

**2nd Meeting**  
**Wales Biodiversity Policy Group**  
**May 11am to 3. 30pm**  
**Conference Room**  
**The Welsh Assembly Government Building**  
**Aberystwyth**

**Present**

Stephen Bladwell Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (Chair)  
Julia Korn Wales Biodiversity Partnership (Secretariat)  
Aethne Cooke CCW  
Lyndsey Dodd WWF  
Jan Sherry Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)  
Glenda Thomas Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)  
Charles Morgan PONT  
Heli Gittins University of Wales  
Nick Birula Environment Agency Wales (EAW)  
Chris Tucker Forestry Commission (FC)  
Steve Lucas Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)  
Lizzie Wilberforce Wildlife Trust Wales  
Steve Spode Welsh Assembly Government  
Dai Harris Welsh Assembly Government

**Apologies**

Diana Reynolds Welsh Assembly Government (Chair)  
Keith Davies CCW  
Howard Davies Wildlife Trust Wales  
Hannah Pitt – National Trust  
Emyr Williams – National Parks

**1. Minutes and actions of Meeting Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Actions 1, 4, 5, 9, 13, 27 – 30, 31-33 and 35 were carried forward (see action table).  
The minutes were confirmed with minor changes.

**2. Key Policy Drivers**

Some Ecosystem Groups (ESGs) provided written information on the key policy issues affecting their habitats and others provided verbal updates.

**Written reports** (*See attached reports*)

**Lowland Heathland and grassland group:** The main driver identified is agri-environment schemes. The need to look for mechanisms outside of agri environment schemes was raised. Discussion on the conversion of forestry into open habitats and a computer model developed by the Forestry Commission a few years ago to help inform policy development for open habitat creation.

**Wetland:** Again agri-environment is a key driver along the Water Framework Directive and regulations such as Environmental Impact Assessments.

**Uplands:** Agri-environment, Commons legislation, grazing, forestry/open habitat creation all identified. Also discussed was development of wind farms on upland peat sites and reference to the National peat Policy. The need to feed into the development

of the Cambrian Ecosystem project was raised. The Policy group should influence the development of future schemes which means pooling our knowledge and developing the evidence base required to identify actions required for different ecosystem services to ensure best outcome for biodiversity and service delivery. There is merit in identifying the perverse policies which influence habitats and the tackle these to achieve win/win situations. A starting point could be to focus on the Uplands.

**Urban:** Conflicting issues as development on previously developed land is advocated within the planning process. Steer on this is critical to ensure balance between location and ecological interests.

**Freshwater:** Issues set out clearly and prioritised ranging from knowledge base to practical management issues impacting on the freshwater environment.

### **Verbal reports**

**Woodland:** Issues around encouraging private owners to manage unmanaged woodland. A 1<sup>st</sup> steps grant scheme is being piloted to bring in small areas of woodland. Some conflict between target to increase tree numbers and removing trees for habitat management. Ecological survey is key to ensure no encroachment onto other habitats.

**Marine:** Water Framework Directive and water quality; better implementation of existing legislation e.g. Habitats Directive; Marine Spatial Planning for co-ordinated regulation of marine environment; Strategic Environmental Assessments for offshore windfarms and oil & gas industry / EIAs generally – more objective assessment of Section 42 priorities required; new Marine Protected Areas (Highly Protected Marine Coastal Zones) - Marine Bill

**Farming:** The new Axis 2 scheme will potentially be a key driver for this group. In addition each habitat has different issues such as cutting management and Hedgerow Regulations for Hedgerows, a changing arable market, condition monitoring and seed source for Arable Field Margins and the lack of protection by Tree Protection orders, survey needs and local food movement for Orchards.

### **3. Axis 2**

There will be an announcement on the option chosen for the new agri environment scheme in Wales due later in the day (*Note: Option 2 was chosen*).

**Entry level** – So far looked at a list of actions to be delivered and identified outcomes. There will be a flat rate of payment based on hectareage. It is a whole farm scheme and will offer options e.g. hedgerow/arable/woodland planting and species packages. The detail is still being worked out. Options need to be simple as there will be no project officers. There will be little opportunity to influence the Entry level scheme as that has to be agreed in Europe by the end of June to enable modification of the Rural Development Plan (RDP). The Lowland grassland and Heathland group have information ready to send which can help inform the development of the Entry level scheme.

**The Higher level** scheme is still in development and has a longer timeline with modifications being accepted until early 2010. CCW, the Environment Agency and NGOs have been involved in developing the broad structure. The scheme should be up and running by 2012 including transition arrangements. Ecosystem groups and the Species Expert group need to be formally involved as biodiversity advisors in addition to CCW as we now have this formal Structure at a Wales level bringing together biodiversity expertise. The ESGs and SEG can help inform expected biodiversity

outcomes for the higher level scheme and ensure link to BARS reporting. This needs to be stated in formal representation made by Diana Reynolds to John Westlake.

#### **4. Workshop**

The scheduled workshop was replaced with a workshop on how designing a template to capture priority issues identified by the ESGs.

Information was provided in various formats making it difficult to translate into a Policy group action plan. It was decided that a common template should be developed using features from the templates provided by the Urban group and the Freshwater group and filled populated with the information provided before sending back to the Ecosystem groups for completion. In addition a Biodiversity Action reporting System (BARS) friendly Action Plan template would be developed similar to those developed for species and habitats and this would become the Policy group work programme and populated (and regularly updated) based on priority work actions identified by the Ecosystem group. The morning session of the next Policy group meeting would be spent developing the initial Action plan.

#### **5. Spatial Plan**

The South East Wales Spatial Plan Environment group has been developing the role of the environment in contributing to Sustainable development. Consultants have produced a report that looks at the ecosystem approach and connectivity including a map looking at ecological connectivity. Biodiversity is a primary driver in this work.

#### **6. Section 42 Guidance**

The original guidance has been agreed by the Minister and published on the WBP website. Work is now on-going to update and improve this guidance, developing it for 3 audiences - Local Planning Authorities, non consented activities within a LPA, other public bodies. A small sub-group was formed to continue this work (Aethne Cooke, Steve Spode, Steve Lucas and Chris Tucker).

#### **7. Any Other Business**

##### **Course at Plas Tan y Bwlch 'A Duty for Biodiversity – delivering Benefits for All October 12 -14<sup>th</sup>**

JK is organising this course in partnership with CoHAB the International Organisation on Health and Biodiversity. The course is aimed at senior staff working in public bodies, local and central government in the UK. It aims to increase awareness of the fundamental importance of biodiversity to the economy, to health and to society and of the supporting legislation. The course is subsidised by English Nature and the Welsh Assembly Government and so will cost only £136 for the course and full board. Julia will circulate a programme before the end of May.

##### **Date of Next Meeting**

September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Venue to be confirmed.

*Draft 1- 19/05/09*



Actions and outcomes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Biodiversity Group Meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009

No	Who/Action	Outcome	Progress
<b>Minutes and actions of last meeting</b>			
1 Carry forward Action 1	JK to invite Stella Owen (agricultural Policy Advisor) from the NFU to join the Policy Group	Farming interests represented on the Biodiversity Policy group	
2 Carry forward Actions 4 and 5	Action 4 The Policy Group will use expertise from the WAG Ecosystem Group and the Future of BAP Task and Finish Group and the Diagram for Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is a good starting point to agree a definition of Ecosystem Goods and Services. Action .5. Then: The Policy group will ask each of the BAP Ecosystem Groups to look at which Ecosystem Goods and Services are relevant to them, and include this in their Terms of Reference.	Achieve a common understanding and use of Ecosystem Goods and Services	
3 Carry forward action 9	SS to circulate information on the South East Wales Spatial Plan initiative	Improved knowledge and understanding of how to embed biodiversity outcomes into the Spatial Planning	
4 Carry forward Action 13	DR to run a workshop at the next meeting on policy development and business processes of partner organisations and groups	Increased understanding of opportunities and organisations and groups.	
5 Actions 27-30	DR, HA, JS, GT and CM to update on checklists at the next meeting	Increased number of government departments and public bodies have guidance on how to deliver the Biodiversity Duty	
6 Actions 31-32 and 35	Training issues need to be dealt with by WBP. JK to discuss this with Juliet Hynes	Appropriate actions developed to ensure that issues to do with professional development and skills gaps are properly addressed in Wales	

7 Action 33	The SEG to work with Juliet Hynes to provide advice to the National Museum of Wales on how to proceed with Section 42 species guides and training and which species to focus on. AC to discuss whether marine is to feature in these guides.	Increased skills base for recording and sharing information on selected Section 42 species	
<b>Key Policy Drivers</b>			
8	CT to find out more about the open habitat creation computer model being developed by the Forestry Commission and circulate information to the group	Use of computer model to aid discussion and policy development for developing open habitat on woodland sites	
9	Policy group to identify how to feed into the development of the Cambrian Mountains Ecosystem project. The next phase will involve identifying a catchment for the pilot and developing a 50 year scenario to inform the development of actions.	Biodiversity outcomes embedded into the development of the Cambrian Mountains Ecosystem project	
10	HGs to explore if the Environmental Hub can develop a project that can pool the evidence on ecosystem services providing a base to inform large scale upland projects and enable the best outcome for biodiversity and service delivery.	Biodiversity outcomes embedded into future large scale Upland projects with aim of rolling out to other Ecosystems.	
<b>Axis 2</b>			
11	CM to send DH the information prepared by the Lowland Heathland and Grassland group to help inform development of the Axis 2 Entry Level Scheme by May 12 <sup>th</sup>	Lowland grassland and heathland species needs used to inform final version of the Axis 2 Entry level scheme	
12	Diana Reynolds to make representation to John Westlake to ensure that the Wales Ecosystem groups and the Species Expert group are formally involved in the development of prescriptions and biodiversity outcomes for the Axis 2 Higher level scheme in addition to CCW.	Axis 2 Higher level scheme delivers and reports on biodiversity outcomes linked to Section 42 priorities and the BAP process.	
<b>Workshop</b>			
13	JK to develop a template for collecting and prioritising action on key issues policy issues identified by the Ecosystem groups (ESGs)	Common approach to collecting and using information on the key policy issues affecting biodiversity in Wales	

14	JK to populate the 'Key issues' templates with information already provided by the ESGs and then send to the Chairs for them to complete and assign priority. JK to bring completed templates to the next Policy group meeting	Support provided to the ESGs to ensure that information to inform the Policy group work programme is collected by the next meeting	
15	JK to develop a 'BARS friendly' Action Plan to be used to develop the work programme of the Policy group	Ability to transfer actions straight onto BARS by those who Lead on actions and so supporting full use of BARS within the BAP process	
16	JK to allocate the morning of the next meeting to developing the Policy group action plan	A fully developed initial work programme for the policy group by the end of the next meeting	
<b>Section 42 Guidance</b>			
17	AC to set up a sub group to produce the Section 42 guidance and ensure all appropriate links, reporting requirements etc are included	Comprehensive Section 42 Guidance available for key audiences in an easily understandable format that properly informs processes and procedures to benefit biodiversity.	
<b>AOB</b>			
18	JK to circulate the programme for the Plas Tan y Bwlch Biodiversity Duty course that she is organising in partnership with CoHAB	Increased attendance at the Plas Tan y Bwlch course and resulting increased understanding by participants of the Biodiversity Duty how it can be implemented across sectors.	
<b>Date of next Meeting</b>			
19	JK to make necessary arrangements for the next meeting on September 23rd in Aberystwyth	3 <sup>rd</sup> Policy group meeting held	