

Title: Report from the Ecosystem Groups and Species Expert Group

Produced by: *Wales Biodiversity Policy Group*

Background/Progress

The Future of BAP Mechanism document was agreed by WBP last July and is currently published on the WBP website. Over the next few months it will be used to update the Wales Biodiversity Framework. The new structure and processes set out in this document are seen as a key tool to support delivery and reporting of the Wales Environment Strategy and the Sustainable Development Scheme and support compliance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Biodiversity Duty. The new approach to biodiversity will ensure not just delivery of biodiversity targets but also inform and support the delivery of the ecosystem approach in Wales and so help safeguard the services and products on which the people of Wales depend for their livelihoods, health and general well being.

An important element of the Future of BAP Mechanism has been the establishment of 9 Ecosystem Groups and the Species Expert Group. The primary role of these groups is to make sure Wales meets targets for Section 42 species and habitats. All groups are currently involved in prioritising targets and actions and identifying leads to ensure delivery. In addition groups have been identifying policy issues and responding to government consultations such as Glastir.

There has been tremendous support for these groups from individuals and particularly from the NGO sector and a real belief that it will lead to significant gains for biodiversity on the ground. This approach enables organisations and groups to work closely together to deliver agreed priorities, through agreed mechanisms in collaboration with the most appropriate partners. Three of the Ecosystem Groups and the Species Expert Group have provided information on a positive outcome from their group and an area of work that requires further support/action (Annex 1).

Communication is already starting to improve within, and between different levels of delivery and this will lead to future benefits for biodiversity. All groups now have a LBAP representative who will be responsible for feeding back to LBAP Partnerships following each meeting, providing guidance and ensuring local partnerships are included in consultations etc. The Chairs of the new groups have met twice will continue to work closely together on prioritisation and delivery. A list of the Chairs of each of the Groups and of their LBAP representative is attached as annex 2. The Welsh Assembly Government has offered a small amount of funding to each group this financial year to stimulate action on the ground in partnership with the relevant LBAP partnership/s.

Ecosystem groups -Targets for the original Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats will mostly remain the same as those set in 2006. Targets will now be set for the additional Section 42 habitats (In Wales the Section 42 list is out BAP list).

The Species Expert Group is working closely with Wales species lead partners to set Wales level targets for species and identify priority action. Gaps in expertise will be reported to WBP SG at the next meeting in February.

A timetable has been set for publishing target and action information (annex 3)

The Biodiversity Policy Group has also been established and has met 3 times. Policy actions are fed to the Policy group who will work hard to influence government and others to work more closely with the new groups and to build biodiversity into strategic assessments, strategies, policies, programmes etc at the beginning of their development. The Policy group will also seek to enter into dialogue with other sectors to seek opportunities for multifunctional approaches. In preparation for this a statement on Ecosystems, the ecosystem approach and ecosystems goods and services will be produced to ensure a common understanding across sectors.

The new groups have specific roles and responsibilities regarding biodiversity delivery, and it is important to understand that this work will support and build on the other functions of the WBP wider network including: action for locally important biodiversity; engaging and involving other sectors and the public, communication and education activities much of which will be set out in the WBP communication plan and by the LBAPs.

To maintain momentum and further the conservation of biodiversity it is critical that organisations including Government commit to this approach at all levels. This means

- setting out how they will align their own work priorities with delivery across their organisation,
- raising awareness within their organisations (and especially with management) of the new approach and sharing the work load out between key individuals.
- reviewing appropriate policies and guidance to ensure that staff understand the organisations roles and responsibilities in delivering biodiversity priorities
- ensuring organisational programmes and projects and or grant funding links to Wales and/or local priorities
- reporting biodiversity actions and progress towards targets on Biodiversity Action reporting System (BARS)
- all public authorities (and projects and programmes funded by public money) must be compliant with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Biodiversity Duty.

Decision Point

- Agree that the new structure is a fundamental tool that will support Wales to deliver and report on the Sustainable Develop Scheme 'One Wales one Planet', the Wales Environment Strategy and the NERC Act (2006) biodiversity Duty
- Agree that further commitment and activity to the new structure is required by government and organisations in Wales if we are to meet the Wales Environment Strategy Target of 'recovery [of biodiversity] underway by 2026'.
- Agree that the Ecosystem Group/Species priority actions should inform organisational work programmes and grant applications once they have agreed to act as an Action Lead or Delivery Agent for that action

Actions

- a) WBP should ask the Welsh Assembly Government to take action to strengthen support across key organisations for the new structure
- b) Organisations to adopt the BAP Mechanism Document (WBF once updated) as the principle organising framework for biodiversity delivery in Wales and review existing mechanisms and if required introduce new ways of working to ensure alignment with this approach.

- c) All WBP members to take action to raise awareness with staff across their organisations of their commitment to delivering biodiversity as set out in the BAP mechanism document and their organisational responsibilities regarding biodiversity.
- d) Organisations to report back via their case studies to WBP how they will meet their commitments including the steps they will take to ensure responsibilities are shared between staff to prevent overload and encourage wider engagement.

