



**Biodiversity Action Group
Steering Group Meeting
Minutes**

**10am, Thursday 3rd December 2009
SFT Offices, Chalfont Drive, Edwinstowe**

Present:

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| Janice Bradley | Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) |
| Chris Comerie | Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) |
| Nick Crouch | Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) |
| Anja Nonnenmacher | Environment Agency (EA) |
| Chris Jackson | Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG) |
| Erin McDaid | Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) |
| Paul Phillips | Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC) |
| Norma Saunders (Chair) | Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT) |

1. Apologies

Caroline Harrison (Natural England), Heather Stokes - Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC),

2. Previous Minutes

On the previous minutes it was erroneously reported that the £7,000 received by NWT as part of the Erewash Valley 6C green infrastructure funding, was funding only for the purchase of new grass cutting equipment. This amount was in fact not just for the new cutter but also to deliver a suite of new habitat works, SINC advice to landowners, habitat creation and management funding and to aid in the designation of another LNR.

Action 1: Action ongoing.

Action 2: Action complete and letters of support have been issued.

3. Biodiversity Officer update and work plan prioritisation

The main areas of discussion are highlighted below.

CJ reported that the partnership has been quite active in seeking funding. NWT has submitted a funding bid for Harrison's Plantation, RSPB is seeking funding for two projects both aimed at increasing the amount of reedbed at Langford Lowfields. LRWT & Leicester University are seeking funding for a project to map BAP habitat and OPAL are looking to seek funding for a community mapping project focusing on heathland. Letters of Support have been supplied by the Notts BAG partnership to all of these funding bids.

NCC have heard that they have been successful with two funding bids to the SITA trust. One funding bid is for Lowland Calcareous Grassland management and restoration on the Teversal and Linby Trails and the other is to restore and manage heathland at Ransom's Heath.

With regards to the LBAP document, Edmund Hopkins has agreed to create a HAP for Urban Habitats, whilst the draft Orchard HAP has been sent to PTES for their

comments. The Planted Coniferous Woodland HAP is still under discussion, and it was suggested that a meeting with Andy Powers from FC should be sought to discuss this. JB and NS offered to accompany CJ to a meeting with AP.

With regards to partner estate mapping NWT have been sent a copy of their estate mapped by LBAP habitat type. CJ intends to chase up this mapping information with James Simpson (Idle Valley) and Tim Sexton (Attenborough). The National Trust has provided information from the Phase 1 (2003) Habitat Survey regarding Clumber Park from which the LBAP mapping layer has been created and sent to Carle Hawke for approval. CJ is moving forward with LBAP mapping other partner estates including RBC, RSPB, NCC and Centre Parcs.

With regards to LBAP habitat mapping for the county work is ongoing.

The issue of habitat definitions was raised with regards to mapping. CJ had drawn up a brief habitat definition for reedbed to help with the mapping of this resource. As part of the reedbed mapping work a minimum sized threshold had been decided to be used to assist the process, reedbed must be of at least 0.25ha.

For smaller reedbeds less than 0,25 ha it was thought that these would be picked up by alternative LBAP habitats such as canals, marsh and swamp, open water, rivers and streams.

JB raised that the clarification needed to be made with regards to the importance of smaller reedbed sites so that they were not over looked by the planning system.

It was suggested that CJ look into setting up a system within the HAP documents to ensure that smaller reedbeds were still afforded the same level of protection.

CJ informed that the Lowland Calcareous Grassland and Lowland Neutral Grassland mapping layers are well underway and that this work was conducted using a variety of existing data as well as aerial photographs to identify the habitats.

Since the previous meeting CJ has spoken with the Ordinance Survey Officer at NCC who has confirmed that £2M indemnity is sufficient for local species groups to be given the OS mapping information as part of BAG work.

A discussion about who owned the LBAP habitat data then took place. NC inquired if the Local Records Centre owned the data.

JB stated that mapping layers must be available to all partners for opportunity mapping and that ways around the licences need to be investigated. Also the Local Records Centre charges by the time spent preparing data and not for the actual data itself.

CJ agreed that it needed to be clarified who owned what data so that it could be used for biodiversity opportunity mapping purposes by the BAG partnership.

CJ informed all that the form for LBAP reporting (2009-10) would be circulated soon and that an Excel spreadsheet had been created for this purpose. The form included a tab for each habitat in the LBAP and relevant information fields were set set up to allow for all required data to be recorded as easily as possible.

JB added that an additional column has been put on the spreadsheet since it was made to reflect sites where advice had been given on them but they aren't currently under management.

CJ detailed that funding contributions for the next financial year from RBC and NE have been confirmed though it is as yet unknown if EA and FC will be contributing. Broxtowe Borough Council are to give £1,000 for the first time.

The Japanese Knotweed survey has been going well with over 350 returned forms and details of treatment also received from BAG partners. Possible new information may be coming in from EA pending an agreement of data sharing to go through. All the information from the survey will be put on the NBN website and a radio interview on the survey with Radio Nottingham will take place in January.

Work on priority species has finished for the current year. Water Voles and Traditional Orchards have been chosen as the priority species and habitat for the next 2 years.

NS mentioned that SFT have their Winter Orchard Event coming up which could be used for publicity.

All the speakers for the forthcoming BAG forum event have now been confirmed with Howard Broughton speaking on Barn Owls, NS talking on heathland habitat improvements over the last 10 years, CJ presenting on a general review of the LBAP partnership over the past ten years, Michael Copleston giving a speech on habitat creation on RSPB sites and JB discussing landscape scale biodiversity working. A flier is due to go out for the event in the next few days.

CJ has a few issues to resolve for the Big BAG but was please to say that organisation for the event was generally on course.

CJ informed the group that a venue and date have also been set for the BioBlitz event.

NS gave thanks on behalf on the partnership to PP for Rushcliffe hosting the event.

CJ mentioned that species specialists are being contacted for Bioblitz and that he is hoping to get a representative from the EA's team invited for identifying freshwater invertebrates.

CJ informed the Steering Group that a signal crayfish has been found in Papplewick which has raised concerns regarding the White Clay Crayfish population present on the River Leen. A meeting had been set up to discuss this and as a result county records on Crayfish are to be collated by the partnership. Records of White-clawed Crayfish in Hucknall have been received from EMEC. The meeting also sought to resurvey the River Leen for its crayfish population and to undertake habitat enhancements to benefit this species. CJ and partners are now seeking funding to assist this work.

CJ continued that he and Lee Scudder have visited the pond at Moor Pond Woods 5 times with volunteers searching for signs of signal crayfish but no sightings have currently been made. Rebecca Brunt from EA had sent out an EA team with crayfish traps to see if they could identify any signs of signal crayfish. Only white-clawed had been identified to date.

EM brought forth the need for publicity to prevent future releases of Signal Crayfish.

NC recommended putting up a sign at Moor Pond so people can't claim they didn't know.

CJ followed that the establishing of a River Leen non-native species project has been suggested and that American Mink, Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed are also present on the Leen.

CJ was in the early stages of trying to include biodiversity into a funding bid to 6C for the River Leen at Bestwood.

JB informed all that surveys made up part of the Erewash 6C bid so it may be possible to include these into a 6C bid for the River Leen.

JB advanced that money should be put in for Mink traps and rafts, and that the bid should include as much as possible.

JB offered to consult Gaynor Jones Jenkins (NWT) to obtain more information on bid figures from the Erewash 6C bid.

The main priorities for the biodiversity officer at present are the BigBAG and reporting, with the end of March set as the deadline for reporting. CJ will also try to circulate a draft of the Traditional Orchard HAP and Black Poplar SAP asap.

Action 1: CJ, JB and NS to consult with Andy Powers regarding the Planted Coniferous Woodland HAP.

Action 2: CJ to review the reedbed definition.

Action 3: JB to email James Simpson at Idle Valley regarding the guided walk at the BigBAG, CJ to be copied into the email.

Action 4: JB to liaise with Gaynor Jones-Jenkins regarding Erewash funding bid figures.

4. LBAP document update

CJ informed the Steering Group that during the LBAP meeting in June it was announced that habitat action plans had been reviewed. As a result of this review some habitat action plans had been renamed, others split into two new action plans and entirely new action plans created (much of the work had been done to fit the action plans more in line with the UKBAP). An example is that Lowland Neutral Grassland has been created to replace Unimproved Grassland, and Urban and Post Industrial habitats have been changed into the Urban HAP and the Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land HAP. All lead partners have been tasked with updating their HAP documents, with the deadline set for the end of November, NWT's documents are coming along, Karyn Stander and Rebecca Brunt have been consulted regarding their HAPs, the woodland HAPs are to be discussed with Andy Powers while Deanne Gow has produced a draft of the Canal HAP.

5. **Opportunity Mapping**

JB raised the need for an update to identify what habitats are on what sites and what action can be taken on them.

NS concurred and added that this would also help avoid duplication.

6. **LBAP Future Roles Workshop**

CJ briefed that at the LBAP Future Roles Workshop held in York in October looked at a 'new approach' to take forward the English Biodiversity Strategy. Natural England has 4 officers looking at moving forward the EBS in the future working on a landscape scale approach. Areas will be designated nationwide as 'Integrated Biodiversity Areas'. What this actually means on the ground is not clear but the EMBP has made clear their unhappiness with the process. In the East Midlands 4 areas have been chosen as potential IBA's, with Sherwood Forest being the only one in Nottinghamshire. It is not clear but the plan could see funding from HLS, Biffa award and the lottery targeted towards these areas as opposed to other areas of the country. A presentation was given by Julian Small from Natural England at the EMBP and prior to the workshop in York and Peter Brotherton also spoke about these new IBA areas and unfortunately this gave contradictory information especially with regards to funding sources.

EM questioned if more lobbying is needed on this.

NS related that Natural England have requested feedback by the end of next week although the Report on the York and Reading Workshops document was written prior to consultation.

CJ proposed that a letter be issued to Julian Small detailing concerns over this.

Both JB and NS offered to sign the letter as well.

JB advocated that further discussion on the landscape scale schemes and biodiversity interest groups is required at future meetings.

CJ continued that Natural England have stated that biodiversity integration groups should be working on the information to inform the IBA process.

PP pointed out that there is a trend for working on only 1 or 2 very small areas which affects where money is spent at the expense of other areas which are often ignored.

NC commented that if this approach is followed through it will affect people's access to nature meaning that people will have to drive to certain areas and suggested that a list of BAP species present in Sherwood Forest be prepared as the area represents Nottinghamshire's best chance of getting IBA funding in the region. It is unclear how this will affect the Notts LBAP in future and LBAP co-ordinators in general.

CJ informed the group that even if there was funding for LBAP's from Natural England in the future it was currently unclear if this would be forthcoming from other bodies such as NCC. CJ's contract is due to expire at the end of March 2011.

NS noted that there had been talk in the past of the BAG becoming an independent charity.

NC stated that if Natural England cut their funding then NCC may not be able to cover this shortfall. At present NCC is committed to provide funding for 2010-11.

NS raised the importance of emphasising that the BAG is an independent project and to look for other opportunities.

EM offered to help with publicity, for example in getting the right people to attend forum events.

NC brought up that with next year being the International Year of Biodiversity, the timing could help the cause of the BAG.

7. BAG Funding

CJ informed the group that all contributions to the BAG had been collected from partners and that an additional BAG partner has agreed to fund the post (Broxtowe BC).

8. Update from the Implementation and Monitoring subgroup

JB reported that a lot of points from the Implementation and Monitoring subgroup have already been covered in the meeting. At the last meeting from the subgroup updates on HAPs and SAPs were given, reporting was discussed with problems concerning the BARS system currently under review. It was decided that priority species and habitats should be focussed on for 2 years rather than 1 to allow time for additional lead time to deliver associated projects. It had been agreed to set the priorities as water vole and traditional orchards. A work plan for the next 12 months was also reviewed with opportunity mapping decided upon as the main priority.

9. Update from the Awareness subgroup

EM related that the last meeting of the Awareness subgroup was a very positive meeting with a broadening the range of partners. The venue for the BioBlitz was debated and decided upon and Jackie Adams from NCC is looking to re-establish the Notts Education Group. A good update was presented by Amy Rogers from OPAL on this project. Other issues arising from the meeting have already been covered in earlier agenda points.

10. AOB

NS asked if anyone had any information regarding the floating pennywort in the Trent.

CJ responded that the pennywort is now moving along the Trent from the Soar with fragments found from the Soar to the EA offices at Trentside. A patch of floating pennywort has also established itself at Martin's pond. James Diamond of Nottingham City Council has been informed of this and CJ believe that an officer at Nott'm City has been tasked with its removal.

CJ announced that following the new funding which has been received from Broxtowe Borough Council, their representative Steve Fisher is to be invited to

future BAG Steering Group meetings. CJ will also invite Steve to the BigBAG event in January.

11. Date of Next Meetings

Thursday 11th March 2010. 10.00. EA Offices, Trentside.

Thursday 10th June. 10.00. FC Offices.

Thursday 16th September 2010. 10.00. Notts Wildlife Trust Offices.

Thursday 2nd December 2010. 10.00 SFT Offices.