prosecute. Kings Oak has now revised its policies. A watching brief should have been in place as any work was to be carried out in accordance with the Defra licence held by EPR.

**SG06/42 Dates of next year's meetings (Now confirmed)**

**7<sup>th</sup> March**

**21<sup>st</sup> June**

**13<sup>th</sup> September**

**6<sup>th</sup> December**

10.30 am Seaclose Offices Newport.

**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.**