

Future of BAP task and finish group

Background/Progress

The Future of BAP task and finish group has developed a new structure and processes for delivering BAP commitments in Wales, now that overall responsibility for delivery has been devolved to a country level. The group has developed a BAP Mechanism document over the last 12 months that sets out this new approach. This document is currently being incorporated into the Wales Biodiversity Framework.

The Mechanism has been produced in consultation with interested parties across Wales. In addition to written consultations, the task and finish group held a workshop at WBP SG in November 2008 and 3 regional seminars across Wales in March 2009, targeting LBAP officers and other local and regional staff. The Future of BAP group are committed to further workshops for regional staff of the CCW, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency and an additional workshop for senior staff of these organisations. The support from members of WBP SG is needed to ensure attendance at these planned seminars. The aim is to hold these workshops in November 2009.

Plan/Proposals

The BAP Mechanism document sets out the structure for delivery of BAP actions focussing on the achievement of local and Wales level targets for Welsh BAP priorities. Welsh BAP priorities are listed for Section 42 of the NERC Act, and are therefore underpinned by legislation. The new approach, as set out in the Mechanism, maintains and builds on the previous BAP structure in Wales by establishing a new layer of expertise at a Wales level, while retaining the WBP, its associated groups, the successful LBAP partnerships and the LRC network. The new groups are 9 Ecosystem Groups, a Species Expert Group, a Policy group and Welsh Lead partners for species (see BAP mechanism for roles and responsibilities). The whole approach will be supported and informed by reporting on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).

All the new biodiversity groups are now operating. Previously existing groups are adapting the way they work to fulfil their amended role. There is enthusiasm and commitment to this new coordinated approach, and those involved have high expectations that it will lead to improved biodiversity delivery. Coordination is currently provided by CCW and WBP Support Staff, in addition to their existing work, and meetings are organised and run with no budget. The contribution of the voluntary and public sector has been commendable, however the issue of high level commitment, capacity and resources has been raised by many of the individual groups and in consultation feedback.

The benefits of investment in this process will be evident through:

1. the improved ability to target resources where the greatest biodiversity benefit can be achieved and advise others of action required,
2. increasing our ability to influence others to reduce negative impacts and realise opportunities
3. working across government and public bodies to ensure an effective and efficient service, as required by the Beecham Agenda
4. through LBAP partnerships, continue to work closely with local communities and other sectors to provide a citizen-centred approach to biodiversity action whilst also delivering on a coordinated Wales agenda.
5. an improved ability to report progress using reliable data

Decision Points

If we are to move forward with this process it is vital that:

- a) there is recognition from the Assembly Government of the biodiversity expertise contained in the new structure, with the new Ecosystem Groups, Wales Biodiversity Policy Group and the Species Expert Group formally involved in an advisory capacity on biodiversity issues,
- b) there is active consideration by senior staff in key organisations of the requirements of their organisation to support the implementation of biodiversity action in Wales through the new structure, and of how they need to mainstream this responsibility across sectors within their organisations.
- c) A budget for the coordination and running of the new structure (e.g. venue costs, travel expenses, supporting NGOs to attend etc)

Action Points

1. Agree to work towards full achievement of a- c above and the Assembly Government and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies to report back to the WBP SG meeting in November on progress made.
2. Agree to ensure that the local, regional and senior staff from CCW, FC and EAW attend the workshops run by the Future of BAP Group in November.
3. Agree that the new BAP Mechanism document should be used to update the Terms of Reference of the WBP SG in the Wales Biodiversity Framework.