

Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan

Minutes of the 32nd Steering Group meeting held on 6th December 2007, 10.30 a.m.
Enterprise House, Newport

Present: Matthew Chatfield, Parks and Countryside Manager, IWC
Ian Boyd, Island 2000 Trust
Andy Gordon, English Nature
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
Hugh Milner, Forestry Commission
Colin Pope, Ecology Officer, Isle of Wight Council
Luke Stevens, FWAG
Tracy Underwood, Island 2000 Trust

Apologies: Rowan Adams, Landcare Officer
Jackie Mellan, Environment Agency
Nicky Rogers, AONB Planning Officer
David Rumble, Hants & I.W. Wildlife Trust
Les Street, South-East Project Officer, RSPB
Tony Tutton, National Trust

SG07/24 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

SG07/25 Matters arising from the minutes (other than agenda items)

SG07/11 BAP newsletter: December issue featuring the work of the Wildlife Trust's Living Landscapes Project is due out this weekend.

Next year there are likely to be two issues of *Finest Landscapes* – April and December, as the AONB management plan is being reviewed

SG07/11 SEEBOF meeting, arranged for 25th September 2007, was cancelled as only three of the Biodiversity Officers from the mainland were able to attend. There may be an opportunity to reschedule this but at the moment several vacant LBAP officer posts are being filled.

SG07/11 LRC Progress: IW inventory of BAP grasslands have been sent to TVERC for incorporation in the regional dataset.

SG07/14 Implementing the biodiversity duty. CP reported that Natural England have offered £500 to put on an event in the next financial year. There is a need to draw in the decision makers of the Council. An event, with an outside speaker, to explain the local authorities' biodiversity obligations is planned for the Council Chamber. The target audience is members and key officers. It will be followed by a series of smaller meetings with various operational sections of the Council to look at more specific actions which can be taken.

RG suggested that it should be linked to the current Eco-Island initiative. He is on the governance board of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which was meeting on the afternoon of 6th December. It will consider the 198 national indicators which have been put forward as performance indicators for local authorities. 35 of these are to be

selected as part of the Local Area Agreement. One of the 198 proposed targets relates specifically to biodiversity but it may be possible to have a biodiversity slant on other indicators which relate to conservation and enhancement of the landscape which is seen as a priority. Priorities are established through LSP, AONB management plan and local area agreement (LAA).

AG suggested that the socio-economic angle on biodiversity was most likely to be successful. DL commented that the JIGSAW scheme has been very successful in promoting biodiversity because of the link to red squirrels and the substantial sums of money on offer to landowners. A big all-Island scheme with incentives for landowners and potential for large public interest is needed.

SG07/ Revision of Maritime Cliffs and Slopes HAP

Final draft has been circulated. A few further comments were received.

Action: Any further comments on the Maritime cliffs & Slopes HAP to be sent to AM by 21st December prior to adoption of the revised draft.

SG07/26 Generic Habitat Action Plan

A discussion document proposing a HAP which covers all the generic issues common to most HAPs had been circulated prior to the meeting. Many other LBAPs have produced similar plans. They aim to simplify the HAPs by collecting together all the actions which are repeated through each habitat. They provide a framework for an annual reporting mechanism for the LBAP partnership. Once the generic HAP has been adopted, revision of the other HAPs is simplified. They will be aligned to BARS, to report condition and extent of habitats

Points from discussion of draft:

a) There was a discussion on the effectiveness of current grant schemes in delivering biodiversity. HM explained that the new Woodland Grant schemes are less attractive to owners as the level of grant funding has been reduced decreased and, for holdings of greater than 30ha there is a requirement to go for certification which is often a disincentive.

The new HLS schemes do not recognise the Island as a priority area. It was strongly felt that a case should be made to NE for targeting on the Island at the round of consultation next year. Certain HLS schemes, including SSSIs, land managed for farmland birds and landscape scale projects are still likely to be looked upon favourably.

b) Themes and targets (refer to document)

1a – need to be able to quantify this, to say if it isn't working

1d NERC duty comes in here

2a Need to say how many comments had an influence on the decision

2b, c, d These do not have targets but are able to be reported.

It could be made more explicit that biodiversity gain can be achieved by S106 agreements. For educational facilities there is a 'tariff' built in but biodiversity is only just being seen as a legitimate requirement. 'No net loss' does not comply with the biodiversity duty, as it is a negative.

3 a, b, c, d Ongoing

4 Now includes wider target audiences

c) There was a discussion as to whether this plan was only concerned with holding the ground, monitoring the situation and raising awareness. There also needed to be SMART target setting aimed at enhancing and recreating. Following a debate on these issues, it was agreed that the revised individual HAPs must be read in conjunction with the generic HAP. Single HAPs need to be much more precise on targets e.g. hectareage to be restored, and this is where the challenging BAP targets would reside.

d) The generic HAP review at the end of each year can suggest ways forward if progress is judged to be insufficient.

e) The smaller areas which can be improved e.g. influencing public open space could come under the communities HAP. Community involvement at the parish level is critical to catch the politicians' attention. Looking at the number of projects set up and the number of people involved is a good measure. It was felt that the Community HAP should be retained and revised.

AG suggested that the Steering Group as a body would have more influence than as individuals in their respective organisations. Plans and information tend to cascade down but issues and concerns need to be passed back up to those who have the funding.

Action: Generic HAP to be developed and a draft circulated before the next steering group meeting
Community Action Plan to be retained

SG07/27 Role of BAP Steering Group in adding value to biodiversity projects by collaborative working

AG spoke to his document circulated prior to meeting which identified the contributions that individual partners were making towards biodiversity and posed the question as to how the Steering Group can add value to this work.

Protection of biodiversity 'islands' is not the most effective way forward – a landscape scale approach would be better. Socio-economic drivers may be more effective e.g. issues related to the livestock industry. This is not a new idea on the Island. The East Yar valley project had been started in 1993

Biodiversity needs to be seen as a product of agricultural activity; socio-economic benefit should also benefit biodiversity. The Living Landscapes project has been able to achieve this by talking to 106 people, and helping to set up 83 schemes bringing 5000ha into better management. The Wildlife Trust has made a bid to Natural England and Environment Agency to continue the work, and details will be circulated to the Steering Group.

IB reported that the Tubney Trust currently has relatively large sums of money available to support suitable biodiversity projects. They are looking for new interesting projects on a landscape scale. Island 2000 works best with land that fits around SSSIs, and links things together like road verges etc. Producing a landscape scale project would enable HLS schemes to go ahead. Volunteer help can be used to match money.

From the CLA (whose members own 76% of the Islands land surface) perspective, money is the only incentive. At the moment, livestock farming faces particular

difficulties; milk production is running at a loss, as beef cattle and sheep. This is likely to lead to significant landscape change. Small fields are good for animals, but they are likely to be lost. Cereals produce a different type of landscape and they are more profitable at the moment.

LS described the scheme being developed on the North Downs in Surrey where there are problems with scrubbing over of land. A target area has been drawn up in conjunction with estate owners, rights of way officers and other interested parties to produce a landscape scale HLS which allows access to the scheme by small landowners (who would not otherwise qualify) and large landowners. The scheme helps to fulfil many objectives including those of the AONB management plan, and HAPs.

Could a similar scheme be drawn up here? The West Wight Landscape Project has collapsed but it may be possible to base a project in a similar area but which benefits the farming community as well as landscape and biodiversity.

Action: IB and RG to work up a brief, to be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting.

A document was circulated on 5th December relating to the funding of LBAP partnerships. It is for co-ordinating, developing and administering a partnership. £16000 is available for each county but within fairly clearly defined parameters.

SG07/28 Recordors' Conference

Arreton Village Hall has been booked for Saturday 2nd February 2008 from 1pm to 5pm. Speakers include the following

Environment Agency Fisheries Department (JM)
Wildlife Trust Marine Team (DR)
Review of local BAP species (CP)

Further details will be circulated shortly.

SG07/29 Any other business

a) Woodland grants

HM announced two 80% funded targeted woodland improvement grant schemes

- 1) Whole-Island scheme. It is linked to providing red squirrel habitat by bringing coppice out of cycle by 20 years back into a chequerboard of coupes to be cut in rotation (8 or 12-15 year). Applications must be made by the end of February. A flyer will be circulated via the IW Woodland Forum group.

2) Small-leaved lime project: this is available in the Forest of Bere and on the one Island site. On the Island, there are 20 stools in one ownership and 7 in another, separated by a field. Eligible management includes skylighting the stools, coppicing, rabbit netting and layering.

Following on from the Woodland Forum meeting, the wood fuel issue has attracted quite a lot of interest and both suppliers of wood and potential customers who have contacted James Attrill, the chairman of the Woodland Forum. The formation of an ESCO (energy supply company) is under discussion.

b) AG reported that there as £5000 available for the LRC project this year and next as part of a national scheme.

SG07/30 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 22nd January 2008 10.30 a.m. **at Seaclose Offices**

Other meetings next year are at Enterprise House at 10.30 am on

Thursday April 3rd

Thursday July 3rd

Thursday October 23rd

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.