

**Minutes Wales Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group Meeting
WBPSG17 10th July 2012, Welsh Government Office, Aberystwyth**

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Matthew Quinn	Welsh Government
Alys Edwards	Wales Biodiversity Partnership Support Team
Sean McHugh	Wales Biodiversity Partnership Support Team
Tracey Lovering	Wales Biodiversity Partnership Support Team
Roy Tapping	LRCs Wales
Rob Griffiths	Welsh Government
Danielle Fry	South Wales LBAPs
Sean Christian	RSPB/Wales Environment Link
Dusi Thomas	Dŵr Cymru/ Welsh Water
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	Wildlife Trusts Wales/WEL
Helen Buckingham	National Trust
Nick Bialynicki-Birula	Environment Agency Wales
Matt Howells	South Wales Police
Bill McDonald	Forestry Commission Wales
John Watkins	Welsh Government
Polly Spencer-Vellacott	BSBI
Rhys Owen	Snowdonia National Parks
Hazel Drewett	CCW
Leanne Bird	Ceredigion County Council
Stephen Bladwell	RSPB Cymru/WEL
Sarah Slater	North Wales LBAPs
Laura Palmer	Cardiff City Council

Apologies

Name	Organisation
Lynda Warren	Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership (WCMP)
Mike Bruford	Cardiff University
Jerry Langford	Woodland Trust
Shelia Davies	Newport CC
Amanda Davies	ALGE
Deb Hill	WLGA/ City and County of Swansea
Graham Oliver	National Museum Wales

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

Attendees were informed that Sgt Ian Guildford (Wildlife and Environmental Crime Officer) retired from the south Wales Police on 30th June 2012. Matthew extended the groups thanks to Ian for all his hard work over the years and wished him well for the future. Sgt Matt Howells was welcomed to his first WBP meeting, replacing Ian Guildford and Rhys Owen was welcomed replacing Emyr Williams, representing National Parks Authorities in Wales.

2. Paper 01: Ecosystem Group Reporting Session: Tracey Lovering, WBP Ecosystems Advisor

Tracey Lovering introduced the background to the annual ecosystem group reporting session and emphasised the importance of partnership working and the sharing of biodiversity priorities at a strategic and local level. Group delivery over the past year has included: identification of the priority action areas; development of work programmes; increasing academic representation on the Wales-level groups; identification of evidence gaps in order to strengthen links with the research community in Wales; and identify mechanisms to meet these gaps; input into the Living Wales programme; assistance with the Ecosystem Resilience and Diversity (ERD) funding application assessment ;identification of policy issues to feed into WG planning review; assistance with UK HLF bid (wetlands & lowland heathland & grassland); advice and guidance to Glastir Contract managers; provision of workshops at the WBP conference; visiting/providing expert advice and guidance to LBAPs and importantly enabling and supporting biodiversity action on the ground (see paper for project examples and related group activity)

The above represents a significant and varied work programme which is often delivered in addition to member's day jobs and the capacity of the groups to deliver often challenging work programmes was highlighted.

Tracey proposed that, from the perspective of the WBP Chairs, the challenges for the year ahead include: establishing consistency in the level of support offered by partners; resourcing the activities of the groups; resolving challenges faced by the Marine Ecosystem Group; completion of the priority mapping work by remaining Wales-level groups; integration of the species habitat association work into the priority mapping initiative; engagement and communication of the group's activities provision of further priority mapping and action workshops at a local level; supporting WBP Conference and WBP Academics Workshop and identification and monitoring of policy and legislation drivers

A significant challenge will be identifying and implementing the changes to WBP structure in response to the Living Wales programme and the 2020 European Commission and CBD biodiversity targets.

Matthew Quinn updated the group on the outcomes of the WBP Advisory Group Chairs meeting, which highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the WBP's work and governance. The workshop identified the potential advantages of the partnership approach in terms of coordinating limited resources and building common purpose around delivery but identified the need for a much clearer sense of objectives, accountability, authority and roles going forwards. Some of these issues are touched upon in the review but many are more fundamental and will need to be considered alongside the work of the Single Body and Green Paper.

Matthew noted that the groups were currently delivering substantial work programmes and thanks were conveyed to groups for the work completed this year, particularly in light of on-going policy developments.

Attendees noted that the priority mapping and communication of this work had been particularly useful at a local level, giving wider context to local issues, although governance and authority to deliver LBAP work remains an issue at a local level.

Matters raised around the table included:

- that stronger governance of WBP is required, along with clearer communication and connections at all levels.
- There was a need to close the gap between there being a WBP 'job' and a day-job when it came to working for biodiversity, one suggestion was the sharing of work programmes with member organisations enabling assessment of resources to facilitate WBP work and assist in the planning of staff work programmes.
- A consistent level of funding and drawing on the pool of expertise within the biodiversity community would also be beneficial.
- Clarity on the role of WBP in the development of a Living Wales and how work fits into the priorities of member organisations is a key component.

Matthew set out that it was that Welsh Government's intention to establish a clearer governance structure for biodiversity, which reflected the European and UK policy context, whilst enabling Wales to continue to benefit from the expertise spread across agencies and NGOs when developing its response to biodiversity priorities. This structure will need to provide certainty on mandate when setting priorities, providing advice, developing new approaches, and coordinating local delivery. This would be developed and established this year.

Decision Points: A brief Welsh Government response to the **decision points from the annual reporting paper will be prepared for the next WBP SG meeting (John Watkins).**

3. Future of BAP: Stephen Bladwell, RSPB Cymru/WEL

Stephen Bladwell provided an overview of the Future of BAP (FoB) paper, developed to review the current approach and integrate developing work on the ecosystem approach with the on-going work of WBP. The work sits in the context of new international and European biodiversity targets and Welsh Government (WG) policy objectives on Living Wales, sustainable development and the environment strategy. The FoB work had broad representation from the statutory agencies, NGO sector and LBAPs. In contrast to the rest of the UK, Wales has maintained an active and effective BAP network with strong partnership links but the need to ‘tighten up’ the WBP structure and improve governance and accountability was noted.

The Future of BAP group has also produced an additional paper (not circulated), analysing the contribution of WBP to delivery of international and European targets concluding that WBP had significant involvement in delivery of the majority of targets. Only 4 targets were identified where WBP had little or no involvement in delivery.

ACTION 1. WBP Support Team to circulate the paper on the contribution of WBP to delivery of international and European targets.

The new focus on the ecosystems approach to conservation embodied by the Living Wales programme has identified the need to integrate delivery across sectors. To date the Wales-level groups have enabled Wales to make significant progress, offering value for money and resources WG can draw on, meaning WBP can provide significant support to the Living Wales programme. The Wales Biodiversity Partnership needs to continue to be flexible and review and develop its role in line with emerging policies and initiatives.

Matthew gave some background to the development of the response to the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and the associated Common Implementation Framework (Annex 02), produced by John Watkins, Welsh Government. The European Nature Directors meeting had endorsed the EU Biodiversity Strategy Common Implementation Framework, which would now be used as a basis for structuring Wales’ response to the delivery of the Strategy’s targets. Welsh Government is keen to share early thinking on the paper in order to inform future development and ensure policy and delivery requirements are integrated.

The focus of Annex 02 is governance and how priorities for biodiversity are identified, developed, and delivered in Wales. John Watkins spoke about the need to crystallise how the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and European Union Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS) targets will be delivered through the development of a clear implementation framework in Wales which reflects the UK and European context. A

clear line is required from priorities to what is delivered on the ground, with a strong feedback loop, and this will enable Wales to link into work in the European and international context, thereby enabling Wales to move from reactive delivery to an influencing role.

The aim is to consider the FoB paper and draft implementation framework for Wales side-by-side, to share early thinking and identify areas which can be mapped across. Any future biodiversity strategy will need to respond to implementation commitments already in place so clarity on the approach in Wales is essential. The value of the existing partnership was reiterated and the new implementation strategy needs to recognise the value of partnership which has been evident in the spirit of WBP to date.

The intention now is for Welsh Government to lead on introducing a new governance framework for biodiversity for adoption before the end of this year, drawing on the review undertaken by the WBP and the approach being taken on the Common Implementation Framework. The participation of the WBP members in this process, and the endorsement of the final approach, will be necessary if the strengths offered by the current WBP are to be carried forward into addressing biodiversity priorities in Wales. The approach will reflect on the areas for improvement that have been raised by the Chair's Group and the review of BAP, and target in particular providing clarity over the role and responsibilities of the wide range of organisations and working groups whilst strengthening the work programme, identifying priorities for delivery, and establishing clearer lines of accountability.

Discussion

A discussion followed considering the content and implications of both papers. Both papers were welcomed and it was noted that some recommendations contained in Annex 01 and Annex 02 map across easily (i.e. INNS and WEISG); however some areas will need further consideration to identify integration. A synthesis of the two papers was proposed as a means of realising Welsh Government's wish for a clearer governance framework for biodiversity whilst addressing the issues raised by the review of BAP.

Other points raised for consideration when preparing the proposition for a new governance structure:

- to show how the UK level groups (i.e. Natura 2000 inter-agency group) sit within the structure identified in the draft implementation framework.
- to indicate the staffing level required for group representation and where the surveillance, monitoring and reporting group fit in the overall structure and in relationship to current CCW monitoring and reporting work. It was emphasised that reporting should take place at a Wales-level and the suggested additional group should fit in with an existing group rather than act standalone.
- Timelines to development/establishment of new structure need to be clearly defined, in order to fit with other areas of change which are currently on-going.

- Doubts were cast over whether the current Steering Group could perform a Board function given the complexity.
- Constraints relating to resources and capacity within the current structure need to be recognised and access to other sectors and departments could potentially alleviate this.

There was a consensus that there was logic in developing a biodiversity strategy for Wales in some form, to provide clarity on priorities at a time when the approach to natural resource planning and regulation was going through significant change, but where the targets to be delivered on biodiversity are ambitious and require urgent action.. A FoB targets paper could be fed into the development of any future biodiversity strategy for Wales.

Matthew informed attendees that responses to the Living Wales green paper were currently being considered and an announcement as to the future direction on biodiversity and development of a biodiversity strategy would be made in Autumn 2012.

The need to ensure contact is not lost with local delivery and action on the ground was raised, and the new governance structure would need to ensure that there was a strong feedback loop from delivery into the development of new policies and approaches. The connection between local delivery and high level policy is considered to contribute to the value members attach to the WBP in it's current form.

Decision Points: Decision points from the Future of BAP paper will be considered in the synthesis paper to be produced by Welsh Government in advance of SG18, in November 2012.

ACTION 2. John Watkins to draft synthesis paper for comment over the summer and for discussion at a workshop of the WBP conference, and for decision at SG18, November 2012.

ACTION 3. ALL to send in comments on redrafted paper.

ACTION 4. Welsh Government to share diagram of the common implementation framework discussed at the Nature Directors meeting

4. Presentation: Filling in the gaps - monitoring rare vascular plant species in Wales, Polly Spencer-Vellacott: Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI)

Polly introduced attendees to the National BSBI project and the specific focus of the Welsh work. BSBI are currently developing vice counties rare plant registers, providing a vital regional picture of species status.

In addition to this work the present focus is on increasing the number of volunteers monitoring rare plants on SSSIs in Wales. Emphasis of the work is on monitoring not

management. Two specific species were highlighted during the presentation; *Antennaria diococa* (Mountain everlasting) and *Trollius europaeus* (Globe flower). The latter species is on the s42 list. It was suggested that due to the rarity of Mountain everlasting and its restriction to designated sites in Wales, inclusion on the s42 list would be beneficial, in terms of accessing external funding and raising awareness.

The species identified by Polly in her presentation could potentially act as indicators, allowing implications for wider ecosystem services to be drawn from management.

The adoption of county flowers in each vice county is a useful concept and could act as a good engagement mechanism and basis for project work. Rare plant registers were recognised as useful in the local context but not so useful for site assessments.

A request was made for funding for volunteer mileage to survey *Antennaria diococa* across Wales (approx 50 sites), with an extension of the survey to include *Trollius europaeus* if additional funding was available. Receipt of funding would allow a Wales-wide picture of the status of this species to developed, enabling wider distinctions to be drawn.

ACTION 5. Any WBP member interested in contributing to the costs of volunteer mileage to increase survey effort for *Antennaria diococa* across Wales to contact Polly Spencer-Vellacott pollyspencervellacott@gmail.com

5. Papers to Note

Paper to Note A: WBP Planning

Decision Point: The group noted the paper and endorsed the WBW 2013 approach and dates.

Decision Point: The group endorsed the paper and agreed the WBP budget for the coming year.

ACTION 6. Sean McHugh to explore possibility of adding an additional workshop on the structure of WBP to the 2012 conference programme.

ACTION 7. ALL to note the dates and running order for WBP conference on the 12th-13th September 2012 and promote attendance

ACTION 8. Sean McHugh and RSPB Cymru to explore possibility of a themed conference next year, looking at the implementation of a landscape scale approach, with potential European input.

ACTION 9. Sean Christian to share RSPB Cymru conference proposal

Paper to Note B: An audit of data sharing between volunteer recorders and Welsh Local Records Centres

It was highlighted that data from public bodies still not openly available to LRCs, apart from CCW.

Decision Point: The group welcomed the paper and agreed to influence greater sharing of records, where possible, with the LRCs

Decision Point: The group agreed to promote wider use of LRC data information services where appropriate.

- ACTION 10.** ALL with influence over data sharing to encourage records be sent to LRCs.
- ACTION 11.** ALL to encourage greater use of LRCs information services within their own organisations.
- ACTION 12.** Bill MacDonald to discuss sharing of FCW data with Roy Tapping.
- ACTION 13.** Matthew Quinn to discuss issues around sharing of Welsh Government environmental data with LRCs (specifically Welsh AES monitoring data) with colleagues and feedback.
- ACTION 14.** Welsh Government to ensure that work on Pan-Wales agreement with the LRCs is addressed through future monitoring and surveillance group.

Paper to Note C: Wildlife Crime Update

Sgt Matt Howells provided an update on staffing changes within the Wildlife and Crime Enforcement Group. Super Intendant Huw Meredith has been appointed as Chair. There will also be a change in Chief Officer lead in ACPO following Ian Arundel's retirement, although it is not yet clear who will be taking on this portfolio at present.

Decision Point: The group noted the paper and continues to endorse the work of the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime.

Paper to Note D: Academic Workshop

Decision point: The group noted the paper and endorsed the outline for upcoming workshop.

- ACTION 15.** ALL to send comments on academic workshop programme to Tracey Lovering t.lovering@ccw.gov.uk as soon as possible.
- ACTION 16.** Anyone with an interest in attending the workshop to contact Tracey for further details.

6. **Feedback from WCMP** – postponed until November meeting.

7. Feedback from Four Countries Meeting

Rob Griffiths provided an update on the recent Four Countries meeting. This group now consists of UK Government and devolved administration officials, the statutory conservation agencies, and JNCC. A schematic diagram exists as well as terms of reference. A new list of UK biodiversity indicators was endorsed by the group. In addition a new UK biodiversity framework, setting out common goals and the UK's role in regard to the UK and European targets has recently been developed.

The British- Irish Council Meeting will be held on the 06th-07th September 2012 in Edinburgh, with a focus on Invasive Non Native Species issues. John Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment and Sustainability will address the meeting.

An 'Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' (IPBES) has now been formally established. IPBES will be an interface between the scientific community and policy makers that aims to build capacity for and strengthen the use of science in policy making. Further details at: <http://www.ipbes.net/>

8. Minutes and Actions From SG16

The minutes from the SG16 meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

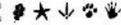
9. AOB

Welsh Water are currently offering funding for the implementation of Water Framework Directive (WFD) aimed at improving the quality of Welsh rivers, lakes and waterways and creating a more vibrant and healthy environment for people and wildlife. Further details can be found on the Welsh Water website <http://www.dwrcymru.com/en/Environment/Water-Framework-Directive-Projects.aspx> or by contacting Dusi Thomas Dusitaporn.Thomas@dwrcymru.com

<p>ACTION 17. Anyone interested in accessing Welsh Water funding to contact Dusi Thomas Dusitaporn.Thomas@dwrcymru.com for further information</p>

Welsh Water has established an Independent Environmental Advisory Panel (IEAP). As part of supporting Welsh Government's Living Wales agenda, making a number of changes to the way they address the environmental challenges and opportunities faced. For more information contact Dusi Thomas Dusitaporn.Thomas@dwrcymru.com

Matthew informed the group that FWAG Cymru have been re-launched and welcomed their continued involvement in WBP.



Laura Palmer provided an update on the Cardiff LBAP pilot (see minutes of SG17, February 2012). The initial outputs of the project will be reported on at the WBP Conference in September 2012.

10. Date of Next Meetings:

SG18: 14 November 2012, Bangor

SG19: 19 February 2013, south Wales (location tbc)

Matthew thanked everyone for their participation.