



**Biodiversity Action Group
Steering Group Meeting
Minutes**

**10am, Thursday 17th Sept 2009
NE Offices, Chalfont Drive**

Present:

Janice Bradley	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
Rebecca Brunt	Environment Agency (EA)
Chris Comerie	Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC)
Nick Crouch	Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC)
Caroline Harrison	Natural England (NE)
Chris Jackson	Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG)
Erin McDaid	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)
Norma Saunders (Chair)	Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT)

1. Apologies

Heather Stokes - Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), Paul Philips - Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC).

2. Previous Minutes

Previous minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

Action 1: Action ongoing, CJ has not been in touch with representatives of Whatton Prison since the last meeting.

Action 2: Action complete, CJ met with Eon's Environment Officer briefly but she stated that she was currently too busy to discuss biodiversity issues and requested further contact with CJ later in the year to discuss the implementation of the BAP written for the management of their site at Ratcliffe on Soar.

Action 3: Action complete, CJ has contacted Amcott by e-mail to obtain details of their estate and the biodiversity work undertaken on it. CJ is awaiting a response. NC has recently emailed Amcott regarding different information and is also awaiting a response.

Action 4: Action complete, EM has produced the press release and will be passing it on to CJ to circulate. EM will produce a second press release on hedgerow management later in the year.

Action 5: CJ has obtained information from Warren Priest and this has been circulated throughout the partnership.

3. Biodiversity Officer update and work plan prioritisation

CJ reported that NWT had been successful with a partnership bid for funding from the 6C green infrastructure project. The next round of 6C funding has already started and expressions of interest are due in December 2009.

JB followed on that the contracts from the last round of grants haven't gone out yet, NWT haven't received the cash they were awarded, amounting to forty three thousand pounds between NWT and DWT, to buy a new cutter and to deliver a

suite of habitat works including habitat creation, advising land owners on management along with providing funding for this and for LNR designation. Unfortunately the cutting season will have passed by the time contracts are signed.

CJ continued that a spreadsheet for partners to record their progress against the LBAP has been produced and will be circulated soon. Partners will be asked to complete the spreadsheet and feedback a copy of this at the end of March 2010. The spreadsheet will cover reporting for the period April 2009 to the end of March 2010.

The Japanese Knotweed survey has so far returned 230 sightings, of which approximately 50% represent new sites.

Work on the annual forum hasn't moved forward since the last meeting, JB and Karyn Stander from SFT have agreed to speak at the forum, JB on landscape scale biodiversity projects and KS on heathland. CJ is in the process of talking to the Notts Barn Owl group's to provide a talk on the success of the barn owl SAP.

NS suggested contacting land owners to get them to speak about management success on their land.

CJ followed on that the forum will be both looking back at the achievements of the LBAP partnership as well as looking forward at the future of the LBAP and landscape scale projects.

CJ suggested that a further speaker could come from the Trent Vale project, JB suggested that it was too early at this stage to have feedback from Trent Vale and that it may be better to approach them next year when a project officer will be appointed for the project.

NC recommended that the forum contain a general overview on the LBAP highlighting success stories and chronicling the changes to it which have occurred over the last ten years.

NS pointed out that aerial photographs could be used to display the difference on sites caused by management, in a before and after style.

NC suggested that the RSPB could be contacted to provide a talk on recent habitat creation work at Langford and Beckingham.

CJ mentioned that there had been problems with potential dates for the BigBAG as it would be too close to the Sherwood Habitat Forum. CJ had spoken with KS and agreed to move the date of the Big Bag to ensure that the events were far enough spaced not to affect each other's attendance. The Sherwood forum had been pushed back to late November and as a result CJ was looking to move the prospective date for the BigBAG back from December to late January.

One of CJ's priorities over the next few weeks would be to organise the date and venue for the BigBAG.

EM said that he would help with the booking of the Idle Valley Centre and confirm a date with CJ.

CJ pointed out that next years BioBlitz event is provisionally scheduled for either end of the football world cup either on the weekend before (early June) or after (mid July) the World Cup.

NC stated that with regard to attendance at the event it would be best to avoid it conflicting with an England match.

Possible venues that have been put forward by BAG partners include Brackenhurst College (Trent University) which could also provide the publicity for the event, Rushcliffe Country Park, Bramcote Hills Park, Sherwood Pines and Clumber Park.

NS questioned if Clumber Park would drop their entry charge for the event, adding that Rushcliffe Country Park would be a good choice for the venue as it would recognise Paul Philips' support for BAG and would be beneficial with regards to a community focus.

JB added that Rushcliffe Country Park has the least biodiversity of the sites mentioned but would be good for political reasons.

NC advanced that there are ponds and wetlands present at Rushcliffe Country Park and if the event were to be held there it would benefit from picking up regular through traffic by virtue of being a public park which would not be the case at a site like Brackenhurst.

JB continued that there will already be hundreds of families visiting Rushcliffe Country Park anyway and that these families could get involved in the activities offered by the event.

EM proposed that a mini BioBlitz event be held at Brackenhurst prior to the main Bioblitz to raise awareness with the students there and encourage them to attend the main event.

CJ announced that further discussions on the BigBAG forum event and Bio Blitz will continue at the forthcoming meeting of the Awareness subgroup.

CJ announced that 2010 has been announced as the international year of biodiversity by the UN and this is to be looked at during the LBAP conference with he believes national events planned to promote this (possibly a national Bioblitz event).

CH proposed that Creswell Crags be used as a possible venue for future events as there are new offices there which could be used and it represents a good venue for cross border events with Derbyshire.

CJ concluded that regarding the budget he has been working at keeping expenses down and his current priorities are preparing for the BigBAG. He also intended to edit the orchard and black poplar action plans with a view for their imminent circulation, and completing partner LBAP mapping.

4. LBAP document update

CJ reported back from the Lead Partner Workshop, EH from Royal Forestry Society has agreed to be the author of the urban HAP for which NWT through its urban partnership group is to take the lead partner role. CJ has asked that the draft Urban HAP be ready at the end of November.

The planted coniferous woodland HAP is to be changed to a guidance note with a grouped species action plan being created for those species that are dependent on coniferous woodland. This has not been clarified by Andy Powers from FC as communication between Andy Powers and BAG is passed through other officers. It is hoped a clearer picture will be presented at the next BAG I&M subgroup meeting.

NS mentioned that the Forestry Commission has requested a spatial plan to go alongside the guidance note.

NC stated that this would represent a large amount of work to add alongside the guidance note and questioned who would do this work.

NS added that The Forestry Commission has raised the importance of the coniferous habitat within the region and the need for sympathetic management towards it.

NS recommended that Steve Clifton be contacted regarding management and that with the different needs of different types of species too many SAPs would be required to represent the species present in all the coniferous woodland.

NC advocated that rather than individual SAP's a grouped SAP be produced as there shouldn't be too much of a conflict between the interests of different species within coniferous woodland habitats.

CJ brought up that at present there are fifteen actions for HAPs, and felt that the actions should be put into a generic actions document and that for each Hap a small number of specific actions for that habitat were included in each individual action plan. At the recent regional LBAP meeting the idea of scrapping general actions all together was looked at (as these were undertaken as a matter of course) with the intention of just keeping the specific actions for HAPs.

JB followed that actions on a HAP act as an aide memoir and that the generic fifteen actions should be kept and habitat specific action added as well.

NC suggested that at the start of each HAP a generic statement be included along with advice for land owners and an advice note on planning.

JB added that such a statement would need to be included on each HAP so the information doesn't get missed by consultants just looking at the HAP they need.

NS stated that if the actions are to be removed from HAP's then to compensate the remaining targets would need to be very prescriptive.

CJ cited that in the LBAP meeting the general opinion was in favour of losing the actions and that he personally is in favour of just having a few specific actions for each HAP, with a link to the generic HAP document included with each HAP.

RB remarked that if the HAP's were only downloaded then it would be best to keep the actions included in their current state as the generic information would already then be present.

NC advanced that specific actions would be better as they would be easier to read than the existing fifteen generic actions which can be off putting as they mainly

refer to process and policy outputs. NC argued that a Generic Action Plan was needed to deal with the 15 standard actions for habitats.

JB voiced that the HAP's were originally set up as they are with the 15 similar actions as an aid in BARS reporting.

CJ reminded everyone that at a national level it is being looked to incorporate (brigaded) most SAP's into HAPs. This process should be looked at closer in future meetings.

NC asked if the intention of this would be have a list of species which would benefit from each HAP.

CJ responded that the UKHAP group for Hedgerows has linked 115 UKBAP species to hedgerows as a recent piece of work (he discovered this at the recent Hedgerow Conference). Warren Priest from Natural England Regional Team is trying to match UKBAP species present in the region with actions that link these species to UKBAP habitats.

JB raised the need to link up species to the HAPs as it would provide more information.

NC questioned when species would be reviewed for the lists.

CJ suggested that Sheila Wright would be reviewing species on the list of conservation concern next year (2010) and that this may be a good time to brigade local species. At the same time it would be good to be able to use national information to inform this process.

Action 1: CJ to draft generic actions for HAPs.

5. LBAP mapping

CJ informed all that the NWT LBAP habitat mapping layers are nearing completion as are the National Trust layers while NC is finishing off the NCC layers. Mapping work continues on the Centre Parc's estate and talks are planned with James BaKer of RSPB to acquire mapping information from their two sites to show details of the recent and ongoing habitat creation work.

NC proposed that map information be obtained from the Beckingham site as it would prove useful.

CJ continued that he has a new volunteer (Malcolm Kennerley) working on mapping the lowland deciduous woodland layers (initially using the SINC data and the ancient woodland data). The canals layer is complete and the mapping of grassland layers has currently stalled. OMHOPDL is nearly complete and heathland is being mapped by Natural England as a part of their climate change project.

The 6C mapping project has been expanded to cover the whole of the East Midlands with data sets required for each county, once LBAP mapping has been completed the data sets can then be added to the mapping programme and the accuracy of the data enhanced.

Andy Lear at Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust is working on a further mapping project, that will consist of using data from the land cover maps and OS parcel mapping. The project could lead to an enhanced method of reporting against the UKBAP. The project is seeking funding from the Wildlife Trust's national research fund.

Action 2: CJ to contact Andy Lear to inform him that the Nottinghamshire LBAP datasets aren't currently complete but that the BAG partnership is happy to support the mapping project work that LWT and Leicester University are proposing.

6. LBAP Future Roles Workshop

CJ recounted the main points discussed at the LBAP co-ordinators meeting recently held in Reading. BARS was discussed with the general opinion being that it is not working and that a guidance note on operating the BARS system and what it should be used for is required. Invasive non-native species are to be looked at following the Norfolk's example of recording and identifying sites, which are to be treated if possible or otherwise contained, this links in with the Japanese Knotweed survey being undertaken throughout the county. Also CJ and NS are set to attend the Northern and Midlands LBAP Workshop to be held in York in October.

7. BAG Funding

CJ imparted that he has issued letters to the district councils asking for £1,000 of funding and to Nottingham City Council requesting £2,000 of funds to make up the budget shortfall, so far three negative responses from Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood and Gedling councils have been returned. Ashfield District Council have not officially replied yet as they are reviewing their budgets and Broxtowe Borough Council are to be chased for their reply.

NS raised the need for the full funding strategy to be looked at with the possibility of looking at obtaining funding from the private sector.

NC stated that the problem with approaching the private sector is that it would take money away from NWT.

JB added that NWT's funding from businesses is being cut as it is in reaction to the recession.

NS advised that the City Council should be the priority in chasing up funding.

CJ brought forth the financial problems currently being suffered by Nottingham City Council.

NS proposed that central government be lobbied to provide complete funding for a biodiversity officer for every county.

JB voiced her agreement but said that she couldn't see it happening.

CH recommended that marketing be looked at highlighting to councils that is they give to the BAG then they can save money from hiring people to work in related roles.

NC mentioned that he and CJ are meeting with Heather Stokes from Nottinghamshire County Council on the 21st of September to discuss financing options.

NS advocated that if central government won't fund biodiversity officers themselves then they should be lobbied to produce a funding strategy forcing local authorities to provide funding.

CJ stated that he had been in contact with Rebecca Brunt from the Environment Agency regarding their £1k contribution towards funding the BAG and he was still awaiting a response from the EA.

8. Update from the Implementation and Monitoring subgroup

JB briefed that the main topic of conversation was in clarifying the definition and role of lead partners. As result of this process lead partners were currently updating the 21 HAP documents.

Opportunity mapping has been identified as a priority work area but may have to wait until Natural England have completed their regional mapping work. New targets are to be set next year to match national targets along with the work to review HAP documents.

Work is to be started on updating SAP' and creating relevant grouped species action plans.

Discussions began on potential species and habitats to be considered for work as priorities in 2010. There was a suggestion of working on Water Voles and Otters.

Mike Reid and Richard Yarnall are to be approached to act as speakers at future BAG I&M meetings.

9. Feedback from the Awareness subgroup

EM reported that not many records have been received for the hedgerow moth survey (Small Eggar and Scarce Vapourer moths) and that perhaps better images of the species may have helped in promoting these species.

EM is to create a press release for good hedgerow management as part of the priority habitat promotional exercise. CJ suggested that in the press release the public and land managers are directed towards the BAG leaflet on hedges and to the hedgeline website.

EM concluded that at the meeting the Bioblitz event and BigBAG events were also discussed though final decisions were to be made at the next subgroup meeting.

10. AOB

CJ brought up that hedgerow survey grants for £5,000 are available for which Lesley Sharpe is considering putting a bid in for Nottinghamshire.

CH mentioned that Natural England are giving £25,000 in grants for managing hedgerows covering the 152,000 meters of hedgerows in Nottinghamshire.

CJ fed back a little on the Hedgerow Hap event in Birmingham. The national countryside survey that in the last 10 years more hedgerows had been created than lost but that the general condition of hedgerows for biodiversity was declining. In addition it was noted that hedgerow trees were being lost at a rapid rate and that in order to maintain a similar number of hedgerow trees in the future 30,000 trees were needed to be planted year on year for the foreseeable future. Stella Artois are providing money to groups aligned with The Tree Council for hedgerow management and planting, and hedgerow schemes are underway aimed at planting trees in hedgerow gaps.

JB raised the problem with hedgerow trees getting flailed by contract cutting.

NS recommended that a better cause of action may be to establish hedgerows themselves prior to planting trees within their gaps.

NC suggested that the money being spent on the hedgerow survey would be better used going towards planting hedgerow trees and enquired if the grant would cover this kind of planting.

CJ responded that the hedgerow HAP covers this but to qualify for the Stella Artois grant groups would need to be members of The Tree Council. Defra provide money for surveying alone.

CJ announced that Papplewick is being considered by Lesley for the first possible survey site in the county to use the defra grant scheme. Further discussion on this will be brought up by Lesley Sharpe at the next Implementation and Monitoring Group meeting.

11. Date of Next Meetings

Thursday 3rd December 2009. 10.00. SFT Offices, Edwinstowe.

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.