

WBP SG-1
14th February 2007

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE WALES
BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP HELD AT
BRONEIRION, LLANDINNAM ON WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2007**

Present:

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| Dr Mike Dunn | (Chair WBP) Welsh Assembly Government |
| David Jenkins | Coed Cymru |
| Steven Bromley | Groundwork Wales |
| Dr Tim Stowe | RSPB/Wales Environmental Link/Cynnal Cymru |
| Steve J Moon | Association of Local Government Ecologists |
| Michelle Bromley | Forestry Commission |
| Cliff Benson | Seatrust |
| Dr Trevor Dines | Plantlife Wales |
| Nick Bialynicki Birula | Environment Agency |
| Dr David Parker | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Robin Woodyatt | Welsh Local Government Association |
| Nigel Ajax Lewis | Welsh Wildlife Trusts/ Wales Environmental Link |
| Diana Reynolds | Welsh Assembly Government |
| Dr Rod Gritten | National Parks Wales |
| Peter Birch | British Waterways |
| Deborah Hill | Welsh Local Government Association |
| Roy Tapping | Local Records Centres |
| Dr P Graham Oliver | National Museum of Wales |
| Ieuan Hughes Roberts | Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd |
| Julia Korn | Wales Biodiversity Partnership |
| Juliet Hynes | Wales Biodiversity Partnership |
| Sean McHugh | Wales Biodiversity Partnership |
| Aethne Cooke | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Liz Howe | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Jim Latham | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Delcie Simkin | Welsh Assembly Government |
| Niall Moore | Non- Native Species Secretariat |
| Emily Dicks | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Dr Geoff Proffitt (for Prof. Graeme Clive Hays) | Swansea University |
| Helen Buckingham (for David Bullock) | The National Trust |
| Jeff Morgan (for Brian Nelson) | Dwr Cymru |
| David Cowley | Ynys Mon County Council (LBAP coordinator rep-North) |
| Gareth Ellis | Brecon Beacons National Park (LBAP coordinator rep-South) |
| Helen Lloyd Jones | Ramblers Association |
| Vicki Hickin | NW & NWSFC |
| Hazel Drewett | CCW |
| Catherine Duigan | CCW |

Paul Owen ARENA Network
Apologies
Brian Nelson Dwr Cymru
David Bullock National Trust Wales
Prof. Graeme Clive Hays Swansea University
Michael Bruford Cardiff University
Two WBP Steering Group members did not attend

Morning Session:

1. Mike Dunn welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the newly configured Wales Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group and announced the main theme of the morning session would be ecological connectivity and a presentation based on this theme would occur in the morning session. On behalf of WAG, he expressed gratitude for the efforts of CCW in taking a lead role on this. He introduced guest speaker Niall Moore, who presented an overview of the work carried out by the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat.

2. Non-native Species Presentation

Niall Moore presented an overview of the work carried out to date. Defra led a review of non-native species policy in 2003. The NERC Act (2006) banned the sale of non native species listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The Non Native Species Secretariat was set up in 2006 consisting of 2 members of staff (Niall Moore and Diane Owe). A working group was set up in March 2006 and the Draft Non Native Species Strategy has been approved by all 3 administrations (Scotland, England and Wales). It will be available for consultation in early March and the full Strategy will be finalised by late summer. Defra has some money for this but largely for central coordination and development of methodologies etc. Niall is currently setting up an online system to collect information; further details can be found at www.csl.gov.uk.

Action: Once the Strategy is published WBP SG will establish a Task and Finish Group to take this work forward in Wales.

Niall's PowerPoint presentation will be available on the WBP website with the minutes of this meeting.

3. CCW Natural Connections Project

Jim Latham presented an overview of CCW work on the Natural Connections Project. Currently freshwater, terrestrial and marine environment under threat from habitat fragmentation. There is increasing interest in ecological connectivity at a Wales and a local level. Connectivity is complex and we need to consider it at a range of scales. Protected sites are central to plans for increasing connectivity. Initially link clusters of sites and then develop large-scale connectivity. Interaction between habitats is important to build functional networks. Maps of current connectivity and those demonstrating possible future action are the basis of the project.

Points raised during the discussion

A national framework is important as an aspiration but should be locally driven. Information on local wildlife sites should be fed into the database. LBAP Partnership network already set up and can input local fine tuning of project, LBAP Partnerships welcome this project.

The possibility of linking this project to planning maps as LDPs are developed should be fed into the consultation on "Planning for Climate Change". Dwr Cymru would like to offer information on their sites which are often undisturbed areas to compliment this approach. The importance of training Planners and integrating this into University Courses on Planning was raised. It was suggested that an analysis be carried out on the benefits/impacts on different BAP Species, in some cases different action may be required to safeguard a species. We need to be able to assess the contribution that this project will make towards meeting LBAP/BAP targets. Tim Stowe questioned which species a habitat connectivity programme will benefit as opposed to an increase of habitat area . CCW commented that the project was in its early stages and the analysis was not yet underway. Local community projects can offer information such as the Green Mapping project in Caerphilly. Information on the marine environment can be drawn from voluntary groups such as the Seatruster. It is important that we work with England and Ireland on this. In 2002 there was a declaration on "Marine Connectivity" Examples of marine fragmentation exists on the coast, further out the real problem is with habitat deterioration. The ecological connectivity work is important not just because of climate change but also because of biodiversity loss. Suggestion that a designation for potential sites for wildlife links could go into TAN 5.

Action:

- i) Secretariat to circulate note on existing TAN 5 protection to all WBP members

4. Discussion.

David Parker announced a symposium taking place in Llandudno (29-30th March 2007) themed on Natural Connections-good practice in UK and Europe and the next steps for Wales. The symposium is by invitation only and he agreed to report back the findings of the symposium to WBP SG-2. The Chair then thanked the presenters and the contributors to the discussion and invited the attendees to take lunch.

Action:

- i) David Parker to bring a report from the Natural Connections Seminar to WBP SG-2.

Jims' PowerPoint presentation will be available on the WBP website with the minutes of this meeting.

Afternoon Session

5. The new WBP Reference: Paper 1; Agenda item 5

Mike Dunn briefly discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Partnership in taking forward biodiversity duty in Wales. David Cowley welcomed the opportunity for LBAP Officers to contribute to the Steering Group. Deborah Hill hoped the new configuration would be an effective force for biodiversity duty and suggested that the term “effective” is added to the aims list.

Comment was passed on the lack of an LBAP officer in Ceredigion, and the insecurity that officers have in not knowing whether their posts will be continued as they near the end of contracts.

6. NERC Biodiversity Duty Reference: Paper 2; Agenda Item 6

Steve Moon discussed progress to date. He explained guidance for NERC duty through DEFRA workshops was ongoing. Diana Reynolds offered examples of draft guidance drawn up for public bodies and Local Authorities which could contribute to the final paper. It was suggested a conference should be run around the time of publication. The process of identifying Biodiversity Champions has begun and a yearly monitoring check will take place to establish whether agreements have been kept to.

Decision points:

- i) Agreed to endorse the current approach.

Action:

- i) Agreed that a detailed discussion paper, including sample bullet point lists would be provided at WBP SG-2.

7. Species and Habitats Targets and new lists Reference: Paper 3; Agenda Item 7.

Liz Howe reported on progress to date. She corrected the date of the UK Standing Committee which will meet in April. She noted that the new priority habitats and species list will be presented at that meeting and was likely to be ready for publication in June, following Ministerial approval. Mike Dunn suggested the Committee may delay their decision on this issue until June to take account of the local elections in Wales. He then invited partners to contribute to the new Priority task and finish group to establish the section 42 list. Nigel Ajax Lewis and Aethne Cooke were suggested as potential contributors and Steve Moon offered assistance in finding local government ecologists. Nigel commented that taxonomic expertise may have to be drafted in. Liz confirmed the first stage of the Wales habitat target disaggregating exercise was complete and will be followed by a consultation period prior to publication. For species she commented that progress had been made in contacting assistance and cited

Plant Life and the Butterfly Conservation Group who were keen to participate in disaggregating species targets.

Decision points:

- i) The plan was endorsed.
- ii) Agreement for establishment of task and finish group to lead on developing the S42 List for Wales consisting of: Liz Howe, Trevor Dines, Nigel Ajax Lewis, Tim Stowe, Aethne Cook and an ALGE member.

Action:

- i) Potential task and finish members to confirm with Liz Howe on their availability. Steve Moon to provide a list of local government ecologists to Liz.
- ii) Members of the wider network may volunteer to join this group by contacting the Secretariat team.

8. Standardised Guidance to Develop Local Wildlife Systems in Wales. Reference Paper 4; Agenda item 8

Nigel Ajax Lewis provided the background and a progress report. Mike Dunn enquired about a shortlist of participants for the tasks and finish group. Nigel explained that a meeting of South Wales local authorities engaged in the process of creating Wildlife Sites will take place on 26th February and participation will be confirmed at this meeting. Mike invited participants to engage with the task and finish group. Steve Moon offered help to identify local government ecologists. Nigel will contact Stuart Campbell (CCW) for geological guidance and Hazel Drewett (CCW).

Decision points:

- i) Identified task and finish group consisting of: Nigel Ajax Lewis. Stuart Campbell, Hazel Drewitt and an ALGE member to be invited to sit on group.

Action:

- i) Steve Moon to identify local government ecologists for the task and finish group.
- ii) Nigel to contact Stuart and Hazel and provide an interim report at WBP SG-2.

9. Progress Towards the 2010 Target in Wales: Wales Report from the 2005 UK BAP Reporting Round. Reference: Paper 5; Agenda item 9.

Emily Fleur Dicks briefly explained her new role of Reporting Officer with CCW and then talked about her work area of identifying trends in Wales based on the Wales Report. The final report reporting mechanism will be web based and be searchable. And users will have the ability to toggle between UK and Wales data. Mike Dunn requested clarification on the feedback mechanism for the Report. Emily explained that this would be mainly occurring via the web interface which was customisable but general feedback was welcome. She also offered attendees a draft paper-based report

and explained the Report would go to consultation in early March. She requested lead partners to offer examples of species case studies.

The Draft report revealed that species trends for many species are unknown in Wales, may be artefact of reporting at UK level from lead partners in BARS, and leaving unknowns at the Wales level.

Discussion Points:

Bias might come out so should qualify by who is reporting under each heading, thus can see whether partner would have a Wales understanding or just UK level.

Emily has fed back a lot from this exercise, to the UKBAP team about reporting on BARS.

Confusion from lead partners about who should enter it, and what data should go on BARS necessitating guidance and clarification to all parties.

BARS reporting anomalies arise for example with overwintering, non-breeding species e.g. Common Scoters which only report on breeding pairs and this anomaly has been raised to BARS administrators.

Action:

- i) Emily to document problems and forward an issues report to the WBP Secretariat.
- ii) Emily to avoid biases through increased reporting, by circulating species lists for WBP members to comment on them.
- iii) The Ministerial response to the Wales Report to be delayed from April till May/June due to the run-up to Welsh Assembly elections occurring at this time.
- iv) Steering Group Members agreed to provide feedback on the Draft Report to Emily

10. Communications and Awareness Work Handover Reference: Paper 6; Agenda Item 10

Emily Fleur Dicks reminded the Steering Group of her new role and explained that Samantha Bryan (CCW) was assisting WBP secretariat with Emily's former awareness duties until complete handover to WBP secretariat in March 2007. She highlighted the main communication and awareness activities including Wales Biodiversity Week, Breathing Places and the Biodiversity Award. Preparations for the WBP 2007 event are underway. The revamped Wales Biodiversity website was demonstrated with its increased functionality.

The Ramblers Association (Helen Lloyd Jones) praised the website and suggested that unless there was a clear economic reason then it should not be moved from the current

provider. Mike Dunn suggested further discussion was required to ensure web site continuity.

Decision points:

- i) A temporary extension of the website contract beyond August 2007 was agreed. Continuation beyond this point will be considered as an option by WBP.
- ii) Full proposals on Stakeholder communications will be brought to WBP SG-2 or 3 to give a chance for ongoing discussions to finalise on Wales Biodiversity Week.
- iii) Sean McHugh produced a draft WBP 2007 conference outline and invited comments. The conference will take place on the 12th and 13th September 2007 in Wrexham.

Robin Woodyatt thanked Emily for all her hard work in a short space of time.

Action:

- i) WBP to consider website contract options beyond temporary extension.
- ii) Full proposals on Stakeholder communications will be brought to WBP SG-2 or 3.
- iii) Sean McHugh will distribute the draft programme to the Steering Group and the wider partnership, comments to be returned by 23rd February.
- iv) Juliet, Sean and Julia to remind LBAP Coordinators to send photographs and information about their LBAP to Sam Bryan for loading onto the revamped website.

11. Marine and Freshwater Actions Reference: Paper 7; Agenda item 11

In response to an action from WBP12 Catherine Duigan presented a list of actions for the marine and freshwater environment and the WBP Steering Group were asked to sign up to these.

As some members of the Steering Group felt unable to sign up to the 1st principal it was agreed that members should provide comments on the list and feed back to the Secretariat by the end of February.

Action:

- i) Juliet Hynes to send out a copy of the paper to the SG and wider WBP, all to feed back comments to Secretariat by the end of February so that they can be collated and the revised actions brought back to WBP SG-2.
- ii) Aethne Cooke to develop a quick list of actions that can be taken now to bring to WBP SG-2

- iii) A meeting will be established to take forward WBP consideration of River Basin Liaison plans.

12. WBP Work Plan and Introduction to New Staff Reference: Paper 8; Agenda item 12

Diana Reynolds announced that changes would be made to the WBP work plan to include decisions from this meeting and will be circulated by the Secretariat. Further announcements included:

Decision Points:

- i) Membership of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group membership was confirmed.
- ii) Membership of the Environment Strategy for Wales Outcome 21 task and finish group was confirmed.
- iii) An outline of the funding/budget for the work plan will be provided at the next meeting.
- iv) Notable diary dates include the WBP Annual Conference (12-13th September, Wrexham). Biodiversity Duty – Focus on local Action course at Plas Tan y Bwlch in Snowdonia National Park (23rd to 25th October). Welsh Wildlife and Environmental Crime Conference (29th -30th October, Llandrindod Wells)

Action:

- i) The update plan will be sent round by the Secretariat for each SG
- ii) Secretariat will circulate a reminder those actions agreed for all WBP members.

14. Review of outstanding action from LBAB Reference: Paper 9; Agenda item 14

Julia Korn reported on outstanding actions from Local Biodiversity Advisory Groups in the period 6th October 2005 to 17th October 2006.

Actions from minutes 06/10/05

- i) Julia asked Diana Reynolds regarding the awareness raising indicator. Diana indicated that the Environment Strategy Indicators should be publicly available by mid-June at which point WBP may wish to review the list.
- ii) Aethne Cooke indicated that funding was now available for the review of marine BAPS.

Actions from minutes 25/01/06

All ongoing actions have been included in the forward work plan.

Actions from Minutes 17/10/06

- i) Nick Bialynicki Birula suggested the LBAP facilitator newsletter could be presented three times a year and contain the main bullet points with links to the WBP website for more detail. Mike Dunn praised the December 2006 newsletter. Julia explained this included a CCW funded newsletter on funding sources. These points will be incorporated into the stakeholder communication plan.
- ii) Julia will distribute the LBAP country facilitator meeting minutes when they become available. She announced the next facilitator meeting would be on the 6th March.

15. AOB and Date of Next Meeting

EA have entered into scoping study of wildlife economic activities including tourism. A £25k funding programme has allowed consultants to undertake information gathering and to pull together key messages with WBP members leading to future programme development. Report will hopefully be produced at the end of March. The overall aims seek to raise awareness and highlight the economic benefits from investment in wildlife, and encourage investment and improved resources for wildlife. Diana Reynolds pointed out that her colleagues in the Assembly believe that funding coming in to the Public Sector in Wales (from UK and EU sources) is currently on a downward trend over the next twenty years. In the circumstances we will need to find innovative ways of maximising biodiversity gains from all existing and future funding streams

Action:

- i) **WBP members** to contact Nick Bialynicki Birula (EA nicholas.birula@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk) for liaison with the consultation team if they wish to become involved. Examples of economic benefit from wildlife protection (dolphins) were mentioned by Cliff Benson (Seatrust).
- ii) Secretariat will incorporate results of this work into the Stakeholder Communications Plan

Date of next meetings:

WBP SG-2 Weds 18th July, Kenfig Nature Reserve Visitors Centre

WBP SG-3 provisionally Weds 14th November, in North East Wales.