

Present:

Adrienne Bennett	Forestry Commission (FC)
Linda Davey (Vice Chair)	Women's Institute (WI)
Gill Grievson	Greenwood Community Forest (GCF)
Edmund Hopkins	Royal Forestry Society (RFS)
Chris Jackson	Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)
Rob Last	Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT)
Erin McDaid (Chair)	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
Sue McDonald	Bestwood Country Park (BCP)
Paul Phillips	Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC)
Norma Saunders	Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT)
Janet Valenti	Greenwood Community Forest (GCF)
Kathy Wimble	Newark & Sherwood District Council (N&SDC)

1. Apologies

Jackie Adams (NCC Environmental Education), Karen Bailey (Rufford Country Park), Louise Fleetwood (Sherwood Forest Community Rangers), Felicity Washbrook (Mansfield DC).

2. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

EH identified a number of minor corrections required to the previous minutes (OPAL project not OPEL, RFS not RFC). These to be amended.

The previous Actions would all be addressed in the meeting except for

Action 7 - SM reported on behalf of JA that the facilities at Stoke Bardolph were no longer available.

Action 12 - CJ believed that grants were not available through the million ponds project and that it was just a reporting mechanism and advisory role that the project provided. AB believed that there was money available.

ACTION 1: CJ to revisit the million ponds scheme to find out more and circulate.

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

CJ introduced the item explaining that the survey form had been completed back in late 2008. The survey was unofficially launched in January at the Friends of Greenwood meeting where CJ gave a short presentation on alien invasive species and promoted the survey.

In addition CJ reported that Alien Invasive Species was the theme for this years International Biodiversity Day (May 22nd). This obviously tied in very nicely with the JK survey.

The aim of the survey was to increase our knowledge of the distribution of this species to try to ensure that BAG partners were managing it correctly and to try to promote good practice among all land owners with it present on their landholding.

The survey had currently received 103 records.

GG then spoke about the work programme timetable that she had worked up in conjunction with CJ (a copy of this was handed around). The timetable included dates for a series of press releases; the creation of a display board about Japanese knotweed and the survey to be taken to any events attended by BAG partner organisations; a poster to be created promoting the survey and circulated around visitor centres throughout the county; feedback on the survey at the BigBAG and finally analysis of results at the end of the year and plans to contact and educate landowners & organisations about knotweed in the future.

GG requested that BAG partners send her information about the events they intend to attend so that she can work out a programme of which BAG partner is able to take the JK survey promotional boards with them to the various events.

GG would like to work with EM to use his press contacts to help to get the press release greater coverage.

LD informed all that the JK survey form was due to go out to all WI's in the county in the news letter before the end of May.

EM would include some information about the survey in the next copy of the NWT newsletter.

GG requested pictures of Japanese knotweed to be sent to her from partners (especially those with local people involved).

EM would try to get information on Japanese Knotweed and the survey onto the BBC internet pages.

Partners were asked to think of suitable locations where a poster promoting the survey could be put up. This could include country parks, wildlife sites with notice boards, visitor centres etc.

CJ is currently undertaking work with NCC sustainability promoting the survey through NCC Environmental Champions network. He is also giving a radio interview to Radio Nottingham on Thursday 14th May.

EH suggested that a contact with Network Rail would be incredibly useful due to the amount of Knotweed on the rail network. Similarly a contact with British Coal may be useful (this may be gained through Martin Sly, NCC reclamation team).

ACTION 2: ALL to send details of the events that they intend to attend during 2009 to GG so that she can work out a rota for partners to display the Japanese Knotweed survey information/promotion boards.

ACTION 3: EM to work with GG on distribution of press releases.

ACTION 4: ALL to promote the Japanese Knotweed survey through their own organisations.

ACTION 5: SM to send copies of photographs of Knotweed at Bestwood Country Park through to GG.

ACTION 6: ALL to suggest locations in Nott's where a Japanese Knotweed survey poster could be put up.

ACTION 7: CJ to try to get contact details for someone at Network Rail and also with British Coal.

4. Priority Species and Habitats 2009 – EM/CJ

CJ reminded the group that this years priority habitat and species were Hedgerows and Hedgerow Moths (particularly the Small Eggar and the Scarse Vapourer). The aim of this project would be to highlight good management of Hedgerows including the promotion of the BAG hedgerow leaflet and to raise the profile of two moth species that require hedgerows that are managed in a wildlife sensitive manner.

EM reported that currently he had worked up two press releases that would be sent to the press towards the end of May. EM is keen to receive pictures of bad hedgerow management to use with his press release on hedgerow management.

CJ should contact partners who are working regularly on hedgerow habitats – SFT/FWAG/NWT.

EH suggested that the information could be sent out to the people at local authorities who deal with the Hedgerow regulations (in most cases this would be the tree officers).

NS suggested that the information could be sent through to SFT and then on to their contacts at Bassetlaw to promote it through staff newsletters.

Kathy Wimble was happy to spread the information on N&S website.

Info should be sent to DANES, Brackenhurst, Butterfly Conservation and other moth and butterfly recording bodies.

Info could be sent to the Glow-worm recording workshop to be held in the summer.

EM to produce a workplan for the priority habitat and species for the rest of the year (2009).

ACTION 8: EM to work up a detailed plan for the promotion of the priority species and habitats during 2009.

ACTION 9: ALL to send pictures of bad examples of hedgerow management through to EM. (CJ to contact BAG partners working regularly on Hedgerows with this request).

ACTION 10: CJ to send info on hedgerow and the two moth species through to officers working with the hedgerow regulations at each LA in Notts.

ACTION 11: CJ to send info through to NS to send onto contacts at Bassetlaw and to send info through to KW.

ACTION 12: CJ to send info onto local recording bodies for promotion among the professional recording community.

5. BigBAG - CJ

CJ apologised because he had not had time to take forward his actions from the previous meeting. The group then discussed the possible venues and locations for this years annual forum event and considered possible themes and speakers for the event.

It was suggested that CJ should contact local authority contacts for potential venues and financial support for the event to see if LA partners would be interested in supporting the Big BAG event. CJ would concentrate on those LA's that had to date not currently hosted a Big BAG event (N&S, Ashfield & Gedling). EH suggested that the City Council would be a good option if nothing else came to fruition and a venue like the Town Hall could be a possibility.

All agreed that theme to focus on should be the BAG partnership 10 years back, ten year on. Within this theme issues such as climate change, the water framework directive, robust landscapes could be looked at. NS suggested asking someone to talk on the impact on trees and forestry (especially Oak-Birch Woodland) from Forest Research. (Joan Webber from Forest Research was suggested as a name to chase up.

NS suggested contacting the EA to talk about Climate Change with respect to wetlands and river systems. CJ could contact NS for her to chase a contact through Charlotte Gault.

Other possible topics for speakers could be the Idle Valley Centre, Trent River Park, Trent Vale project, robust landscapes (landscape scale projects).

ACTION 13: CJ to send official request to LA contacts to see if they would like to be involved in hosting this years annual BAG forum event.

ACTION 14: CJ to look at following up some of the leads he has been given to attempt to find relevant speakers for this years annual event.

ACTION 15: NS to follow up her contacts at FC and Charlotte Gault at EMBP.

6. Communications Strategy

CJ has completed a first draft of a Communications Strategy for the partnership for 2008 to 2011. The strategy looks at the current method of communications within the partnership, suggests a few changes to enhance this and looks at an action plan for this. CJ would welcome comments on the strategy. The next stage is for CJ to work with the Awareness subgroup to create an annual workplan for 2009/10.

One of the initiatives in the strategy is for the BAG partnership to adopt a strap line to go with the logo to be used by BAG partners on all of their work. CJ will circulate a few suggested strap lines for comment.

ACTION 16: All BAG Awareness members to have a look through the draft Communications strategy and send any suggested changes to CJ.

ACTION 17: CJ to put together a proposed workplan for 2009/10 and circulate for comment.

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

CJ made partners aware of the two main projects currently being undertaken by the BAG I&M subgroup. These are both mapping projects one of which aims to work with BAG partner organisations to try to map LBAP habitat within the partner estate to enable future reporting by that partner to be relatively straight forward. CJ is currently working with NottsCC and NWT but is hoping to open this out to other partners including local authorities. CJ also would like to work with partners without estates to help them to identify the LBAP habitat that they are working on to aid their reporting.

The second large scale mapping project that the BAG are working on is the mapping of all LBAP habitat across the county. A lot of work has so far been achieved on wetland habitats (rivers and streams, canals, ponds and lakes etc.) and CJ is hoping to start work on grasslands in the near future.

NS reported back from the previous BAG Steering Group meeting. The main issues raised were the level of administrative support being given to BAG from NCC (the hours of the relevant post had been decreased but the impact on BAG were not yet known). The Bag was seeking a small contribution from all of Nottinghamshire's LA's to support the BAG Biodiversity Officer post.

A draft HAP for Orchards was now complete and would be circulated for comment in the near future. A SAP for Black Poplar was currently being drafted by Katherine Garton from NottsCC. Reporting through the BARS system had stalled and other methods were being researched for the time being (the importance of having one efficient system for the whole of the nature conservation family was recognised and BAG still wanted to be able to use a system such as this). Work was still being undertaken with LA's with regards to the Biodiversity Duty.

SFT was seeking to include an element of funding for the Biodiversity Officer post with all of its future funding bids. Natural England had secured funding to undertake more research on the Hazel Pot Beetle at Sherwood NNR.

8. Partner Updates

Kathy Wimble - Newark & Sherwood District Council

The authority is putting forward Sherwood Heath and Cockglade Wood to be assessed by the Green Flag Award. This will be the first purely biodiversity based site in N&S to be assessed by the Green Flag criteria. N&S have been working in partnership with Epperstone Parish Council on a piece of land that has been passed onto the parish through a planning application to develop the old police Headquarters. The football pitches that were part of the site are to be managed as wildflower areas in partnership with Naturescape. In addition N&S are working on a BBC funded scheme in Southwell to maintain and enhance an orchard site. The work includes wildflower grassland creation (again with Naturescape as a partner).

Adrienne Bennett - Forestry Commission

The guidance note on invasive alien species has recently been updated for the local FC district. AB is currently undertaking GCN surveys on the FC estate in Clumber Park and Birklands. The FC are also involved in the UK wide worm survey (OPAL) and have been assisting with this in Sherwood. A water vole survey being undertaken in Sherwood Pines is indicating that a healthy population of this BAP species is still present. The survey has so far shown no signs of mink. A new gang of shadow rangers has been recruited by FC (from the previous rangers 3 have already found paid employment).

Norma Saunders - Sherwood Forest Trust

RL has recently completed a resource pack for Ancient Trees. KS is working on HLS applications and is also helping to organise the farm walks as part of the farm land bird project. A project to enhance the Edwinstowe wetlands is underway and the SGFT are also working with a national expert collating advice on tree pruning and other important management tasks for orchards. SFT are also working to examine the status of the LAxton Elm (is it a local subspecies?).

Gill Grievson - Greenwood Community Forest

GCF have been working in partnership to promote the national worm survey and have worked with SFT to host talks on creating heathland. In the near future the GCF will be helping with a worm survey at a primary school in Gedling. A lot of work has

recently been undertaken with regards to promoting the Japanese Knotweed survey with BAG. The community tree planting grant has been very successful this year and has been widely taken up. The scheme has also involved the planting of wildflowers. This years Greenwood Awards are being organised and will be staged at Bestwood Lodge Hotel later in the year.

Linda Davey - Notts Federation of Women's Institutes

The JK survey has been promoted within the local WI and an article will be published in the next newsletter. Details of the Hedgehog survey have been circulated throughout the WI in Notts. Since January LD has given four talks and two more are lined up for the near future. The WI nationally are campaigning to encourage government to put more resources into researching the huge decline in honey bee numbers in recent years.

Sue McDonald - Bestwood Country Park

The winters hedgelaying courses completed a long stretch of hedge that has laid over a series of years (running parallel with the Dunvegan Road). A large woodland compartment known as ferney wood (formerly sycamore dominated) has been felled, much of the timber removed and interpretation erected. At the Mill Lakes part of the country park crack willow around the pond dipping ponds has been coppiced and pollarded to allow more light to the ponds and improve access. The spring has brought with it some good bird sitings – with Ravens at the Winding Engine House, Red Kites, SM believes there has been a big increase in Blackcap numbers and Tawny Owls have moved into Andy's coppice. Work to improve the ground flora at the broadleaved plantation woodlands at the Mill Lakes is seeing its benefits this spring with wildflowers such as bluebell coming through.

Paul Phillips - Rushcliffe Borough Council

The RNC SIG has held a successfully attended AGM and the Annual report is due out soon. The work to declare LNR's is now well on its way with four sites moving along this process – The Hook, Meadow Covert, Sharphill Wood and Rushcliffe Country Park. AB has just had her job title confirmed as the Biodiversity and Ecology Officer. AB recent work has concentrated on surveys at Wellow Park Wood. The surveys have concentrated on bats, badgers, fungi and a phase 1 habitat survey. AB is currently half way through surveying all FC sites for water voles and next year she will begin surveys for GCN's.

Edmund Hopkins - Royal Forestry Society

EH will be promoting the WIG 80 and Woodlands Birds projects among local members of RFS.

Erin McDaid - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

The new posts at the Idle Valley Centre have now been filled and the Reserves officer has started his role. Capacity at the Idle Valley Centre is increasing and it is now able to lead guided visits etc. (it is expected that activities and capacity will continue to build at the centre in the coming months). Edingley Churchyard has been admitted into the Blue Butterfly Scheme. Attenborough has seen some good records in spring with the first spoonbill since the 1980's, black headed gulls returning to the islands and a large level of warbler activity. Levels of visitor numbers are up greatly and this is thought that this may be in response to the credit crunch.

Chris Jackson - Notts BAG

CJ reminded all about the current river basin management plan consultation. Notts sits in the Humber River Basin Management Plan area and to respond with respect to your local river you can do this through the our rivers website (www.ourrivers.org.uk).

9. Bioblitz 2010.

CJ reminded the group that this event was held every other year. The work undertaken to host the event in 2008 was time consuming and many species specialists would have liked to have been contacted earlier to set a date for the event. As a result CJ suggested that he should be contacting species specialists earlier for the 2010 event to discuss a date and a venue. There was a discussion about the format of the event and possible changes that could be incorporated into future bioblitz events. These included ensuring walks and talks were promoted separately by the various bodies involved in the event so that maximum uptake for these could be encouraged.

ACTION 187: CJ to contact all BAG partners and species specialists to establish a date and venue for Bioblitz 2010. Also to seek ideas from partners about how to enhance this event.

10. **A.O.B.**

none

Date of Next Meeting

10am Thursday 6th August, Sherwood Pines, FC Offices

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

10am Thursday 4th February (2010) - TBA