



**Biodiversity Action Group
Awareness Sub-Group Meeting
Minutes**

**10am. Thursday 6th August 2009.
FC Offices, Shirewood Pines.**

Present:

Linda Davey (Vice Chair)	Women's Institute (WI)
Edmund Hopkins	Royal Forestry Society (RFS)
Chris Jackson	Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)
Erin McDaid (Chair)	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
Norma Saunders	Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT)
Rachel Peck	Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC)
Louise Fleetwood	Sherwood Forest Community Rangers (SFCR)
Mark Brice	Center Parcs (CP)
Mark Waller	Center Parcs (CP)

1. Apologies

Kathy Wimble, Newark & Sherwood District Council (N&SDC). Sue McDonald, Bestwood Country Park (BCP).

2. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

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

The action points from the previous meeting were discussed. Actions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 had all been completed.

Action 6, 7, 8, 15, 16 and 17 were all ongoing.

3. Japanese Knotweed Survey (promotion) - CJ/GG

CJ informed all that Greenwood CF are currently following their Japanese Knotweed Promotion work plan that was introduced to the group at the previous BAG Awareness meeting. A press release had been sent out during May and a further one is due to go out in August. In addition Greenwood has created a series of information boards about Japanese Knotweed and the Nott's survey, including information for identification and "dos and don'ts".

EM stated he had mentioned the JK survey in his Newark Advertiser column.

CJ followed on that he has had radio interviews to promote the survey on Radio Nottingham and Smooth FM (formally Saga Radio) and has been involved with editing the press releases and has been updating the news page with the latest information about the survey.

To date 200 survey forms have been received. The forms mainly record sites in the west of the County along water courses and railway lines and on post industrial land (this is as would be expected).

NS suggested contacting Railtrack for information on how they are treating Japanese Knotweed along railway lines.

CJ replied that he has been trying to get hold of contacts at Network Rail but that it has proved problematic and that it feels as though he has been moved from pillar to post with little success as yet.

EH agreed that it could be a problem, the trouble with Railtrack's elusiveness staff.

RP mentioned that she would be producing an article on the survey in the next few weeks for Living for Tomorrow magazine.

CJ informed all that a further press release would be forthcoming at the end of autumn and the survey would be coming to a close at the end of December (survey information would still be taken past this point).

NS raised the need for Natural England to produce a strategy document to deal with Japanese Knotweed at a national level.

MW queried what is being done with Himalayan Balsam.

CJ answered that BAG was recording this non-native alien too but that this work was not being actively promoted. A GIS layer was being created for HB but currently very few records had been received from the partnership.

NS mentioned that a volunteer group in Edwinstowe are working on Himalayan Balsam at their site.

CJ continued that at Sherwood National Nature Reserve (the highest designated wildlife site in Nott's) a patch of Japanese Knotweed had been recorded and that a large patch of Himalayan Balsam had also been reported.

LF said that on SFCR sites, small patches of Himalayan Balsam were being treated by pulling the plant.

EM added to this saying that on NWT sites, volunteers were pulling small patches of Himalayan Balsam every year.

CJ stated the need for there to be County wide record of the distribution of Himalayan Balsam so that volunteer and community groups that were currently working on this species could target their efforts better to ensure that they were not wasting their time. It could lead to groups working together rather than in isolation.

EM confirmed that recording this could be a participation opportunity for next year, perhaps making it a priority species with press releases. EM indicated that Carl Cornish has some pictures of Himalayan Balsam but that better photographs would be required for a press release.

EM recommended that half of any press release be dedicated to management with an accompanying how to manage Himalayan Balsam leaflet.

EM suggested that the JK survey carries on informally into 2010 along with a wider focus on alien species and asked for suggestions on raising awareness of Himalayan Balsam.

Action 1: CJ to continue seeking contacts at Railtrack and British Coal for information on management of their sites.

Action 2: CJ and Gill Grievson to complete and publish final press release on the survey for the end of autumn.

4. **Priority Species and Habitats 2009 – EM/CJ**

The first part of this item covered the existing Priority species and habitat work for 2009. This was then followed by a discussion on suggested species and habitats for 2010.

EM had mentioned the survey for the two priority moth species in his Newark Advertiser column and sent out a press release in June covering information about finding records for both adult scarce vapourer moths and the nests of small eggar moths.

In response to these media items CJ had received a handful of enquiries about the Scarce Vapourer moth and no records with respect to small eggar moth nests. The majority of Scarce Vapourer enquiries were from people who thought that they had seen some of these unusual moths. Unfortunately after seeking verification from Sheila Wright most of the moths turned out to be the more common vapourer moths. In some cases people sent in pictures of completely unrelated moth species, but this was good as it had managed to raise the profile of moths.

MB added that two Vapour moths had been seen at Centre Parcs and that pictures of these will be sent to CJ.

The main aim of the project to raise awareness with regards to these moth species and the importance of managing hedgerows in a sensitive way for moth species and other creatures had been highlighted as part of the projects promotional coverage.

As part of the Priority habitat and species work EM was due to send a further press release later on this year with respect to the priority habitat Hedgerows. The PR would stress the importance of managing hedgerows in an appropriate way to ensure that they could support the maximum diversity of wildlife.

Action 3: EM to create and send out press release on Priority habitat.

CJ discussed the need to start thinking about a priority species and habitat for 2010.

CJ brought up that Water Voles haven't been worked upon in the county for a long time and that survey information held by the partnership was mainly gathered in 1999/2000/2001. It may be an opportunity to try to better collate some of this data and invigorate new surveys for water vole.

EM advised that he could produce some "know your voles" cards for use in surveying.

CJ went on that there is already surveying experience for Water Voles within the BAG partnership and there were potential people who could run training courses for volunteers.

EM informed all that a lot of survey work with respect to water vole had been conducted in the last eighteen months to two years.

NS put forward the case for the partnership doing a project on an avian species as it's been a long time since birds were done.

EH advocated a survey be done for deer as there have been recent sightings of deer species in people's back gardens and there is a public interest in deer.

LF proposed that a campaign could be undertaken on the problems caused by Muntjac deer.

CJ informed all that at the Sherwood Habitats Strategy Group meetings there had been talk of a deer group being set up in the Sherwood area of Nottinghamshire.

NS continued that a deer management group has been founded with emphasis put upon the genetics of the Sherwood Red Deer engaging large landowners at sites such as Wellbeck which is being co-ordinated by Nic Broomhead from Nottinghamshire County Council.

EM reported that NWT had received calls of deer that had been trapped.

EM suggested that as a priority species an aspect could be to concentrate on the different identification features for deer.

NS followed on that Roe Deer numbers in the County were increasing quickly.

NS then suggested that meadow flowers, hedgehogs and if a wetland theme was to be implemented possibly water birds such as Herons and Oyster Catchers could become the priority species.

EH added that Herons would be a good choice as there is a wide range of interest in them from the general public, and this would be good for conservation as it would increase knowledge on Heron distribution throughout the County.

MB suggested that a focus could be placed on polecats. Polecats were slowly increasing their national distribution and moving back into lowland England. Their current range was thought to extend into Nott's and it may be a good species to focus on as a positive story and to see if it could help to increase distribution knowledge of this species. A polecat ferret had recently been seen at Center Parcs.

EM reported that a polecat had been spotted in the south of the County in the last ten days and he would obtain pictures of this, also a polecat-ferret hybrid had been found and that mapping of the species has proven successful. Finally the species picked should be one that has lots of stories around it such as deer species.

CJ concluded that the Awareness subgroup had suggested a wide range of species and that he would be happy to take these to the BAG I and M subgroup to seek their advice and if possible try to fit the choice in with any up and coming projects. CJ felt strongly that the species and habitat chosen should be UKBAP or LBAP species or at the very least listed in the species of conservation concern section of the BAP document.

Action 4: EM to pass polecat records onto the County Mammal Recorder and to Wollaton Hall.

Action 5: CJ to raise the suggested priority species and habitats mentioned at the meeting for discussion at the Implementation and Monitoring subgroup meeting.

5. BigBAG - CJ

CJ reported that little progress had been made since the last meeting. At present Janice Bradley from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust had agreed to give a talk on landscape scale biodiversity. CJ is in the process of contacting people from BAG partner organisations to find out how action plans have progressed over previous

years - he will be contacting someone with regards to focusing on the successes achieved with regards to heathlands and barn owls.

CJ also intends to contact a speaker with regards to climate change or possible with an example of a large scale biodiversity project in Nott's (Trent Vale?).

NS added that Sherwood has been chosen by Natural England as an area for conducting a climate change study - perhaps the officer leading on this could give some feedback to the partnership.

EM questioned if a decision had been made on the venue for the BigBAG.

CJ replied that no decision had been made since the last meeting and there are still numerous possible locations being considered. At present the date of the BigBAG is looking likely to be in November.

LF announced that she would look into a possible FC contact that could give a talk on climate change.

CJ said that he would like to investigate green travel to the event, but this would depend on where the venue would be.

The Idle Valley Centre near Lound was looking like a good contender for hosting the Big BAG and CJ will be liaising with EM regarding this.

Action 6: LF to look into her contact giving a climate change talk and feedback on this to CJ.

Action 7: CJ and EM to look at the possibility of holding the event at Idle Valley and providing green travel.

Action 8: CJ to follow up some of the ideas for speakers and to see if he can get these in place by the time of the next meeting.

6. Communications Strategy

CJ briefed that work on the communications remains ongoing.

7. Feedback from the BAG Steering Group & from the BAG I&M subgroup

NS fed back on the main points raised at the BAG Steering Group meeting. BAG was currently seeking funding to support the Biodiversity Officer post from District, Borough and City authorities. Currently just over half of the funding came from NE, EA, FC and Rushcliffe BC with the majority coming from NE. The rest of the shortfall was made up by NCC but this was unfair and other partners should pay into the service provided by BAG (especially local authorities).

The future of LBA partnerships was to be discussed at a workshop to be attended by CJ and NS in October in York. In addition CJ would be attending the UKBiodiversity Partnership event also at York in October.

CJ fed back on the previous meeting of the BAG I&M meeting. A workshop held in June had clarified lead partners responsibilities within the partnership. The responsibilities include updating HAP documents - including new LBAP habitat definitions.

The I&M was looking into the possibility of downgrading the HAP for coniferous woodland to a guidance not. A draft reporting sheet is being worked upon to help the partnership with future reporting of BAP work. The pending list of species of

conservation concern is due for updating in 2010. The LBAP document is being looked at with the intention of bringing it more in line with the UKBAP. A draft HAP for Orchards and a draft SAP for Black Poplar are due to be circulated in the near future.

NS added that industrial archaeology is being used to protect orchards from demolition for new housing developments, which are classified as six or more trees together in a group, and the closing date for planning permission for these developments is tomorrow and it is worth putting together a general orchard letter to planning officers with regard to information from common ground.

EM continued that once the orchard HAP has been adopted it should be sent to tree officers at local authorities throughout the county.

NS followed on that awareness of orchards needs to be raised with planning authorities and pressure should be put on the government to protect fruit trees.

EM raised the need for mapping to be conducted on calcareous grassland as two sites have already been lost in the county.

EH brought forth the problem of building on existing gardens and how this adversely affects wildlife corridors.

8. Partner Updates

Rachel Peck - Nottinghamshire County Council Sustainability

As a key part of her role Rachel has is producing Nottinghamshire County Council's Living for Tomorrow magazine which in the next issue includes an article on bumble bees and focuses on the work undertaken by Tarmac and the wildlife organisation's that they are working with in Nottinghamshire to create new wildlife habitats. Rachel requested that BAG partners contacted her with regards to any stories from the partnership that could be put towards future issues of the magazine. Another area of Rachel's work has focused on leading delivery plans for the Climate Change partnership which is aimed at reducing levels of carbon dioxide produced in the county.

Linda Davey - Notts Federation of Women's Institutes

LD informed all that she has been involved in working for the WI's national resolution on a national project to support the honey bee. As part of this project the national federation are searching for a Bee Ambassador. In Nott's, LD has been continuing her promotional activity for BAG giving talks on biodiversity and promoting the Japanese Knotweed survey.

Mark Waller & Mark Brice - Center Parcs

Centre Parcs have been awarded with a Biodiversity Benchmark rating, being the only company to be re-accredited with currently all their sites credited. Monitoring results for Sherwood were published for the nineteenth year running. A Center Parcs BAP for bats (created for the 336 bats on the various Centre Parcs' sites) is due to be republished. Work is underway with local stake holders as a part of the BAP. Recent sitings on Center Parcs land at Sherwood have included a polecat-ferret, and there are nesting populations of woodlark and nightjar. Two badger sets have been successful with rearing four cubs. Work is also underway on heathland and scrub creation at the Sherwood site. In June MW attended the Living Landscape Conference at Sherwood.

Norma Saunders - Sherwood Forest Trust

announced that a new community landscape officer had been appointed for whom publicity and P.R. are key to the role. The Green Week event is due to be held at

Victoria Centre to raise awareness featuring children's characters Woody the woodlark and Najine the nightjar and work is underway for an event focusing on welsh clearwing. Glow worm walks are being conducted with a large number found and a woodlark pair has been sighted on Sherwood Heath while recording work is being done for beetle and bee populations.

Louise Fleetwood - Sherwood Forest Community Rangers

SFCR have been undertaking a lot of work to promote the glow-worms at Sherwood Heath recently. FC has successfully seen the rearing of two barn owls in one of their barn owl boxes recently and they have also received recent reports of nightjar nesting at both Calverton and Clumber Park.

Edmund Hopkins - Royal Forestry Society

Little progress has been made from a biodiversity promotion angle with the membership of RFS in Nottinghamshire (which mainly consists of small land owners). Current RFS structures make it very difficult for EH to get messages across to its members. The RFS AGM was recently held near Hull and nationally the RFS website is due to be revamped.

Erin McDaid - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

NWT have just completed the installation of new interpretative materials at Attenborough Nature Reserve. The awareness raising project has included the installation of 12 new information boards focusing on relevant wetland species and habitat the launch of an audio tour that can be accessed via mobile phones. A big project is underway at Besthorpe that includes scrub clearance to help with the creation and restoration of a large area of reedbed.

9. Bioblitz 2010.

CJ reported that a list of suggested sites for the 2010 Bioblitz are to be circulated around the Bag Awareness subgroup and that these sites would be asked to contribute pros and cons of using the sites for the Bioblitz event. At present the list contains Sherwood Pines, Brackenhurst, Sherwood National Nature Reserve, Clumber Park, Rushcliffe Country Park and Bramcote Hills Park as possible venues.

The potential dates for the Bioblitz 2010 are currently either side of the Football World Cup and have been moved to a Monday/Sunday due to the feedback from the event in 2008. The potential dates currently being considered for the event are Sunday 6th June & Monday 7th June or Sunday 17th July & Monday 18th July.

Action 9: CJ to circulate list of possible venues and dates around the BAG Awareness subgroup.

Action 10: All partnership to arrive at a decision on the venue and date by November 2009.

10. A.O.B.

NS brought up that she is progressing with the orchard HAP which will soon be ready for circulation. Training courses are being run by SFT on orchard pruning and maintenance.

LF mentioned that a press release is forth coming on the future work and strategy of the Forestry Commission for which suggestions can be made via the Forestry Commission's website.

Action 11: CJ to forward e-mail from LF to the full BAP partnership.

Date of Next Meeting

10am Thursday 5th November, the Classroom, Bestwood CP

10am Thursday 4th February 2010, the Council House/Exchange Building.

10am Thursday 6th May 2010, Sherwood Forest Trust's Offices.

10am Thursday 5th August 2010, Centre Parcs.