

Inaugural Meeting
Wales Biodiversity Policy Group
January 7th 2007 11am to 30m
Conference Room
The Technium Aberystwyth
Please bring sandwiches for lunch

Chair Diana Reynolds Welsh Assembly Government
Secretariat Julia Korn Wales Biodiversity Partnership

Time	Item	Information	lead
11:00	Introductions		Diana Reynolds
11:10	The reviewed BAP process	Background information on the UK BAP review and how we propose to take delivery forward in Wales	Julia Korn
11:30	Terms of Reference	look at the information on the Policy Group in the draft New Approach to BAP in Wales Document and amend if necessary. Include agreement on how the group will operate.	Diana Reynolds
12:15	Species signposting exercise	Background to this work and agreement of policy priorities identified in this work and where possible assign responsibility	Julia Korn or Jan Sherry
13:00	Lunch		
13:30	Section 42 priorities guidance	An amendment has been recommended for TAN 5 on Section 42 habitats and species. A small group is now working on associated guidance and agreement on the draft framework is required	Diana Reynolds
14:00	WBP Biodiversity Checklists	Agree to new check lists (produced to support the delivery of the NERC Act Biodiversity Duty) e.g. NHS and training bodies and agree small group to produce these	Diana Reynolds
14:20	Professional development for Biodiversity Officers and Ecologists	Agree action to improve this in ways that is accessible to Local Authority staff who face budget restraints	Julia Korn
14:40	AOB and date of next 2 meetings		Diana Reynolds
15:00	Close		

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Present

Diana Reynolds Welsh Assembly Government (Chair)
Julia Korn Wales Biodiversity Partnership (Secretariat)
Jan Sherry Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Glenda Thomas Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)
Keith Davies CCW
Charles Morgan PONT
Nick Birula Environment Agency Wales (EAW)
Michelle Bromley Forestry Commission (FC)
Steve Lucas Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)
Lizzie Wilberforce Wildlife Trusts Wales
Howard Davies Wildlife Trusts Wales
Steve Spode Welsh Assembly Government
Stephen Bladwell Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Chris Utterly (by audio) CCW

Apologies

Aethne Cooke CCW
Tim Hall Wildlife Trust Wales
Shaun Russell University of Wales
Lyndsey Dodd WWF

Diana suggested a rotating Chair for the group and asked for volunteers for future meetings.

Action .1. Julia to contact Jennifer Price and ask if she would still like to represent the farming Unions or to suggest an alternative.

Glenda raised the issue of cost for NGOs attending the meeting and asked if support could be offered. WBP current policy is that anyone working on a voluntary basis can apply for travel and subsistence costs. The group will continue to keep the costs of meetings as low as possible and ensure that wherever possible car share is available.

1. Introduction

The Biodiversity Action plan process has been devolved to a Wales level. The new approach to coordinating, advising on, reporting and supporting the delivery of BAP actions and targets is set out in a draft document circulated before the meeting. A WBP Task and Finish group has been responsible for this work and meets again on January 21st. Julia provides the Secretariat for this group. The new approach has led to the establishment of 9 new Wales Ecosystem Groups, a Species Expert Group and this Policy Group. The roles and responsibilities of the different groups, of WBP and of the LBAPs and others delivering action at a local level is set out in the

document. The document will be embedded into the Wales Biodiversity Framework in May and will then become policy. The Wales Biodiversity framework will be reviewed (and therefore also the new approach) following the next UK BAP reporting round.

2. The reviewed Biodiversity Action plan (BAP) Process

Stronger links to the Ecosystem Approach is required within the aims of the delivery mechanism document to support biodiversity policy development and integration. A common understanding of Ecosystem Goods and Services is needed to support reference to this approach in the document. The Welsh Assembly Government has set up an Ecosystem Services group led by Chris Lea. In addition a common understanding of Biodiversity would be useful for policy integration.

Concern was raised about the proliferation of groups in Wales. The idea with the new approach is to streamline the BAP process and improve delivery. The existence of each current groups should be reviewed with some being linked and others absorbed into the new BAP groups. BAP provides the overarching framework for biodiversity action and existing and new programmes, projects and other actions are delivery mechanisms to deliver UK, Wales and Local targets.

Action .2. Julia to put a discussion on embedding the Ecosystem Approach into the new approach document on the Agenda of the Future of BAP Task and Finish Group meeting on January 21st.

Action .3. Diana to discuss the work of the WAG Ecosystem Group with Chris Lee and ask that someone attend the Future of BAP Task and Finish group meeting on January 21st.

Action .4. Next: 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.

Action .6. Julia to locate the definition of Biodiversity in the Wales Biodiversity Framework to bring this to the next Policy Group to see if this can be used as a common definition for Biodiversity.

We identified the key drivers/policy levers which can potentially deliver for biodiversity as:

- Axis II (agri environment)
- The Marine Bill
- The Wales Spatial plan and regional statements
- Local Development plan process
- The Water framework directive

We agreed that we need to create common messages for feeding into these processes and policies.

Wales Spatial Plan – the Wales Spatial plan includes several hooks for biodiversity/natural environment, however we need to be clearer on expected environmental outcomes and express them spatially. Information on constraints and opportunities must be clearly set out. The WAG Department of Economy and Transport have worked with others on a pilot project in South East Wales linking the ecosystems approach with the economic and regeneration agenda and the consultants could be asked to give a presentation to this group. Central Wales tried to develop a similar approach but it is not known how this progressed.

Axis II - The Ecosystem Goods and Services approach provides the overarching view for the Axis II and should deliver some benefits for biodiversity, additional action will also be required to meet other BAP targets.

Action .7. Keith to circulate information on the hooks within the Wales Spatial Plan for integrating the natural environment outcomes into Regional Statements and information on what is happening in the 6 regions. (If possible, including identifying what progress had occurred with mid-Wales.)

Action .8. Julia to add a discussion/agreement of Key Drivers to the agenda for the next Policy Group meeting.

Action .9. Steve Spode to circulate information on the Pilot Project on South East Wales to the group.

Action.10. Diana Reynolds to talk to Jon Westlake to check on progress and encourage incorporation of biodiversity into any Axis II pilots.

Action .11. Stephen .B. and Jan to send a list of species where agri-environment schemes are listed as an issue to John Westlake

3. Policy Group Terms of Reference

The policy group will integrate and monitor the delivery of biodiversity policy of Government (national and local) and other organisations and bodies (private and public) primarily within Wales but where required extending beyond our boundaries. To do this we need a better understanding of operation procedures and policy development of the organisations represented on this group and what they are already doing to positively influence internal policies and operations and external key drivers. It is importance to influence business planning as well as policy as the latter does not necessarily ensure delivery of biodiversity outcomes on its own.

It is useful to demonstrate clear links to the Beecham Agenda and be mindful of the language – collaboration, partnership and outcomes.

Important to influence at highest possible level if we are to secure resources. Identifying Axis II, Spatial Planning etc as key delivery mechanisms for biodiversity will make it easier for biodiversity to be prioritised by Government.

Action .12. Keith to circulate a sentence on how biodiversity policy development/delivery links to the Beecham Agenda

Action .13. Diana to design a exercise to help us understand how each others policy development and business processes work .

Changes to Terms of reference suggested

Existing Bullet point .6 - change 'implement' to 'advise on' and add 'monitor policy changes' to the end.

New bullet points

- Develop a common understanding of key concepts, terms and develop core messages for use in policy integration
- Look at the costs/benefits of changing policy to benefit the natural environment /biodiversity and identify and develop best practice for policy development and delivery.
- Act as a focal point for policy information and provide intelligence to identify and influence key drivers

Action .14. Julia to update the Policy group Terms of Reference and circulate.

Action .15. All to comment on this version and other general comments on the new approach document by Jan 15th

Membership

Action .16. Julia/Diana to invite representation from Local government (WLGA), the Private Sector, Spatial Planning Unit and the Farming Unions

4. Species Signposting

Species Signposting identifies the types of actions for each Ecosystem group. Currently high level actions (and so fairly vague), however some policy areas e.g. agri environment require change for a large number of species. Actions for some taxonomic groups (e.g. mammals and birds) are already being refined. There will then be a need to link these actions into policy development where appropriate.

The Species Expert Group (SEG) will be tasked the continuation with the refinement of the actions over the next 6 – 9 months. It is expected that in some cases species will be grouped e.g. for arable weeds. The Future of BAP task and Finish group will define what is required and provide templates. Jan and Michelle are both working on assigning species to habitats and will compare notes at the Future of BAP Task and Finish group meeting. Resulting policy and Legislative Actions will come to the Policy Group for consideration and action.

The Ecosystem groups will be asked to look at existing Habitat Action Plan (HAP) action and pull out all policy actions that are still relevant, and if necessary generate new ones and prioritise these. They will also be asked to identify what they can influence themselves and what policy actions need to be passed to the Policy group.

Action .17. Julia to put Species Signposting on the agenda for the Future of BAP Task and Finish group meeting on Jan 21st

Action .18. Jan and Michelle to send Julia the work that they have done on assigning species to habitats so that she can circulate to the task and Finish group

Action .19. Julia to send an note to the Chairs of the Ecosystem Groups asking them to pull out policy actions from relevant HAPS, identify those that are still relevant, which of these the ecosystem group can carry out themselves (or can help with) and provide a prioritised list of those with which assistance would be needed from the Policy group.

The opportunity to influence Axis II is now with the possibility of integrating biodiversity into the Axis II pilots.

5. Section 42 Priorities Guidance

The WAG Planning Division accepted the proposed sentence for TAN 5 on Section 42 species and habitats and also the principle of producing supporting guidance.

However just before Christmas the Minister announced a review of planning to look at streamlining the process to make it more efficient and effective. It will be about enabling and not preventing development and the statutory agencies will be a formally involved in the review process.

Diana can take messages from this group to the head of the Nature Marine and Access Unit, Gerry Quarrell

Action .20. Diana to take the following messages :

- **We don't want to lose the steps made in building biodiversity into the planning process. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) Biodiversity Duty and Section 42 list is a good starting point.**
- **Measuring Effectiveness and Efficiency needs to be not just in terms of time taken but also the outcome of the process. The Natural environment of Wales gives it a competitive edge as it continues to be a healthy place for people to work and live.**
- **Failures in the planning system are often because of a lack of resources available rather than the process itself.**
- **Effective means appropriate development in the appropriate place without destroying the environment and so maintaining the quality of the natural environment (linked to 2 above).**
- **Early engagement leads to a more effective outcome e.g. supporting the applicant to provide all the relevant material before the application is submitted.**

Action .21. Diana will ask about timescales and involvement and will suggest this group as a key stakeholder. She will also ask that involvement of the department of E and T includes Steve Spode.

Action .22. Julia to resend the Section 42 guidance

Action .23. All to send comments on this guidance to Julia by Jan 22nd

Action .24. Julia to submit as a paper to note to WBP for approval at the meeting in February and then to arrange for it to be translated and put on the WBP website with the other biodiversity checklists

The Review of the NERC Act Biodiversity Duty is in Autumn 2009 and Joanna Robertson (CCW) is involved. Howard referred to the work that he has been doing on interpretation of 'have regard' and the principle of proportionality and relevance.

Action .25. Howard to discuss the work that he is involved in on the interpretation of 'Have regard' with Joanna Robertson.

Action 26. WBP Support Team/Diana to check timescales for the review.

6. Biodiversity Checklists

A number of advisory checklists for public bodies and local government are already published on the WBP website (<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/>). The checklists help organisations, government and other bodies to comply with the NERC Act Biodiversity Duty. A number of future checklists were suggested including: Planning Inspectors, CADW, Crown Prosecution, NHS, Fire Service, Utilities, Farming Connect, Ministry of Defence and WAG Cabinet Ministers.

Action .27. Charles and Glenda will look at the checklists on the WBP website and then let Diana know if they think it worth drafting one for Farming Connect. If so Diana will approach Welsh Assembly Government colleagues about this work.

Action.28. Diana to provide Jan Sherry with a contact in the Fire Service so that a suitable checklist can be created.

Action .29. Howard to provide feed-in to the development of a checklist for the Ministry of Defence

Action .30. Diana to take a lead on producing a checklist for WAG cabinet Ministers

7. Professional Training for Biodiversity Officers and Ecologists

Two issues came out of a small sub meeting of the Policy group on March 12th.

1. Biodiversity Officers and Possibly LA Ecologists were finding it increasingly difficult to attend courses and other professional development courses due to financial constraints.
2. the lack of available taxonomic training and hence skills

NATUR/LANTRA could be involved in developing solutions the second issue. Information on training opportunities should all be sent to Sean McHugh (s.mchugh@welshwildlife.org) for posting on the WBP website.

The issues of taxonomic skills development has been raised many times and would benefit from a central body to coordinate action. The model developed by WBP to develop lichenologists could be used for other species. LBAP Partnerships also offer identification training to volunteers often by pairing them up with experts to get involved in survey. Coordination of activities and identifications of gaps is required.

Action .31. Charles to discuss with NATUR if they would be willing to provide a coordinating communications role to help address the skills gap.

Biodiversity Officers should report to WBP Support team if they are struggling to get any training or professional development so that the WBP Support team can provide advice and support..

Action .32. Diana to ask WBP Support team to request input from LBAP Coordinators on their training needs, so that we can try and provide for at least some of these with as little expense as possible.

Action .33. Diana to check progress on up-dating species guides and whether training might be provided as last time.

Action.34. WBP Support Team to ensure that Policy Group (and all WBP members) provided with details of the late Feb/early March Future of BAP workshops.

Action.35. ALL to ensure that information on training opportunities is sent to Sean McHugh (s.mchugh@welshwildlife.org) for posting on the WBP website.

8. AOB

By e-mail Shaun Russell offered the possibility of a MSc Student to carry out research looking at how Section 42 species and habitats are dealt with in the planning system. Shaun also offered the use of the Environmental hub for future Policy Group meetings and workshops etc.

9.Date of next meeting

The Technium, Aberystwyth on Wednesday 6th May from 11am to 3pm

Action .31. Delcie to book the Technium, Aberystwyth for Wednesday 6th May.

Action 32. Diana to ask Keith if he would Chair the next meeting, if not she will provide the Chair again (but only once!).

The 3rd meeting will be in September.

Action .33. Julia to circulate date options for a meeting in September including one that is linked into the WBP Conference