

Wales Mammal Biodiversity Action Forum

Minutes of the 8th Meeting

2nd October 2012, by VC

1. Welcome, introductions

Present:

Bangor Liz Halliwell (CCW - Chair), Jean Matthews (CCW - Minutes), Ceri Morris, (CCW – MISE)

Llandeilo Steve Lucas (BCT), Isabel Macho (Carmarthenshire CC), Jenny MacPherson (VWT – MISE), Lizzie Wilberforce (WTSWW)

Apologies: Rob Strachan (EA), Henry Schofield (VWT), Nida Al-Fulaij (PTES), Jane Garner (CCW), Matthew Ellis (CCW), Claire Bryant (CCW), Ian Danby (BASC), Rob Parry (WTSWW), Kate Williamson (The Mammal Society), Sarah Bird (Chester Zoo), Paul Sinnadurai (BBNP)

Organisational updates

The announcement of the Chair and name for the Single Body are expected in next couple of weeks. SL reported discussion at WEL regarding the inclusion of the “balancing” of duties between biodiversity and economics.

New body will be in place from 1st April, but substantial changes will be gradual over next year or two. New body will have all WG licensing functions apart from the badger licensing that WG currently deals with.

2. BAP Process update

Species Expert Group hasn't met for some time. The July meeting was cancelled and the next one is scheduled for November.

WG ERD grant: the Mid-Wales Red Squirrel Project was successful and the Deer Initiative received partial funding for a project to monitor deer in the Elwy Valley and develop a management plan.

ACTION 1 - Liz to send list of projects funded out to group

There is currently a review of the Wales BAP process.

Some LBAP groups have invited Ecosystem Group chairs to come speak to them at meeting and seem to be active.

Evidence Gaps Workshop. Each of Ecosystem Groups have reported on where there are evidence gaps and the information has been discussed at a workshop with academics. A new project proforma is being co-ordinated by Tracey Lovering. A draft paper on the workshop with project proposals will be circulated when available. Need to check if WMBAF priorities have been included in the process.

Living Wales – results of consultation should have been published by now. WBP Conference had some good case study talks.

Article 17 reporting – reports will be co-ordinated by JNCC and sent out for consultation. Taking up a lot of CCW staff time, with much work spent on collating and sorting data.

PTES Mammals grant funding – sent round new priorities for their funding. Check these if you're thinking of applying for funding.

UK Water Vole Steering Group update

Database and mapping project

Wildlife Trusts database has been updated. Group noted that the database was an important resource and that the alert maps were useful especially for planning purposes. Mink and otter data had been included. Updates for CCW and SNH would be produced. Derek Gow had provided a list of reintroduction sites and these would be mapped.

Riparian fencing

Rob Strachan reported on issues connected with the growth of Himalayan Balsam and use of riparian fences to protect river and stream banks from livestock poaching and intensive grazing. It had been reported that exclusion of grazing in these situations had led to a proliferation of Himalayan Balsam, which shaded out ground cover and died back in the winter leaving largely bare ground. This created unsuitable conditions for water voles even though the original fencing might have been installed with the intention of benefitting the species. RS to give technical advice and check the agri-environment scheme prescriptions

Glasgow's fossorial water voles Rob Raynor reported on water vole populations in the Glasgow area living in rough grassland adjacent to housing and nowhere near waterways. The population was so dense that there was a risk of water voles becoming a pest in some gardens. There had been a few records of water voles in non-wetland areas in England but the population in Glasgow appeared particularly dense.

Statement on translocations – a draft statement had been prepared in 2003 by The Wildlife. It was agreed that it would be useful to have endorsed by the Steering Group.

ACTION 2 – JM to send out note on UKWVSG meeting (notes above)

ACTION 3 – Lizzie to check with Rob if most recent WV records are included in mapping project.

3. Project/partner updates

Updates submitted and circulated, but more to add. Final version will be sent out for circulation to Group and to pass on to LBAPs

ACTION 4 - CCW to ask for LBAP rep for north Wales.

ACTION 5 - CCW to circulate final partner update

4. BAP Action Plans

WBP said they would circulate them to LBAPs, but not put them on website until they were finalised.

a) Role of Species Leads in reporting/encouraging action.

Many of actions are quite high level. Would be useful to have more support from SEG in determining role of Species Leads. LH suggested having discussions with Action Leads, but may not be feasible for all leads. There is also a difficulty with WG actions with no named person.

It may be worth having a meeting of Species Leads with Action Leads.

ACTION 6 – LH/JM to go back to Julia/Tracey before Ecosystem Group Chairs meeting and re-consider how to take forward.

b) How to help LBAPs make use of BAP Action Plans. National Plans should help provide context.

IM – tend to work in opportunistic manner where funding is available. It was also noted that currently having to re-do Action Plan on BARS 2.

SL idea to virtually write plans for LBAPs. IM has invited Ecosystem chairs and found local meetings useful for identifying projects and prioritising. Could work at regional level, but difficult to get to all meetings and not all have a regional organisation.

ACTION 6 – Ceri to check if there's a N Wales Forum.

5. Priority projects and funding opportunities

Hedgehog – MS rolling out hedgehog tunnel survey next year. Make LBAPs aware.

Dormouse – Ceredigion prioritised. Another monitoring scheme in N. Ceredigion. Stoat tubes picked up dormouse, more results awaited. Much of action will be delivered through MISE project. Wales Dormouse Workers' Day 17th November now fully booked.

Water vole – see CCW update re records. Some info will come out in peer reviewed papers when data avail from WG – contact BASC.

Rare Woodland Bats – see update. Need to decide priority for this year's money on – kit or guidance material, training.

LHB – see update – workshop and/or contract for someone to develop projects at smaller scale

Harvest mouse – trialling bait pots, but no HM results so far. Being trialled at Chester Zoo next to HM nests to check if this method works.

WTs – student comparing harvest mouse trapping methods. Rats trashed trip traps. Have got HM at Parc Slip and seeing evidence of pecking order of small mammals on video camera traps, but not catching HM at bait stations. Useful to have meeting of people working on HM.

ACTION 7 – Ceri to set up harvest mouse VC.

Otters – spraint DNA work being taken forward through MISE

Red squirrel – mid-Wales red squirrel project was successful in getting WG ERD funding (which meets WMBAF red squirrel project priority). Wales Squirrel Forum meeting postponed to Feb.

Bats – discussion about possible grey long-eared bat record in Pembs. Suggestion that there is a need for better identification training and further DNA analysis of droppings.

6. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

No comments received on the minutes.

Action Point 1 - *Jean and Liz to send round links to Article 17 reports and guidance.*
Done.

Action Point 2 - *Steve to contact Kate in BCT to establish her role in collating data for the Article 17 reports.*

From Kate at BCT - We haven't really been asked to do much for Article 17 reporting. JNCC decided to ask the country agencies for species record data and appear to be basing distribution maps on existing information from data that are on

the NBN, and using the alpha hull tool (as last time) to map ranges. We have provided JNCC with the trend data from the NBMP for population trend information.

Action Point 3 – *ALL to send in partner updates asap if not already done so. Done*

Action Point 4 – *Steve to identify who is responsible for putting actions from the Wales mammal plans onto BARS – lead partners or LBAPs who are implementing the plans.*

This is still not clear. It was agreed that it would be useful to have some guidance from WBP how they would like them to be structured and linked to other organisations; for example is it worth having WMBAF on there as an organisation (or parent project) under which the species action plans can sit, so that they are linked together.

Action Point 5 – *ALL other lead partners to finish action plans as far as possible ready to be published. Ongoing.*

Action Point 6 – *JM/LHa to find out from WBP where plans are likely to be published.*

All bat action plans were sent to WBP secretariat but they declined to ‘publish’ them as they are subject to further change during the review. They have however sent them to LBAP partnerships.

Action point 7 - *JM to draft rare woodland bats project proposal and circulate to SL and HS. Ongoing. See CCW update*

Action Point 8 – *HS to talk to Jenny Macpherson about harvest mice survey work in Powys and SE Wales. Potential for her to do some training/visits in Swansea.*

Discussed at MISE project meetings

Action point 9 – *LH to consider communication with Powys and SE Wales mammal workers to encourage them to do harvest mice surveys.*

Ongoing. CCW planning to let habitat mapping contract to identify potentially suitable harvest mouse habitat, prior to encouraging survey in 2013..

Action Point 10 – *Jenny, Jean and Rob to discuss water vole genetics project in MISE. Carry over. NEW ACTION POINT 8*

Action Point 11 – *KW to make sure reflected TMS hedgehog monitoring reflected in action plan*

Action point 12 – *Steve to feedback to SEG that projects are ecosystem focussed and don't deliver or provide opportunities for species.*

Species Expert Group has not met.

Action Point 13 – *Liz and Jean to contact Kate for update on Mammal Atlas.*

Carry over. **NEW ACTION POINT 9**

Action point 14 - *Steve to circulate note he has received from WBP regarding NEF pilots. No longer needed*

Action point 15 – *Steve to raise need for noctule records at Bat Workers Day.*

Done – received a number of records but only from a few bat groups

Action Point 16 – *Jean and Liz to circulate data collation results for harvest mouse, etc as soon as available.*

Will be available soon following completion of Article 17 reports. **NEW ACTION POINT 10**

7. Any other business

Wales Mammal Group – Rod Gritten has written to the members of the WMG expressing concern about the apparent ‘moribund’ nature of the group. He feels that a decision needs to be taken on the future of the group and what to do with the group’s funds. Whilst it isn’t a decision for WMBAF it was considered valuable to have the views of the group. There was a general consensus that the WMG had performed a useful function, primarily by organising the Wales mammal conferences, but that

other projects were not taking on this role (eg the MISE project). It was noted that The Mammal Society were applying to CCW for grant funding for a Wales Mammal Officer to provide support for mammal recording in Wales and their role as lead partner for harvest mouse and hedgehog. It was agreed that if this application were to be successful the WMG could contribute towards the match funding required

Glastir – SL undertaking gaps and benefits analysis exercise of management requirements for bats. Wildlife Link have asked for an update from WG. The Targeted Element is not called Glastir Advanced.

ACTION POINT 11 – SL to send Glastir gaps analysis spreadsheet to Jean

Law Society Review of wildlife legislation – consultation on the Law Society proposals is now underway and will close on 30th November. Aim is to consolidate various Acts into one piece of legislation. They are also keen to go back to original wording in Habitats Directive and suggest that statutory guidance on interpretation of the offences may not be necessary.

8. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the use of VC was fine and made attendance easier for some group members.

Dates were set for the next three meetings: **27th February, 25th June and 8th October**