

**Minutes Wales Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group Meeting
WBPSG18 14th November 2012, Countryside Council for Wales Office, Bangor.**

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Matthew Quinn (Chair)	Welsh Government
John Watkins	Welsh Government
Robert Griffiths	Welsh Government
Alys Edwards	WBP
Sean McHugh	WBP
Tracey Lovering	WBP
Danielle Fry	South Wales LBAPs/ Monmouthshire CBC
Sarah Slater	North Wales LBAPs/ Flintshire CCBC
David Jenkins	Coed Cymru
Stephen Bladwell	RSPB (Species Expert Group)/Wales Environment Link
Dr Clive Walmsley	CCW/Climate Change Commission Wales
Colin Charman	CCW (WBP INNS Group)
Helen Buckingham	National Trust (Lowland Grassland and Heathland ESG)
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	Wildlife Trusts Wales/ Wales Environment Link
Kathryn Hewitt	CCW
Julia Korn	CCW
Nick Birula	Environment Agency Wales
David Parker	CCW
Tim Pagella	Wales Environment Research Hub
Roy Tapping	Cofnod
Helen Cariss	Forestry Commission Wales
Jan Sherry	CCW
Clare Burrows	CCW

Apologies

Name	Organisation
Glenda Thomas	FWAG Cymru
Dusi Thomas	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
Gemma Light	Welsh Government
Matthew Howells	Dyfed Powys Police
Chris Mills	Environment Agency Wales
Steve Spode	Welsh Government
Shaun Russell	Wales Environment Research Hub
Adam Rowe	SEWBReC
Amanda Davies	Flintshire CBC/ALGE

Bill MacDonald	Forestry Commission Wales
Chris Tucker	Forestry Commission Wales
Trevor Dines	Plantlife Cymru
Hazel Drewett	CCW
Mike Bruford	Cardiff University
Rhys Owen	National Parks Wales
Sean Christian	Wales Environment Link/RSPB
Graham Oliver	National Museums Wales
Lynda Warren	Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership

1. Welcome and Introductions

Matthew Quinn chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees and thanked them for their continuing work supporting the partnership.

2. Paper 1: CCW Life Natura 2000 Programme

Kathryn Hewitt, CCW, introduced attendees to the CCW LIFE Natura 2000 Programme, the aim of which is to develop a strategic programme for the management and restoration of all Natura 2000 sites in Wales (terrestrial and marine SACs and SPAs) for the period 2014-20 and beyond. It will be prioritised, detailed, costed and agreed by relevant stakeholders. The end result will be development of individual site actions plans in addition to thematic action plans. A similar project has been established in England and the two projects will be run side by side in order to address cross-border issues.

Kathryn reiterated that contribution of stakeholders, both internal (CCW) and external, at all stages is key to the success of the project, with the aim of securing agreement and commitment to delivery of actions. The hope is the programme will result in the development of large-scale conservation projects which are able to draw down funding from a wide range of sources. To facilitate on-going communication with stakeholders the programme is committed to delivery of 28 workshops over the lifetime of the programme (Sept 2012- Dec 2014).

The Programme will work alongside the Special Sites Programme and build upon work already completed by the Special Sites Project (SSP).

Kathryn confirmed that the remit of the project extends to regulatory issues as well as direct on-site management issues and could be expanded to include issues such as diffuse pollution and nitrogen deposition etc. However, it may be outside of the scope of the project to address larger issues such as climate change, and there is a need to focus on practical work.

It was noted that CCW have recently started a project looking at nitrogen deposition and the impact on N2Ks, which is being presented to an EU conference later this year, and it is important that this work informs the development of the LIFE Programme.

John Watkins confirmed that from a Welsh Government (WG) perspective the programme will help prioritise action and focus funding priorities. Integration and mainstreaming are key and there is a need to explore how obligations to deliver other statutory requirements can be addressed through this work, for example there will also be strong links to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) work.

ACTION 1. ALL to feedback to Kathryn Hewitt (k.hewitt@ccw.gov.uk) on best mechanisms for LIFE N2K Programme engagement with stakeholders.
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Matthew Quinn provided an update on the timescales for legislative development in Wales;

- **Environment Bill:** White Paper due for publication in the summer and will contain three main elements: integrated environmental management; natural resource planning and tools for delivery e.g. new markets; changes to designation or designation purpose and specific changes to individual regimes which align them with this approach.
- **Sustainable Development Bill:** White Paper due on 03rd December 2012
- **Planning Bill:** draft Bill and White Paper towards the end of 2013

Decision Point: Attendees endorsed the aims and objectives of the project

Decision Point: Attendees agreed to contribute to the project (e.g. provision of information and advice, consultation on outputs, approval of Programme at relevant stages), via the relevant WBP groups.

ACTION 2. ALL to contribute to the LIFE N2K Programme through provision of advice, information etc.
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3. Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) Update

A new map based version of BARS was launched on the 18th April 2012. The new system has been built from the ground up to offer a consolidated pot of action data describing individual actions taken to benefit biodiversity, enabling BARS to offer a range of powerful mapping and summary tools. Actions can then be linked to a project or range of projects enabling the collation of information at different levels.

The new system will provide an important source of evidence to support delivery and reporting of work within the UK to protect and enhance important habitats and species. BARS offers a

central tool to collate such data which is typically held in widely distributed sources and in a range of formats.

WBP and CCW currently have three pilots underway focusing on data transfer, grant reporting and a new approach to LBAP coordination. These aim to test BARS functionality, and explore the role and value of BARS in Wales with a view to using BARS to contribute to a range of reporting requirements including supporting future Wales level reporting.

Decision Point: The group endorsed Wales’ engagement with the BARS and continued investment in this project.

Decision Point: Attendees agreed to explore the BARS as part of a tool kit for reporting through the development of Natural Resources Wales, and potential use as a reporting tool for any Living Wales Pilot projects.

Decision Point: The initial focus, for data transfer, on Glastir Target Element Biodiversity Actions (Glastir Advanced) was agreed.

Decision Point: Attendees agreed to encourage use/testing in their own organisations with a view to building the data on BARS including making sure that appropriate staff are identified who have the skills/time to use the system effectively.

Decision Point: Partner organisations agreed to promote collaboration with LBAPs through the use of BARS.

ACTION 3. ALL to promote use of BARS within their own organisations

4. Adoption of the Wales Biodiversity Framework

John Watkins introduced the paper, the aim of which is to ensure Wales is able to deliver on its biodiversity commitments and deliver associated biodiversity benefits. The paper builds on the outline proposal discussed at WBPSPG17 in July 2012 and reflects closely the approach taken in the EU Common implementation Framework. A workshop to further develop and refine the approach was held at the WBP conference in September 2012 and the paper combines feedback from both sessions in addition to the recommendations of the Future of BAP group.

The paper outlines proposed new governance arrangements, which make the best possible use of the expertise and capacity of statutory agencies, local and national park authorities, and the third sector, whilst providing clarity on authority and accountability thereby ensuring that the European Union Biodiversity Strategy targets are fully covered, and increasing the potential for Wales to influence policy at member state and EU level. The approach builds on the current partnership approach within WBP and existing governance framework.

The paper outlines the intention by Welsh Government to establish:

- A Welsh Government Natural Resources Policy Forum
- A Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board
- Four Working Groups on Natura 2000, ecosystems and green infrastructure, Invasive Non Native Species, and Surveillance Monitoring & Reporting.

The relationship between these groups with each other and existing groups operating in that arena is outlined in the Framework (Annex 1-3). The framework is a headline representation and is not designed to represent all activity. The changes to the Wales Biodiversity Partnership as it currently exists relate to clarifying its particular role, scope, and where it receives its operational instruction, providing group with a clear mandate within which to operate and ensuring this is understood and agreed by all.

note; 'Wales Biodiversity Action Forum' indicated on the diagram should read 'Wales Biodiversity Partnership'.

The proposal is to build on diagram presented in Annex 3 of the paper and provide clarity and responsibility for the 5 points presented in paper, harnessing expertise and capacity that exists and ensuring action on ground is informed by strategic priorities and resource levels.

Welsh Government are now seeking agreement on the broad approach put forward and would like WBP members to work with Welsh Government to establish the framework, review existing activity and draft terms of reference for endorsement by the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board.

Discussion

A discussion followed around the detail of the paper and attendees requested clarity over how this work would be taken forward and integration with Natural Resources Wales activity and the upcoming Sustainable Development and Environment Bills in Wales. Matthew Quinn confirmed that under the current proposals, establishment of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) would precede the detail of the remaining structure and would be responsible for developing a mandate for the remaining groups. The intention is that the WBSB will have an initial meeting in January 2013.

The role of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) will guide the work of the WBP and ensure action needed is agreed by consensus rather than dictation. Matthew reiterated that there is no intention to bypass communication from the local level to WG and this needs to be maintained.

A question was raised over whether the diagram was representative of the wide range of group currently operating and John reiterated that the diagram presented was not intended to capture all groups, merely to provide an overview of proposed changes to lines of

authority and reporting and acknowledged that there is a need to makes this clearer if circulating for comment.

Concerns were raised that under the proposed structure the replacement for the Outcome 21 (O21) group appears to focus solely on N2K and SSSIs, with no reference to local sites, which are also under the remit of this group. *“Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified”*

Matthew Quinn acknowledged that the Environment Strategy Wales (ESW) in its current form will probably be refreshed in the next 2 years. However, it is unclear at this stage whether the ESW will remain a standalone document or be subsumed into emerging policy initiatives post 2015.

Attendees welcomed the continuation of a partnership approach and not move to ‘stakeholders’ noting that significant progress has been made in Wales adopting a partnership approach. A significant amount of detail is contained in the original WBP Future of BAP including looking at CBD and EU targets and how WBP does/could deliver into these in the future and it is important that is revisited and fed into the developing structure.

Matthew acknowledged that the least developed area of the framework is currently around WBP structure and the role of local partnerships to deliver on the ground and enable the action of others to be delivered. The Wales-level groups need to enable delivery and determine regional and national priorities and action required on the ground. This needs to be worked up in more detail to ensure the right context is provided and ensure there is feedback from local partnerships to the strategy board. Some groups i.e. ESGs may need a stronger mandate and stronger links to relevant groups within the structure to ensure accountability.

Representation of marine biodiversity in the framework will need to be explored in greater detail as marine has its own governance in WG and EU. There is a need to ensure the structure is ‘marine proofed’ and this will require strengthening of links to the WG Marine department and their work programme.

<p>ACTION 4. John Watkins to discuss development of the framework with Julia Williams and ensure the Welsh Government Marine Branch is involved in the process, with strong links to their own work programme.</p>

John Watkins reiterated that setting priorities and providing clarity will ensure resources and effort are focussed on shared priorities. There should not be a distinction between CCW/NRW funding priorities as it sees them and WBP priorities. A single programme can provide clarity over who is delivering what and would eliminate parallel processes and duplication

Comments on the Framework should be sent to Alys Edwards who will gather feedback and forward to John Watkins for consideration.

- ACTION 5.** ALL to consult internally, within individual organisations and feedback to Alys Edwards aedwards@wtwales.org by 20th December 2012.
- ACTION 6.** Alys Edwards to forward comments to John Watkins to feed into initial WBSB meeting in early January and feedback to WBPSG19, February 2013.
- ACTION 7.** Stephen Bladwell to discuss Wales Environment Link (WEL) representation on WBSB with WEL colleagues.

Decision Points: Attendees agreed that additional time was required to enable wider consultation and securing high level buy in within partner organisations, enable more detailed feedback to be submitted, but was in agreement that the proposals were positive.

5. LBAP Annual Reporting

Sarah Slater and Danielle Fry introduced the paper which provided examples of LBAP and National Park projects across Wales, highlighting a diverse suite of projects delivering for a wide range of species habitats with associated ecosystem benefits.

Local Authority biodiversity officers and national park biodiversity officers meet regionally to share ideas, discuss work programmes and identify opportunities for partnership projects. These groups have proved to be an effective way of sharing resources and achieving biodiversity gains in a time of ever decreasing resources.

Among those projects highlighted was the North East Wales Orchard recovery project, funded through the Welsh Government ERD Fund 2011/12. The project achieved planting of 1000 heritage variety fruit trees over a range of 50 community, school and private sites, undertook school visits, produced an introduction to orchard management booklet and ran a well-attended management workshop, the success of the project will be followed up this winter by replacing trees lost in the first year through natural loss. The Monmouthshire Natural Assets Project was also highlighted, which has been funding through the RDP. The project focuses on delivering small grants, via Gwent Wildlife Trust (GWT), for landowners to deliver action on SINC's, to ensure both protection through planning and securing management on the ground. The project has proved extremely successful and project details have been shared with other interested local authorities. Formal reporting of this work at a Wales level through BARS is being undertaken and should prove to be a good way of generating new projects and sharing work taking place at a local level.

A project in Conwy established a high-level green programme board to oversee all the authority's environmental projects to enable a high-level commitment backed up by

quarterly reporting. In Denbighshire, a biodiversity NERC audit was undertaken with departments signing up to action to enhance biodiversity. Both projects are commendable and could be used in other local authority areas. Greater buy in could be secured through greater engagement with Biodiversity Champions in Local Authorities through networking and sharing of best practice, which could be achieved through the regional groups or a Ministerial workshop.

Matthew Quinn noted work on regional cooperation required progressing in greater detail by his own department and that more formal support for work undertaken by LBAPs/Local authorities would be useful.

ACTION 8. Welsh Government to consider greater engagement with Biodiversity Champions and explore possibility of a biodiversity champion workshops.

Nick Birula welcomed the identification of ecosystem benefits delivered by projects, and suggested future reports could be adopted in spread sheet format to enable better analysis of data and services provided.

ACTION 9. Danielle Fry and Sarah Slater to explore possibility of providing future reports in spread sheet form to enable better analysis of data and ecosystem services provided.

Decision Points: Attendees noted the paper and continue to endorse the work of the LBAPs across Wales.

6. S42 List Amendments

Stephen Bladwell and Clare Burrows introduced the paper the aim of which was to propose amendments to the list in the context of two key elements:

1. Revision to the vascular plant section – removing two species that do not occur or are now considered extinct in Wales (i.e. regionally extinct) and adding one species that was omitted due to an administrative error.
2. Addressing a key gap in the list of priority habitats for Wales - the addition of ffridd, also known as coedcae or upland fringe, as a habitat of principal importance to biodiversity conservation in Wales. Ffridd is a uniquely Welsh habitat which has high biodiversity value, is culturally important and is a significant landscape feature throughout the uplands of Wales.

Another key gap, identified as part of the review process in grassland communities, is waxcap grasslands. Some species in this community are already on the list in their own

right but bringing these together would be beneficial. Stephen requested to develop this work further to present at WBPSG19, February 2013.

Matthew Quinn requested clarity over the legal processes of adding/removing features on the s42 list. The legal requirement is for Welsh Government to publish and keep under review this list **in consultation with the Countryside Council for Wales**, and so request clarity from CCW how the current arrangement fits with this requirement. In addition, whilst recognising the specific provisions within NERC 2006 s42, it would be helpful for dis-benefits, costs, implications etc. to be outlined as part of proposals to add/remove.

- ACTION 10.** Stephen Bladwell to develop waxcap grassland proposal and present as a paper at WBPSG19.
- ACTION 11.** WBP Support Team to circulate waxcap grassland paper with the minutes of this meeting.
- ACTION 12.** David Parker to clarify the formal process is for amendments to the s42 list, and whether the current approach satisfies the requirement for WG to consult with CCW.

Discussion

A discussion followed around the proposals in the paper. The proposal to remove *juniperus hemisphaeria* and *Pulicaria vulgaris* and the addition on *Valerianella rimosa* was agreed by attendees.

The proposal to add ffridd to s42 list, based on biological need following JNCC criteria for habitat addition, was discussed at length. Further research work is required in order to characterise and refine the current definition of ffridd and to develop an estimate of ffridd coverage in Wales.

Despite this lack of information on the habitat, it was noted that few areas of ffridd are protected and there is a general lack of awareness and recognition of importance of the habitat. Many of the habitats which make up ffridd are already present on the s42 list, however the ffridd mosaic is not currently protected and there has been widespread loss and net replacement by improved grassland. Moving forward it is likely that ffridd will be critical in terms of ecosystem resilience and will therefore become increasingly important and the case for addition is strong based on the provisions contained in the s42 NERC Act which states that '*species and habitats of principle importance for biology diversity in Wales*' should be included.

Clare Burrows noted that there had been consensus at the recent WBP Conference workshop that it would be beneficial to add ffridd to the s42 list as local authorities currently find it difficult to object to its loss. Addition of features to the s42 list is primarily about targeting action drawing down funding. Addition of ffridd to the s42 list could lead to further research and enhanced datasets. This has been evident for Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land (OMHoPDL), where the first action is to

develop baseline data for the habitat. Addition of ffridd could allow for the development of a strategic approach to ffridd and targeted action. Noteworthy that ffridd is not covered as a habitat in Glastir but rather is recognised as a landscape element.

The majority of the attendees were in support of the proposal to amend the s42 list to include ffridd. However, Matthew Quinn suggested that although there was consensus among attendees on the importance of ffridd a lack of information on extent, definition and what would be defined as good condition make it problematic. Additional pressures, such as conflicts with tree planting targets and conflicting stakeholder ambitions for ffridd mean it is unclear whether ffridd actions should be addressed through s42 or other tools, such as Natural Resource Planning (NRP). There were concerns aired around using old tools when embarking on a new process (ecosystem approach) and a question exists during this transitional period about how issues such as this should be dealt with.

The habitat provides a good test case for application of the ecosystems approach and provides the opportunity to explore options using an ecosystems services approach and in the development of Natural Resources Wales.

ACTION 13. John Watkins to communicate the need to consider ffridd as part of the NRP work being undertaken by Welsh Government.

ACTION 14. Stephen Bladwell and Clare Burrows to undertake further work on definition and extent of ffridd, including risk & cost/benefit analysis and bring this back to WBPSG19 for discussion.

ACTION 15. Stephen Bladwell to develop case for waxcap grasslands, on biological merits and present to WBPSG19

Decision Points: Attendees agreed to endorse the removal and addition of the aforementioned higher plant species and agreed to consider the proposal for addition of ffridd at the February meeting.

Decision Points: Agreed amendments will be taken to the Minister for official approval and action, following clarification of the process from CCW.

7. Papers to Note

Paper to Note A: Wildlife Crime Update

Decision Point: The group considered the paper and continued to endorse the work of the Welsh Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group

Paper to Note B: Academic Workshops Outputs

Tracey Lovering updated the group on a successful academic workshop held in Cardiff on the 11th September, in partnership with the Welsh Government Living Wales team. Delegates were invited to contribute to the day's discussions from across academic institutions in Wales, with representation from Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, Bangor & Glamorgan Universities, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) Bangor, Wales Environment Research Hub (WERH), National Museum of Wales, National Botanic Garden Wales. All representatives were drawn from the pool of WBP Academics recently engaged with supporting WBP through membership of WBP Ecosystem and Species Expert Groups. Additional delegates were WBP Ecosystem Group Chairs, Welsh Government (WG) Officials, CCW Climate Change and Habitat Specialists, Environment Agency and GIS Consultancy. The meeting was chaired by Shaun Russell (WERH).

Comments have since been provided against all evidence gaps identified by the WBP Wales-level groups by Mike Bruford (Cardiff University) and Geoff Proffitt (Swansea University). These comments will now be circulated to remaining attendees for further comment and returned to WBP Groups for refinement and published on WBP and WERH websites. A project research template has also been developed which can be completed returned to Tracey and shared with research institutions to enable easy take up of research projects.

Decision Point: The group welcomed the work undertaken so far and approved Tracey to progress this work

Paper to Note C: Cardiff LBAP Pilot 2012/13 Update

Decision point: The group noted the paper and endorsed the outline of the Cardiff LBAP Pilot and the re-convening of the SINC Group to progress this work.

ACTION 16. Laura Palmer to continue to progress this work, in line with agreed outputs with CCW and report back on progress at WBPSG19, February 2013

Paper to Note D: Working Together Consultation for the Water Framework Directive

Decision Point: The group noted the paper and asked all WBP members to contribute to the Working Together Consultation through the website <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/wfd/working/together2012> and provide additional comments relevant to the NRW body and cross-border River Basin Management directly to Kyle Young kyle.young@environment-agency.gov.uk and/or Ceri Davis ceri.jones@environment-agency.gov.uk

8. Feedback from WCMP

The WCMP update has been delayed as Lynda was unable to attend, however a written update has been provided by Jill Brown (WCMP Partnership Officer)

ACTION 17. WBP Support Team to circulate WCMP update to Steering Group Members

9. Four Countries Update

Julia Korn provided an update from the Four Countries meeting. The UK Biodiversity Framework has now been signed off by UK Ministers, and an implementation plan is currently being developed, which is to be delivered in addition to the country strategies.

Defra is also due to report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in March 2014. Defra will report against high level actions and UK countries will also be required to report against their country strategies and indicators. Information on how this will be coordinated will be shared by Defra/JNCC in November.

10. Minutes and Actions from WBPSG17

The minutes from the SG17 meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Helen Chariss provided an update on outstanding FCW actions around data sharing with LRCs. Problems have been encountered with Forester (FCWs data system conservation module), which lacks the functionality to export to other systems. The issues have been acknowledged and will be addressed through ongoing development.

11. AOB

Dwr Cymru Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (IEAP) A communication note was received from Dŵr Cymru and will be circulated to attendees following the meeting.

WBP Conference 2013. WBP have had initial discussions with RSPB regarding arrangements for next year's conference. Stephen Bladwell confirmed that there is strong support within RSPB for landscape-scale conference and strong support from WBP members based on responses to the proposal was also noted. Further discussions will be needed to develop details.

ACTION 18. Sean McHugh and Sean Christian/ Stephen Bladwell to discuss 2013 Conference proposals and feedback.

Taxonomy & Identification Training Wales - Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales has been remitted by Welsh Government to undertake a “needs and provision review of taxonomy and identification skills” across both professional and amateur sectors in Wales. The work will be led by Dr Graham Oliver who is based at NMW.

The proposal is to approach organisations involved with professional training and development to assess training requirements for the amateur sector. This project will require a very wide range of engagement and NMW would greatly appreciate assistance in this area. A note will be circulated following the meeting.

ACTION 19. WBP Support Team to circulate taxonomy and identification training note to WBP members.

Strategic Assessment of Afforested Peat Resource in Wales – Helen Chariss informed the group that the Strategic Assessment of Afforested Peat Resource in Wales is now available on the FCW website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-8Z7BSH>

Tree disease – David Jenkins provided an update on the current situation with tree health in Wales;

Pine disease: Red band needle blight in Corsican and Lodgepole pines- impacts on timber productivity and tree health particularly in urban areas.

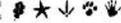
Phytophthora ramorum: in Larch in the south Wales valleys. A fungus-like organism which attacks many trees and plants. The economically important larch is a host, and large numbers have had to be felled.

Chalara fraxinia: an aggressive fungal disease of ash trees which causes crown death and wilting and dieback of branches.

David reiterated that other crops, including oak wood and spruce woodlands, are often genetically undiverse and future pathogens could have a devastating effect. Diversifying species and planting regimes would be advisable under these circumstances.

John Watkins confirmed that responsibility for Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) in Wales, including Chair of the INNS Group has now been passed to the Plant and Tree Health Team within Welsh Government, which will aim to ensure issues a more joined up approach.

Ecosystem and Human Health Course. Julia Korn informed the group that she will be running two courses on ecosystems and human health, in partnership with CoHAB, on the 28th November in Bangor and on the 30th November in Cardiff Maldron Hotel. Spaces are still available and anyone interested should contact Julia Korn for further information j.korn@ccw.gov.uk



12. Date of Next Meeting:

SG19: 19 February 2013, Swansea Environment Centre, Swansea

Matthew thanked everyone for their participation and continued support.