



**Biodiversity Action Group
Steering Group Extraordinary Meeting
Notes**

**10am, Tuesday 9th June 2011
Trent Bridge House, West Bridgford**

Present:

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)
Heather Stokes	Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC)

An extraordinary meeting of the BAG Steering Group had been called in the light of news from NE that it was no longer wishing to support LBAP's.

1. Apologies

Janice Bradley (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust), Steve Fisher (Broxtowe Borough Council), Anja Randeria (Environment Agency).

2. Current Notts Funding Situation

NE notified the chair of the partnership that NE are no longer looking to fund the LBAP's. There is reference in the letter to potential parachute payments but there is no detail in the information.

NE was a key funder of Notts BAG and as a result of their announcement the partnership has been left in a difficult position. As discussed at the previous meeting NCC has agreed to fund the Biodiversity Officer post for the forthcoming year but after this time the position is less clear.

Currently funding is received from two local authorities (Rushcliffe BC and Broxtowe BC).

In recent years funding contributions have also been lost from the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency.

NWT and SFT have both included an element for the Biodiversity Officer in past funding bids and none of these have been successful.

CJ and NC informed the members of the group that NottsBAG and NCC were considering putting in a funding bid to SITA Trust for a Grizzled Skipper Project.

3. The National Picture

CJ reported that after correspondence with other LBAP's it was clear that NE cutbacks were having a negative affect. Currently around a quarter of all LBAP's were no longer employing a LBAP officer.

At a regional level (in both Leicestershire and Northamptonshire) each Wildlife Trust in each county had decided to no longer support the LBAP (In Leicestershire and Northamptonshire the LBAP was previously hosted by the Wildlife Trust).

In England the majority of LBAP coordinator posts had between 6 months and 1 year of funding remaining.

4. EMBP Potential Funding

The EMBP had recently informed members of the partnership that there was an underspend of £27k that was available to be utilised by the partnership. After initial messages it was suggested that this money could be used to support projects that were supporting the LBAP in each of the relevant LBAP areas.

The partnership agreed that this would be a good way of pulling in additional funds and encouraged CJ to put in some funding bids for this resource.

CJ explained that the bids would have to be to expand the scope of existing project work. This may include things like the water vole work, the crayfish work or work on non-native invasive species.

CJ explained that he had spoken with a number of the other LBAP's and there was a consensus forming that an equal amount of funding should be made available to each LBAP from the region. This would split the funds 6 ways which would provide an important additional £4.5k to each of the LBAP's. CJ recent understanding was that each LBAP was being requested to submit a funding bid for each of the projects that it was hoping that the money would support. This would create a lot of paperwork and additional time and effort to get potentially little or no funding.

CJ wondered whether there was a way that the funding requirements could not be so onerous at the same time as offering some clear deliverable outcomes.

5. Opportunities of the Natural Environment White Paper

There were going to be two key areas of the NEWP that would directly affect LBAP's and could in turn be a source of additional funding. It wasn't clear if this was the parachute payments referred to in the NE letter circulated in April.

Local Nature Partnerships

These bodies will compliment the LEP's (Local Economic Partnership's). They will be much broader partnerships than the existing LBAP's and will look to engage with a much wider number of stakeholders with a key component being the business sector. £1m is available over the financial year 2011/12.

Nature Improvement Areas

These refer to Lawton's Ecological Restoration zones. These zones will be landscape scale in size and will be driven by the local knowledge held by local partnerships. NE is looking to run a competition to create 12 NIA's initially. There is £7.5m available for these over three years (2012-2015).

6. Next Steps

There is currently a pot of money that exists that is left in the BAG budget from previous projects and funding streams. This money would help to keep a Biodiversity Officer in post for a year and four months.

The Steering Group agreed that this money should be used to keep the Biodiversity Officer in post to continue to coordinate the work of the LBAP partnership.

It was argued that the BAG currently has a pot of money that will be made available to support the Biodiversity Officer post. We know how much is in the pot and the aim will be to bring in cash to add to the pot so that this can be used to keep the biodiversity officer in post.

NS suggested that the BAG create a funding matrix to identify the holes where funding is required. From this a loose business plan could be developed.

ACTION: NS to send an example of a funding matrix to CJ.

It was suggested that LA's should be approached once again for their support of the Notts BAG. Maybe this support could be provided in different ways (training to planners etc.)

CH suggested that the Biodiversity Officer could facilitate advice to planners on the pSPA .

HS felt that work to develop the Biodiversity Mapping could enable some financial support to Notts BAG through NOMAD.

EM suggested that Notts Bag provide support to the 'Wildlife in the City' project and get paid for it. Delivering workshops etc.

It was suggested that business partners be approached for sponsorship (eg. Centre Parcs).

Finally it was suggested that CJ should continue a positive communication with the partnership that is both upbeat and promotes the Notts BAG. Dialogue with members of the partnership may encourage some good/new ideas of ways of pulling in additional funding.