

CONFIRMED MINUTES

WBPSG4, 20th February, Broneirion

Attending	Organisation
P. Graham Oliver	National Museum of Wales
Aethne Cooke	CCW
Amy Mulkern (providing paper)	Welsh Wildlife Partnerships, Wildlife Trusts Wales
Bill Somerfield (providing paper)	WAG (WBP Secretariat/support team)
Blaise Bullimore (providing presentation)	Carmarthen Bay & Estuaries EMS
Cliff Benson	SeaTrust
David Parker	CCW
Diana Reynolds	WAG (WBP Secretariat/support team)
Dori Gomez- Levit	Arena Network Wales
Emma Durward	Biodiversity Officer, Powys CC
Gareth Ellis (providing paper)	Brecon Beacons NPA/WBP Secretariat/support team
Hazel Drewett	CCW
Ian Guildford (providing paper)	PAW
Jennifer Dack	Environment Agency
Julia Korn (providing paper)	WAG (WBP Secretariat/support team)
Lia Moutselou (providing paper)	WCMP
Liz Howe (providing paper)	CCW
Michelle Bromley	Forestry Commission Wales

Nigel Ajax Lewis	Wildlife Trust S & W Wales
Philip Trembath (providing paper)	Arena Network Wales
Rod Gritten	Snowdonia NPA
Roy Tapping	COFNOD
Russel Hobson (providing presentation)	Butterfly Conservation Wales
Sean McHugh (providing paper)	WAG (WBP Secretariat/support team)
Steve Moon	Bridgend County Borough Council
Steven Bromley	Groundwork Wales
Stuart Moodie	British Waterways
Tim Stowe	RSPB
Tom Lunn (providing paper)	Arena Network
Trevor Dines	Plantlife

Apologies		
Peter Birch	British Waterways	Stuart Moodie representing
Prof Michael Bruford	Cardiff University	
David Jenkins	Coed Cymru	
Chris Mills	EA	Jennifer Dack representing
Dr Glenda Thomas	FWAG Cymru	
Robin Woodyatt	WLGA	
David Cowley	Anglesey CC/LBAPs	
David Bullock	National Trust	
Adam Rowe	SEWBREC	
Liz Cozens	Swansea University	
Gaynor Ainscough	WBP Secretariat/support team	

Introduction

Diana Reynolds chaired the meeting and welcomed the attendees. She thanked everyone for all their hard work over the past months. Diana explained she is filling in temporarily for Mike Dunn (WAG) as he is involved in the Axis 2 review. Diana is also covering the marine role at WAG pending the appointment of Ann John.

1. Action: Support Team to invite Mike Dunn to provide a paper on Axis 2 progress at WBP SG 5 (July)

Graham Oliver announced a feasibility study exploring the development of a Natural History Museum for Wales and more information can be obtained by contacting Graham (graham.oliver@nmgw.ac.uk).

Presentation 1: Welsh GEMS: Group of European Marine Sites & BAP (Blaise Bullimore)

In Wales there are 7 European Marine Sites (EMS) and 2 candidate sites. 2006 EMS reporting showed that over half of all features were in unfavourable condition and stressed that the momentum provided by management planning needs to be supported financially. There are similarities between his EMS and BAP aspirations although there is some mismatch in terms of some species. Currently only listed features (or those encompassed by listed features) are addressed by conservation objectives and so are actually protected within EMS. Both EMS and the BAP process are useful mechanisms but their success to date is limited and habitat loss and degradation remains a problem. He cautioned against 'shifting baseline' and a lowering of our expectations towards the marine environment and the importance of ecosystem functioning provided by the marine environment. Blaise welcomed the aspiration for the marine environment in the Environment Strategy Wales and the NERC Duty but stressed they must result in enforcement where legislation exists and in practical action.

Documents on Marine case law issues that may be of interest:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/paper_en.htm - link to *Nature and Biodiversity cases ruling of the European Court of Justice 2006* is about two thirds of way down page

Natural England case law in Natura 2000 sites report is at <http://naturalengland.communisis.com/NaturalEnglandShop/product.aspx?ProductID=dd60b4c6-281b-4f17-a43a-1df1c38c449f>

The recent Science paper abstract is at <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/319/5865/948> - access to the paper itself is restricted to subscriber and WBP secretariat/support team. However, the lead author's university has web pages describing the work at <http://www.nceas.ucsb.edu/GlobalMarine>

Discussion: Welsh European Marine Sites

How does the existing legislation assist marine sites? Blaise highlighted an anomaly in the legislation whereby a protected habitat/ species can be damaged but as they are not listed as a feature of the site or in the conservation objectives of the site, adequate provision for their protection is lacking. David Parker mentioned that the sea bed is owned by Crown Estates and they should be reminded of their obligation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Biodiversity Duty (Section 40). Blaise cautioned about the potential loss of momentum of marine partnerships as local Authority funding streams are cut back especially regarding their support for EMS Relevant Authority Groups. Steve Moon indicated that cost cutting was a reality for most Welsh Local Authorities and external contract services may be the result. The WBPs role in supporting WAG in their leadership and advocacy on marine sites was emphasised.

2. Action for All: Feed in any specific occurrences of issues which compromise Welsh European Sites protection to secretariat/support team (Sean McHugh s.mchugh@welshwildlife.org).

3. Action: David Parker and Blaise to discuss the role of the Crown Estates following the meeting.

Paper 2: A Biodiversity Duty for Public Sector Bodies and Local Government: proposals for joint WBP/CCW progress review visits.

Bill Somerfield introduced the paper and thanked Joanna Robertson (CCW) who was unable to attend but had provided most of its content.. He mentioned that through a parallel process operating at WAG, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing has agreed to lead this process. Bill will circulate the Decision Report which reinforces the minister's commitment to delivering statutory biodiversity and nature conservation objectives through the biodiversity champion role as part of a range of measures to achieve this aim. The Report also outlines the requirement of local authorities to provide sufficient staff to fulfil these objectives. Bill then drew attention to the annexes on enforcement and Public Bodies accompanying the paper and welcomed comments. The WLGA has agreed the content of the above papers and in addition WAG have recently written to Local Authority Heads of Planning outlining their duty under the NERC Act and habitats regulations. Blaise Bullimore drew attention to work at the UK and EU level which could reinforce the enforcement effort.

The importance to report back following visits to biodiversity champions before the review of the Biodiversity Duty in Autumn 2009 was noted.

4. Action for All: Send track changes of Enforcement checklist (annex 2) and Biodiversity Duty for Public Bodies checklist (annex 1) to Bill Somerfield (william.somerfield@wales.gsi.gov.uk) by Friday 28 March for Bill to finalise and translate document before posting on WBP website.

5. Action: Bill Somerfield to circulate WAG Decision Report and up-dated timetable concerning the role of biodiversity champions within Local Government and the contents of the letter sent to Local Authorities.

6. Action: Blaise Bullimore to send the EU/UK enforcement documents and web links to the WBP secretariat/support team for circulation. (completed see above).

Decision Point A: Joanna Robertson will coordinate visits to Biodiversity Champions across Wales. The visits will involve Joanna representing WBP (or another WBP member) and staff from CCW. It was agreed that members of the steering group would make themselves available for one or two meetings a year to assist with this process.

7. Action for All: Further volunteers to be involved in the visits to biodiversity Champions should contact Joanna Robertson (joanna.robertson@ccw.gov.uk).

8. Action: Secretariat/support team (Delcie Simkin) will continue to work with Ian Guilford to produce case studies illustrating consequences of non-compliance with legislation.

Paper 3: Habitat Connectivity/Natural Connections update

Liz Howe introduced the paper and announced a DEFRA project board funding initiative to assist this process and a report will be out in May 2008. Jim Latham (CCW) represents Wales on the project board. A new initiative 'Phase 1 update' – a remote sensing project with the ability to map habitats aurally was outlined. Tim Stowe questioned whether the planned natural connections strategy was the correct approach for species in light of research findings and questioned whether we have a plan B; species translocation or making existing sites more resilient for example. Marine connectivity issues were raised as baseline data for connectivity lagged behind the terrestrial environment.

Decision Point B: Given the concerns it was agreed to limit connectivity action in Wales on the following actions.

9. Action: Secretariat/support team (Julia Korn) to invite CCW to present 'Phase 1 update' presentation at WBP SG5 or later meeting.

10. Action: Liz Howe to circulate the DEFRA Report when complete for comments

11. Action: Secretariat/support team (Julia Korn) to invite CCW to present an update incorporating comments noted in Action 9 and 10 at WBP SG6 (Nov)

Paper 4: BAP Update – Habitat Groupings, LBAP Review

The UK Standing committee requested that Country Biodiversity Groups establish Country habitat groups and draft proposals were taken to the last Biodiversity Reporting and Information (BRIG) meeting. At that meeting UK groupings were also suggested that more or less follow the Welsh proposed groups. A lack of awareness of the marine group was raised.

Decision Point C. Habitat groupings approach accepted with minor changes to be made by Liz Howe.

12. Action: Aethne Cooke to provide some information on the marine group to the WCMP.

13. Action: Diana Reynolds to explore possibility of the Assembly providing the lead for the marine group

14. Action: Liz Howe to make final changes to the habitat groups list and re-circulate.

The new deadline for BRIG to report on the assignment of country actions to priority species has been delayed until the end of Feb. Single species action plans will still exist in the new approach and a similar habitat grouping exercise had been undertaken by the England Biodiversity Group which would be a useful resource to the task & finish group.

15. Action: Secretariat/support team (Julia Korn) to distribute England Biodiversity Group report to task and finish Group.

Decision Point D: It was decided to use the existing S42 Task & Finish Group as a basis for Welsh BAP task and finish group and to request new volunteers including an individual with policy experience. Julia Korn will administer.

16. Action for All: Contact Julia Korn to volunteer for inclusion on the Welsh BAP task & finish Group by Friday 28March (j.korn@ccw.gov.uk)

Guidance for LBAP review remains Annex H of the Wales Biodiversity Framework (Section 1) and the WBP LBAP review bullet point guidance. Annex H is currently being updated and will be available on the WBP website in March. A Guidance format version of Section 1 will then be produced in the spring.

Gareth Ellis and David Cowley will be covering Juliet Hynes's maternity leave and offering BARS technical support to LBAPs (and other partners where appropriate) in Juliet's absence. Their key role is to help LBAP Officers set up their LBAP on BARS as part of the review process.

Decision Point E: LBAPS were formally recognised by WBP as a key mechanism for delivering reviewed BAP in Wales.

17. Action: Julia Korn to circulate revised Annex H to all when complete.

Paper 5 Use of BARS by organisations and government in Wales

CCW have produced a draft operational agreement to demonstrate how they intend to populate BARS and make information available to partners at all levels. This agreement will be taken to a future Senior Management meeting seeking approval. The first CCW BARS Task and Finish group meeting will be next week and the aim is to have a phased roll out of this project focusing initially on key areas of work such as SSSI management and grants. Jennifer Dack reported that EA have a draft BARS plan and are committed to the BARS strategy. EA will initially focus on activities where they are the lead partner and in the longer term address wider ranging activities that deliver biodiversity. Michelle Bromley stated that a FCW BARS plan with timetable would be in place later this year.. New FCW projects would be listed on BARS. Cliff Benson cited the difficulty encountered by small voluntary groups in using BARS due to capacity and technical issues. Small grants targeted at smaller organisations and individual recorders from CCW could facilitate the use of BARS.

18. Action: David Parker to report back to WBP regarding CCW data mobilisation grants.

19. Action: Julia Korn to incorporate 'smaller organisations' BARS requirements into the overall plan

Discussions and action to populate BARS with Tir Gofal information are on-going. Due to logistics and data protection, single actions could not be reported at this stage, block updates would be provided, probably on a six monthly basis. Tim Stowe announced that RSPB would be updating at the Wales (and UK) level from March. Michelle Bromley announced capturing the Better Woodland for Wales Grant Scheme on BARS is ongoing. The draft CCW BARS operational agreement could be used as a template for other organisations to adapt for their own use.

Decision Point F: The BARS approach of WBP partner organisations was endorsed

Decision Point G: CCW draft BARS Operational agreement will await final endorsement by the CCW Board.

Decision Point H: A timetable for organisational involvement was agreed

20. Action: Organisations listed above are asked to provide a report and timetable on their operational approach to BARS for WBP SG6 in November.

Paper 6: Issues from LBAPs

Gareth Ellis highlighted the implementation gap in sustainable development whereby biodiversity is often missed off the agenda and stressed LBAP partnerships would benefit from action to address this shortfall. Diana Reynolds indicated the WAG decision report and NERC recommendation of the local authority Sustainable Development champion to work with the nominated Biodiversity Champion should help. Climate change is a good hook to move forward biodiversity within the sustainable development framework.

21. Action: Diana Reynolds to liaise with WAG Climate Change communications team to reinforce the case for biodiversity messages

Gareth then spoke about the shortfall and the requirement for up-to-date habitat baseline data which hampered efforts to set realistic LBAP habitat targets and explore connectivity options in the ongoing review was raised. Liz Howe recognised that Phase 1 coverage was less useful particularly for conurbations where land use change was more rapid. Liz mentioned that Phase 1 data is digitised and CCW could provide an algorithm which enabled translation of Phase 1 habitats to BAP habitats on Wales-wide basis, and a pilot study was suggested.

22. Action: CCW will pilot the Phase 1 translation initiative. Gareth Ellis will identify candidate pilot areas.

‘Phase 1 update’ the remote habitat mapping project is currently being developed by CCW (Alan Brown). Initial findings are promising and a report is due in March.

23. Action: Julia Korn to invite Alan Brown to present at a future WBP SG meeting.

FCW are working on Phase 1 update and to ensure it includes retrospective mapping to capture woodland loss/gain. Roy Tapping offered assistance with setting up the algorithm translator and trial this in North Wales.

24. Action. Roy Tapping to liaise with FCW data department (Vicki West) to assist with the technical requirements of the habitat translation algorithm.

Paper 7: Taxonomic Group Presentations – explanation of this new regular agenda item

Bill Somerfield explained the concept and invited Russel Hobson to give the inaugural presentation based on Lepidoptera.

Presentation 2: Taxonomic group – Butterflies (Russel Hobson)

Butterfly Conservation has 3 full time employees and one part time employee and over 400 members in Wales. The organisation receives funding from CCW and has an active volunteer base who deliver projects.

Russel emphasised that strong volunteering element, partnership working and continued funding were critical in delivering conservation objectives. Funding rules rather than sources of funding prevented direct nature conservation action. Further challenges cited in the presentation include the decline of agri-environment schemes and the adoption of a Butterfly Indicator to assess performance.

25. Action: Secretariat/support team will investigate the potential of having an all Wales Funding Officer primarily to work with funding providers

26. Action: Jennifer Dack and Michelle Bromley will forward contact details for external funding staff within their respective organisation to the Secretariat/support team.

27. Action: Tim Stowe to attend HLF funding meeting 27th March (Julia Korn to send details to Tim).

Russel then drew attention to the ‘State of Wales Butterfly Report’ and then outlined active projects in Wales. He informed WBP that the current Butterfly & Moth action plan for Wales is being updated in the light of the new S42 list.

Cliff Benson commended the work carried out. David Parker enquired about the fortune of moths and to comment on reports of a 90% decline backed up by Steve Moon from Glamorgan records. Russel indicated that baseline data was lacking for moths but the HLF project ‘Moths Count’ will assist.

28. Action: Russel to liaise with Glamorgan Moth recorders to capture their moth data.

Decision Point I: Funding action agreed

29. Action. Sean McHugh to speak with Russel to facilitate the funding and ensure that any spare is used for direct nature conservation.

Decision point J: Format of presentation agreed as a standing item at WBP SG meetings.

Decision Point K: Cetaceans and Fungi volunteered for consideration for next presentation.

30. Action: Sean McHugh to approach Cliff Benson (Cetaceans) and Ray Wood (Fungi) for subsequent SG taxonomic group presentations.

Paper 10: Marine Policy and Bill Update

An update was provided on the progress of the draft Marine Bill. Omissions in the draft bill including inshore fisheries management and coastal access provision are likely to be included in the final bill.

Lia Moutselou then updated WBP on the role and remit of Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership (WCMP). WCMP acts in a non statutory advisory role to WAG and further information and signposting is available on the WCMP web site. Membership is by select committee and includes key stakeholders in Wales together with business and fisheries sectors. Steve Moon is a member of WCMP and he will update WBP on progress. Lia will provide annual updates to WBP.

31. Action: Steve Moon to represent WCMP at WBP SG Meetings via a regular agenda item.

32. Action. Secretariat/support team to invite Lia to WBP SG7 (Feb 09).

Paper 11: Business and Biodiversity - an approach for engaging businesses in Wales

Philip Trembath outlined the work of Arena Wales and the shared role with CCW developing EMS systems for business. There are twenty business coordinators located in Wales and a dedicated biodiversity business coordinator covering all of Wales (Tom Lunn) whose role is to integrate biodiversity into business practices. The initiative is concerned with biodiversity gains for business estates but also includes reputational and supply chain modifications by businesses that will benefit biodiversity. Amy Mulkern outlined the Wildlife Trusts role in engaging business which has run for a year and is gaining momentum. The Green Dragon environmental scheme is run by Arena; Arena will ensure their coordinators are briefed on the scheme and professional auditing will ensure consistency and prevent 'greenwash'. WBP could assist with Arena with technical queries relating to biodiversity.

33. Action: David Parker/Diana Reynolds will liaise with Arena (Philip Trembath) to assess the strength of biodiversity provision in the Green Dragon scheme.

Decision Point L: The principal of WBP membership for business organisation was endorsed but it was felt that more consideration was needed to ensure propriety.

The remaining decisions points were placed on hold pending a Business and Biodiversity strategy paper in July which captures potential criteria for business membership of WBP.

Decision Point M: It was agreed to establish a Business and Biodiversity Forum including Arena, Wildlife Trusts and other members to assist with this process.

34. Action: Arena Network Wales with input from Wildlife Trust Wales (Amy Mulkern) to produce a strategy paper for WBP SG 5 (July).

Paper 12 WBP Planning

Sean McHugh updated WBP on merchandise and plan of action for Wales Biodiversity Week 2008 (7th – 15th June). He then requested partner organisation to host events and send details to the appropriate LBAP/Sean McHugh for publicity purposes. Forward planning for 2009 requires a date for WBW to be set.

35. Action: Sean McHugh to provide dates for WBW 2009 at SG5 (July)

Decision Point N: Partner organisations agreed to circulate WBP date to their networks.

Decision Point O: Partner organisations agreed to host/coordinate events with LBAPs

Decision Point P: Partner organisations agreed to circulate event listings for publicity

Sean then outlined the WBP Aberystwyth conference options and highlighted the uncertainty at DEFRA regarding the UK conference event proposed as a one day event (9th Sept) preceding the Wales Conference (10th & 11th Sept). The views expressed in the meeting indicated that a two day combined conference would be preferable. A UK Conference meeting is scheduled for the 20th March and Sean will report back.

36. Action: Sean McHugh to inform DEFRA of the WBP position and circulate final decision.

The timing and location options for the 2009 WBP Biodiversity Conference were discussed. Preferred dates expressed were 9th and 10th September 2009 at the University of Glamorgan or Trinity College, Carmarthen.

37. Action: Sean McHugh to approach Glamorgan and Trinity College with preferred dates and report back to WBPSG05

Paper 13 WBP Communications and conference funding award

Sean McHugh outlined the draft communication framework stating at this stage it represented a high level action plan and context, objectives, audiences and key messages would be added. He also requested comments for modification/improvement and key biodiversity messages from partner organisations. Sean thanked Jennifer Dack (EA) and Dusi Thomas (Dwr Cymru) for their input. It was suggested that the Plan should coordinate with the Climate Change Commission.

38. Action: Diana Reynolds to send Sean a contact for the Climate Change commission.

Decision Points Q: The communication approach was endorsed.

39. Action for All. Send suggestions for improvement and key biodiversity messages from your organisation to Sean McHugh (s.mchugh@welshwildlife.org)

Sean then outlined the proposed changes to the WBP website to capture ES Wales outcomes; the ecosystem approach and adopt a segmented approach according to audience type. Two web designs were offered and comments/preferences were requested. Members favoured the 'rapid refresh' approach to tie in with the run up to Wales Biodiversity Week.

Decision Point R: The web reconfiguration was endorsed.

40. Action for All: Send comments to Sean McHugh (s.mchugh@welshwildlife.org) on the proposed design by Feb 28th. Demonstration website available at: <http://www.demo.wisshost.net/wbp>

Post conference funding projects were then outlined (from Wrexham WBP Conference 2007).

Decision Point S: Proposals and funding amounts endorsed for 2007 conference.

Decision Point T: The conference funding concept was endorsed for future events.

41. Action: Sean McHugh to contact project leads and release funds.

Paper 14 WBP Review of progress

This paper was deferred until the end of the meeting and a short exercise to draw out improvements in the way WBP work on an organisational and individual level was conducted. The overall aim being to improve the performance of WBP and also to highlight the success achieved thus far.

42. Action: Bill Somerfield to collate responses and draw up a report for SG6 (Nov).

Paper 15 Regular wildlife crime update

Wales has 2 Full Time Wildlife Crime Officers seconded to CCW Ian Guilford based in South Wales and Rob Taylor based in the North. Pete Charleston has retired but is currently working on the revision of Tan 9. In addition police officers have been seconded to the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission. Ian outlined a new initiative 'Green Specials' whereby special constables are trained to assist with wildlife crime incidents. Incidents of wildlife crime were highlighted with the intention of publishing these incidents on the revamped WBP website.

43. Action for All: Send details of relevant Wildlife Crime incidents to Secretariat/support team for collation. (Delcie Simkin delcie.simkin@wales.gsi.gov.uk) which Delcie will share with Ian.

44. Action: Sean McHugh to incorporate Wildlife Crime section in revamped WBP website.

45. Action: Secretariat/support team to invite Ian Guildford to provide regular wildlife crime updates and developments to WBP SG meetings. The updates should include proactive work and reactive cases.

The draft marine bill will mean increased conservation legislation and questions were asked as to who will enforce this.

46. Action: Inshore Fisheries consultation web link to be circulated and put on the web by the secretariat/support team.

Item 16: Minutes and Actions

Page 3: Typographic error in Minister's name -amended to Jane Hutt.

A brief report was provided on actions from the previous meeting not yet covered:

Wildlife Sites Guidance for Wales is with the Minister and hopefully will be signed off in the next few days. (Update: it has now been approved)

The invitation to the European Environment Agency minister (Jock Martin) who was not able to be present today will be forthcoming to attend WBP SG5.

47. Action: Secretariat/support team (Delcie Simkin) to invite Jock Martin to SG05

6. Schedule 4 requirement for captive raptor registration update. A compromise solution is being discussed; more details will follow.

Item 17: AOB

1. Diana Reynolds announced that Rod Gritten will be leaving the WBP steering group and thanked him for his outstanding contribution over the years; Rod received a round of applause from the steering group. Kate Williamson will be his replacement and will represent the National Parks following ministerial confirmation.

2. Date of WBP SG 5 meeting is 15th July, South Wales location.

48. Action: Secretariat/support team to circulate SG5 date and location.

(Update: Meeting will be held on July 15, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff)

3. Date of WBP SG06 is November 12th, CCW Conference Offices, Maes y Ffynnon, Bangor.

49. Action Julia Korn to book room and forward details to Delcie/Francis.

7. LRC Biodiversity Information Event at Aberystwyth on 12th March was announced.

8. A series of Wales Spatial Plan review meetings will take places across Wales in early March; to find out more information or register, go to:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/currentconsultation/improveps/wspconsult/?lang=en>

Decision Point U: WBP agreed to endorse Plantlife's new draft red-list of vascular plants in Wales (recently circulated) Trevor Dines has requested the list not be circulated outside of WBP for the time being.

Date of Next Meeting July 15, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.