

**10am. Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009.  
 The Classroom, Bestwood Country Park.**

**Present:**

Jackie Adams	Nottinghamshire County Council Education (NCC)
Chris Comerie (Minutes)	Nottinghamshire County Council
Linda Davey (Vice Chair)	Women's Institute (WI)
Gill Grieveson	Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC)
Chris Jackson	Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)
Erin McDaid (Chair)	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
Sue McDonald	Bestwood Country Park (BCP)
Norma Saunders	Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT)
Rachel Peck	Nottinghamshire County Council
Paul Phillips	Rushcliffe Borough Council (RCC)
Amy Rogers	OPAL
Felicity Washbrook	Mansfield District Council (MDC)

**1. Apologies**

Kathy Wimble, Newark & Sherwood District Council (N&SDC). Edmund Hopkins, Royal Forestry Society (RFS). Steve Fisher, Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT). Ian Major, Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT). Louise Fleetwood, Forestry Commission (FC).

**2. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising**

The previous minutes were found to be an accurate account of the previous meeting.

The actions from the previous meeting were discussed. Action 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 are complete.

Action 2, 3, 8 and 10 are ongoing.

**3. Japanese Knotweed Survey - CJ/GG**

CJ informed the group that 280 records of Japanese Knotweed in the County have been received so far. CJ had received a number of records for the Mansfield area which he asked if Felicity Washbrook would be able to check. CJ had received all the existing records from the local records centre and was expecting to receive some records from a group in Worksop that Ian Major (SFT) is currently working with.

LD reported that the Nottinghamshire WI has put the survey reporting sheet on their website and the survey has been mentioned in their meetings.

CJ continued that the Environment Agency survey team will be returning to him soon with their survey information from 2009. As part of their standard surveying their officers now routinely record non native invasive species.

NCC Highways department have reported 25 sites all of which they are treating and they have been approached by Railtrack to treat sites along their railway lines on their behalf.

Nottinghamshire Trent University and British Waterways are also treating Japanese Knotweed on their sites.

LD mentioned that she had seen sites of Japanese Knotweed in Cornwall that are being treated which have signs by them identifying the plant being treated as Japanese Knotweed.

EM commented that this is a good idea as it shows the public what plants are being treated at the sites and can help them come to recognise Japanese Knotweed in different environments.

SM highlighted that a site of Japanese Knotweed by the quarry within Bestwood Country Park has been cut down without the permission of the rangers (unfortunately the identity of those who conducted the cutting remains a mystery). Horse riders using the site are suspected of undertaking the cutting.

CJ followed on that Bestwood Country Park now has three staffed trained to use chemical control methods and hopefully this will lead to JK on the Bestwood estate to be treated next year. A large patch in Sherwood Country Park has now been included in the annual work plan and hopefully this will prevent its spread and lead to its eradication from this important site. Patches on the paths at Teversal are being treated by NCC. Other notable records are from the RSPB site of Beckingham Marshes (due to be treated) and on Tarmac's land in Lound (due to be handed over to NWT but currently being treated).

GG announced that she has created a 2 panel interpretation board to promote the survey and provide information on Japanese Knotweed. The board has been used once by SFT and has been taken along to the Ashfield and Moor Green shows during the summer. A poster for the country parks has also been produced which CJ has circulated. CJ has also spoken at the last Friends of Greenwood meeting, updating on the progress of the Japanese Knotweed survey and discussing the possibility of recording patches of Himalayan Balsam in 2010.

A press release is due to go out at the end of autumn. CJ added that the press release will include an updated photograph to aid in identifying Japanese Knotweed for the winter months. Records received from the survey so far have been shared with the local records centre and are to be entered onto the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) website at an accuracy of 100m resolution.

A reporting form has been produced for recording Himalayan Balsam which is to be circulated throughout the partnership and local groups to help identify sites in Nottinghamshire that require action.

SM enquired as to what the law is with respect to having Japanese Knotweed on private land.

CJ replied that the legislation basically stated that Japanese Knotweed can't be introduced into the wild. However, there is nothing in the law to enforce its management when it is already present on a site and this is dependent on the landowner. Knowledge of the damage that can be caused by Japanese knotweed and its ability to spread freely by vegetative means is very important to influence landowners to manage it.

SM informed CJ that there is Japanese Knotweed spreading out from a private garden on George's Lane, near Calverton.

CJ stated that management of Japanese Knotweed is the land owner's responsibility or in this case could fall within the remit of the private landowner and possibly the highways department of NCC to treat.

As well as the press release at the end of autumn, it may be good for the partnership to put together a leaflet highlighting do's and don'ts for treating Japanese Knotweed that could be aimed at land owners. Information could be obtained from GG's interpretation board.

PP questioned if the Environment Agency doesn't already have a leaflet on this subject.

CJ responded that they do but their leaflet is aimed towards developers, and that if the BAG produced a leaflet it would focus more on home owners/private landowners.

LD asked when the leaflet is due.

CJ answered that there is no set date for it.

At this point in the meeting CJ asked if a member of the partnership would be able to help with producing the leaflet. After a brief discussion LD offered to help to develop the leaflet.

EM queried as to when the next press release on the survey is due.

CJ responded that it was due at the end of November (GG is due to prepare this).

FW raised the question as to whether each organisation in the BAG is to produce their own press release.

EM suggested that it would be a good idea for them to and to include case studies with treatment details within the press releases.

CJ concluded that NCC is using stem injection methodology using tordon (herbicide) to treat Japanese Knotweed (this can have negative side effects if used near trees). Nottinghamshire University and British Waterways are treating with Glycosphate which reduces 90% of the plant within the first year. The remaining 10% can be difficult to eradicate, but British Waterways have reported that they have struggled to find Japanese Knotweed regrowth after treating in the previous year with glyphosate.

**Action 1: CJ to pass records of Japanese Knotweed in Mansfield onto FW.**

**Action 2: SM to complete a reporting form for the Japanese Knotweed on George's Lane and pass on to CJ.**

**Action 3: LD to produce leaflet on the Do's and Don'ts for J. Knotweed (unable to start this until the new year).**

**Action 4: PP and FW to pass details on the survey to the press departments at their respective authorities.**

**Action 5: GG to prepare press release for the end of November and pass to CJ and EM to check before it goes out.**

#### **4. Priority Species and Habitats 2009 Update (2010 Hab and Sp) - EM/CJ**

EM disclosed that a press release on hedgerows is to go out soon.

CJ imparted that press articles on the moth species chosen for this year's priority species have prompted half a dozen or so responses, but the majority have been for the Common Vapour moth.

EM suggested that better photographs and more information are needed for identifying species in future.

CJ summarised that the promotion had been useful as it had raised the profile of moths through a number of articles written in various newspapers and although it had not led to new records for these species it had led to more people looking for them and learning about them.

CJ informed the subgroup that the BAG Implementation and Monitoring (BAG I&M) subgroup meeting in October had been postponed and as a result the BAG I&M subgroup would be meeting later in November. At that meeting the BAG I&M subgroup would recommend the priority species and habitats for 2010 for the partnership. CJ would report back at the next Awareness subgroup meeting in February.

EM revealed that species suggested as part of the previous Awareness meeting had included water voles, deers, polecats and herons.

CJ continued that deer and herons were not LBAP species and would not necessarily be best to be highlighted through the BAG priority species process.

CJ related that he had attended a conference on hedgerows through the national UKHAP group. The day detailed lots of information on the current state of the UK hedgerow resource and indicated that in the past 10 years more hedgerows had been planted than had been lost. Although this was good news it also highlighted that the condition of hedges during that period had declined partly through poor management and partly as a result of eutrophication of the herb layer under the hedge causing a loss in species diversity. The day also highlighted the importance of hedgerow trees with many being lost due to a lack of restocking. CJ suggested that if people wanted more information that they go to the Hedgelink website.

## **5. BigBAG – CJ**

CJ informed everyone that the date for the BigBAG Annual Forum Event had been moved from November as this had been too close to the date for the Sherwood Habitat Forum. After discussions with Karyn Stander from SFT, CJ had agreed to move the BigBAG date back to January. As a result a new date for the event has been arranged for January 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 and the event will take place at the Idle Valley Centre in Lound.

EM commented that maps would be needed to direct people to Idle Valley Centre because it doesn't appear on Sat Nav systems.

CJ detailed that the BigBAG would focus on looking back at the achievements of the BAG partnership over the past 10 years (actually 11 and a bit years) and how the partnership would look to move forward in the future. CJ would start the event by giving a presentation looking back at the broad achievements of the partnership over the past 10 years. Karyn Stander (SFT) has agreed to give a talk on heathland (including feedback on the successes of the heathland HAP with some details of sites which have been managed/created. CJ is hoping to have Howard Broughton or Clive James from the Rushcliffe Barn Owl Group give a presentation on the successes of the Rushcliffe Barn Owl Project and its spread to other organisations county wide. After a break the event would look forward at future developments for the partnership. Michael Copleston (RSPB) has agreed to talk about the two new RSPB reserves in Nottinghamshire at Langford Lowfields and Beckingham Marshes and to discuss how these sites are developing and will develop in the future. This will be followed by Janice Bradley who will talk about landscape scale conservation.

In the afternoon, James Simpson has agreed to give a guided walk around the Idle Valley Nature Reserve.

EM announced that by the time of the BigBAG the circular walkway around the lake at Idle Valley Centre will be finished. EM also informed all that there would be room for displays and that the talks would be in the classroom area within the Idle Valley Centre.

CJ asked all attending who would be able to bring along displays to the event.

JA and LD replied that they were hoping to.

EM closed the discussion by stating that if GG brings the Japanese Knotweed board this could help promote the survey.

**Action 6: CJ and EM to discuss further the facilities at Idle Valley and content of the event.**

**Action 7: CJ to contact the local barn owl group to speak at the BigBAG.**

## **6. Bioblitz 2010 - All**

CJ informed the group that a summary of the potential venues for the 2010 Bioblitz event had been produced for the meeting. From all the responses that CJ had received only 5 site managers/owners had responded to CJ's e-mail request for information on why each potential host site should host the event (facilities, equipment and staffing available etc.).

The five included Clumber Park, Brackenhurst Campus, Bramcote Open Space, Rushcliffe Country Park & Sherwood Pines.

The partners discussed the pros and cons of holding the event at each venue and the main issues discussed are highlighted below.

LD was concerned at the level of public involvement that could be brought to the event if held at Brackenhurst. Would it be geared too much towards students and not towards the general public? Would the public visit a site such as Brackenhurst and would they be able to get involved with the site after the event.

EM replied that advertising and promotions would be required to bring people in as the venue is very car orientated.

It was suggested that Brackenhurst had the potential of turning the event into a student training event if BioBlitz were to be held at Brackenhurst.

FW pointed out that the Brackenhurst estate has already been surveyed in detail

CJ responded that surveying is only one focus of the event, another important purpose is the promotion of biodiversity on that site to the general public.

PP added that all the sites considered as potential venues, have already got reasonably good records for them.

CJ continued that Bramcote Hills Open Space has woodland, grassland, parkland and gardens but no wetland (which would be a concern). The site does have an active friends group and they are prepared to be involved. There are no facilities on the site though there is a leisure centre nearby.

Clumber is a very good popular venue and has the facilities for the event but there is a £5 admission fee there.

EM mentioned that at Rufford Park in 2008 the site had a £3 admission fee.

SM suggested that Clumber Park would be a good site for passing trade.

CJ added that there is a good range of habitats at Clumber Park.

EM suggested that Clumber Park represents a large site for recording and that it may require a certain area of the site to be targeted.

EM raised the problem of a large site in picking where to use marquee.

FW related that the visitors centre at Clumber Park would be a good central point to place the marquee.

PP advocated that Rushcliffe Country Park has 4 rangers which could be involved with the event, there is also a wide range of habitats at the site including a lake, reedbed and woodland. Facilities available include an education centre, free parking and the option of people staying overnight. The site is quite well visited allowing for passing trade and has an established watch group which can also help. Rushcliffe Borough Council is keen to hold the event at the site and can also provide financial help.

CJ stated that Sherwood Pines has a good range of habitats, facilities and car parking but lacks substantial areas of wetland close to the visitor facilities.

SM brought up that the main focus of the event should be attracting the public which rules out Brackenhurst and possibly Bramcote Hills.

GG followed on that Bramcote Hills is not a good venue for promotion as the passing trade at the site isn't really there. Clumber Park and Sherwood Pines would be the best sites for numbers as schools could be targeted for these venues as well as the general public.

SM announced that really the choice comes down to Clumber Park, Rushcliffe Country Park and Sherwood Pines.

GG pointed out at the aforementioned sites the event could be taken over by National Trust members.

SM supplemented that there is a danger of preaching to the converted at Clumber Park while at Sherwood Pines and Rushcliffe Country Park there would be lots of families present who could get involved in the event.

CJ felt that by holding the event at Rushcliffe Country Park it could encourage the involvement of lots of species specialists many of whom are based in Rushcliffe.

EM added that there are a number of partners at Rushcliffe who can aid in getting more people involved.

The group came to a consensus that Rushcliffe is the favoured site for the 2010 Bioblitz event.

CJ then discussed a date for the event. Previous events in Nott's had been held in July though local bird and amphibian specialists have stated that it would be better to hold the event in June as this would be better for those species.

CJ was considering two weekends currently and these were the weekends either side of the Football World Cup (this was because the initial Bioblitz event in 2006 had suffered from clashing with an England football match). The two weekends being considered were 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> June or 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> July.

FW noted that a bank holiday falls the weekend before the June date and it may be difficult to attract schools for this date as it is mid term time.

PP recommended that bank holidays and the early summer holidays be avoided.

CJ announced that next year (2010) is international year of biodiversity. The year will comprise of a series of events nationwide. The Bioblitz idea will be promoted nationwide and currently CJ is aware of events in Bristol and Brighton (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June), Derbyshire and Leicestershire (dates undecided).

JA suggested that before setting the date the Rushcliffe, schools should be checked to ascertain when their inset days are.

AR advocated holding the event on the Friday and Saturday before at the beginning of the holidays.

CJ stated that after the previous Nott's Bioblitz event in 2008, Saturday had been suggested as not being a good day to hold the event, as the public generally attend events in greater numbers on Sundays.

It may be that the Sunday could be the main day of the Bioblitz event and the Monday could target schools?

SM informed that if the event were to be held on a Monday then she could bring along the Bestwood volunteers.

GG asked if there was an education officer at Rushcliffe.

PP responded that there is.

GG advanced that the July date would prove less problematic.

CJ continued that bird groups may not be keen on the July date but he felt that there would be some bird watchers who would be happy to get involved anyway.

SM clarified that in July there may be less activity from birds as they are busy feeding but they will still be present.

The group weighed up the merits of the June and July dates, and the July dates of Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> and Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> were decided upon.

**Action 8: CJ to start contacting possible species specialists to get involved in the July event.**

## **7. OPAL Project Update - AR**

AR briefed that the OPAL incorporates 15 different organisations including the Met Office, The Royal Parks and Universities. The project in the East Midlands has an overall theme of heathland and OPAL is supporting heathland survey projects.

The project aim is to try to encourage the public to get involved in species recording and started with a focus on earthworm surveys in 2008/9 for which 350 results have been received and the earthworm survey databases will remain open until 2012.

Currently an air quality survey identifying lichens is being undertaken. Tar spot on Sycamore leaves can be used to indicate the levels of air pollution present by looking at the density of spots present (the more spots on the leaves the better the air quality). This project was launched 6 weeks ago with packs going out to local groups and schools, 100 results have been returned so far for the East Midlands. This survey will remain live until Christmas.

Water will provide the next focus for surveying in May and packs for this are currently being produced - the focus will be on looking at invertebrates and water quality, and the survey could be used as one focus for the BioBlitz event.

Biodiversity will be looked into in September 2010 with a focus placed upon hedgerows. The Open University will be producing the draft survey pack on this.

Meanwhile work continues on encouraging surveying and providing help with surveying by providing free training sessions which can be arranged by contacting AR.

CJ noted that OPAL's biodiversity project could include the BAG's hedgerow survey project due to run in 2010 (led by FWAG – Lesley Sharpe). FWAG are currently considering putting in a funding bid to Defra for a hedgerow survey, from there annual funding stream.

AR informed that training will be made available for the hedgerow project and that she could influence The Open University to include hedgerow trees into the hedgerow packs.

In 2011 a final survey is planned based on climate change looking at cloud cover but full details on the survey are not yet known and there is currently an issue with getting data entered onto the database.

9,000 people have interacted with the OPAL surveys so far in the East Midlands. In Nott's field trips are currently being piloted with schools for GIS mapping of heathland in Sherwood Pines. Bestwood Country Park is also being considered as a site for future heathland mapping. The mapping is a joint project with the Space Centre in Leicester who are looking to equip toy helicopters to undertake the mapping to try to ensure sites do not get damaged by trampling and disturbance.

CJ mentioned that the Implementation and Monitoring group are looking to map all LBAP habitats in the county and this technology could be used towards the mapping of heathland areas and would prove very useful data.

AR disclosed that the aim of this mapping is to get children using technology for mapping and that the Space Centre are keen to promote aerial mapping.

CJ reported that the local records centre currently has information for heathland coverage in the county, but that the partnership was hoping to improve this data.

FW added that MDC also have phase 1 mapping data (including heathland) as well.

AR revealed that they are also looking at taking aerial photographs to identify different plant species.

EM divulged that by the end of November NWT are to have a promotional video produced using aerial shots of their sites, showing Attenborough, Besthorpe and possibly Rainworth.

AR imparted that visits are being planned for year 9 school children to compare habitats and investigate nitrogen pollution using soil samples and quadrants on heath, and sites are being looked at for this.

The project is also seeking to create a virtual field trip, getting schools involved in video documentaries on heathland. OPAL in York are running courses on biodiversity and mapping, Leicestershire is being considered to run basic ID talks by specialists and Northamptonshire's pocket parks may be getting involved.

EM informed the group that NWT is offering a new programme of adult training at Idle Valley on identifying different species groups.

AR concluded that funding can be obtained through the central OPAL offices for biodiversity projects with the next opening round due soon, details for this can be found via the natural history museum section of the OPAL website.

**Action 9: FW to pass phase 1 heathland mapping data from MDC's area to AR.**

**8. Re-establishment of the Notts Environmental Education Forum/Group - JA**

JA announced that work is underway to get the Nott's Environmental Education Forum/Group back up and running.

A date is being planned for a meeting to take place at Nottingham University to focus on engaging with secondary schools. The group would also include discussions on a general round up of what organisations currently are doing in their work plans with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire schools.

Potential dates for the group to meet on are 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010 and the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, (currently the February date is preferred).

A flyer is being produced by JA to promote the meeting and find out who wants to be involved with the group (currently a database of people involved in environmental education in Nott's is being compiled). The flyer represents the first stage of the strategy of getting the group together, this will be followed by face to face meetings and depending on the response will move on from there. JA went on to ask that any suggestions on this be emailed to CJ.

A countrywide science co-ordinator conference is also taking place in January at which JA will be speaking.

CJ recommended that JA forward any information to him so that he could circulate this around the BAG partnership.

JA informed that the national curriculum has changed making field trips compulsory.

**Action 10: CJ to forward information from JA around the partnership and anyone interested in getting involved to contact JA direct.**

**9. Feedback from the BAG Steering Group - EM**

EM informed the group that the ongoing issue of the budget shortfall for the BAG were discussed.

CJ disclosed that on a brighter note that Broxtowe Borough Council had agreed to fund the BAG to the tune of £1k. This now meant that two district authorities were now supporting the work of Nott's BAG.

EM concluded that co-ordinating lobbying government on biodiversity issues was also a major issue raised at the last Steering Group meeting.

## **10. Partner Updates - All**

### Erin McDaid - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

NWT is making a 3 to 5 minute promotion video featuring some of their sites, to be shown on the Community Channel and their website. This is being financed by the Media Trust who NWT has paid £1,000 towards the cost of the video. The promotional video scheme is to be launched by the Media Trust again next year.

### Chris Jackson - Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group

Work is being done looking at alien species in the Leen Valley. Signal crayfish have recently been sighted in the River Leen catchment at Moor Pond wood. A single signal crayfish was found at the site and this is a worrying development. The River Leen supports one of the best populations of white-clawed crayfish in the county and the presence of signal crayfish could lead to the loss of the native white clawed due to crayfish plague that is carried by the signal crayfish.

### Rachel Peck - Nottinghamshire County Council

Work is underway on the next issue of Living for Tomorrow magazine due in mid January featuring articles on the BioBlitz event and an update on the Japanese Knotweed survey. RP requested any other information for the group for future stories in the magazine. There will be a sustainability market place held in County Hall on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 open to local bodies and organisations are being sought to provide biodiversity stalls at the event.

### Sue McDonald - Bestwood Country Park

The winter work programme has now commenced at Bestwood with hedge laying being undertaken by the winding engine house, and tree thinning work at the Mill Lakes plantations and the barbeque site. On the Green Estate the Bestwood Rangers are also working on hedge laying and tree thinning work and Bestwood Country Park will be a host site for a world record tree planting event on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. SM also currently has some Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers working with her who need to volunteer for some more hours. SM asked if anyone else within the partnership could provide these hours and if they could to contact her with the details.

### Linda Davey - Women's Institute

LD announced that she has been giving talks on biodiversity during which questions have been raised about the damage caused to hedgerows and trees by the works on the A46 as a consequence of the Highways Agency ignoring environmental advice. She is also raising awareness of bees and promoting bee friendly plants as a Bee Ambassador for national bee week. She has also been helping to promote the BAG Japanese Knotweed survey.

### Jackie Adams - Nottinghamshire County Council

The NCC learning outdoors service is in a period of uncertainty with budget cuts and the review of further future cuts coming soon. JA has been looking to try to develop services across secondary schools and is setting up the environmental education network database.

### Amy Rodgers - OPAL

AR informed all that a scheme is being planned with a Nottinghamshire corporate partner? to provide transport for groups from the city area to get out to green spaces for pond dipping and survey work.

Felicity Washbrook - Mansfield District Council

The winter work programme has begun in Mansfield with work underway in conjuncture with friends groups such as the BTCV. Work is being undertaken on woodland and heathland management. A management plan is being constructed for the viaduct with emphasis on white clay crayfish and a meeting next week will report if any have been found in the area. Surveying work and habitat management is being done for water voles and training on identifying water voles is being set up. Nearly 1ha of heathland has been created last winter, half a hectare of which is by the big Tesco in Mansfield and work is being carried out on the Green Flag applications for Oak Tree Heath.

Paul Phillips - Rushcliffe Borough Council

Work is nearing completion on designating local nature reserves at Sharphill Wood and the Hook with information going to cabinet next week and a further 2 sites being put forward in December 2009. The planning application around Sharphill Wood has been approved including the surrounding green infrastructure. The Clifton Gateway proposal for 5,000 houses has also been submitted and green infrastructure is to be an important part of this proposal. New developments at Gamston have not reached application stage yet but an objection is already being prepared for it. Work is being done on the completion of the new Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy which is due to be published in April 2010.

**11. AOB**

None

**12. Date of next meetings**

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010, 10.00am - the Council House/Exchange Building.

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 10.00am - Sherwood Forest Trust's Offices.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2010, 10.00am - Center Parcs.

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, 10.00am - NCC Offices, TBH, West Bridgford