

Minutes of the 11th WBAP Freshwater Meeting

Held at T Cambria, Cardiff at 11:00 on Monday 18 November 2013

Present:

Tristan Hatton-Ellis (THE) Natural Resources Wales (NRW) (Telecon)
Huw Jones (HJ) NRW
Janet Buckles (JB) NRW
Pascal Nicolet (PN) Freshwater Habitats Trust (Telecon)
Dai Roberts (DR)
Barbara Spence (BS) NRW
Dusi Thomas (DT) Welsh Water
Adrian Lloyd Jones (ALIJ) North Wales Wildlife Trust
Kris Roberts (KR) Torfaen Council, LBAPS
Kyle Young (KY) NRW
Nick Bialynicki Birula (NB)

Apologies:

Robin Woodyatt
Steve Ormerod
Emma Guy
Isabelle Durance
Julian Jones

1. Welcome and Introductions

THE & PN joined the meeting by telecon.

2. Minutes of last meeting

10.4. Name of sedge fly contact is Stuart Croft not Stuart Cross

Action: **JB** to amend in final draft of minutes

10.5. Lakes Monitoring report

Outstanding action: **THE** to send to **JB** for circulation.

10.6. Article 17 Reporting

Reporting completed for this year.

10.7. Forest Water Guidance Update

Now signed off for Wales, England, Scotland & Ireland, to be published January 2014. Also guidance & maps showing acid-sensitive areas in Wales, where woodlands are appropriate.

Action: **BS** to e-mail **DT**.

Minutes of last meeting approved subject to amendment (see 10.4).

Action: **JB** to send copy to Sean Mc Hugh for upload to Wales Biodiversity Partnership website.

3. Ecosystem Group Chairs Update (THE)

3.1. Request to produce work programme.

Action: All to send suggestions for priorities to THE.
THE to produce guidance for each ecosystem approach.

3.2. Priority mapping

Outline priority maps for some areas to steer projects eg. ecosystem resilience

3.3. Wales Biodiversity Partnership Webpage

Requires updating

Action: All to look at website and send suggestions for items & links to JB.
JB to collate and circulate.

3.4. Group membership

- Review, update and send to Medwyn Roberts.
- Kyle Young has been invited as an academic member of the group.

3.5. Non-Native Species Directive

- Members group in Manchester discussed draft legislation.
- Regulation out for consultation amongst member states. Great Britain's invasives strategy should cover most of this.
- Focus is on species currently outside the EU, i.e. species likely to be invasive but not currently present. Does not deal with species within member states but risk assessment included.
- Queries:
 - How will species for listing be identified?
 - How many will be listed (max 50?)?
 - How will new species be added (will current species have to be removed)?
 - Current discussions led by DEFRA
 - Full implementation not expected until 2015.
 - This is regarded as a way to formalise regulations for invasive species.

4. Hydro-electric Power (HEP)

4.1. KY gave a presentation explaining recent developments.

4.2 Subsequent discussion included the following points:

- Guidance expected from Natural Resources Wales in 2014 to include central guidance and guidance notes. These will change before finalisation, hopefully after review.
- Regulations support small schemes at tops of catchments.
- ELON framework for managing abstractions includes flow modification, hydrology, social process, bio-monitoring.
- Indicative mitigation standards for Zones 1,2 & 3. Will community based schemes on Welsh Government land be treated as Zone 1 or as rest of Wales?

- De-commissioning cannot be mandatory.
- Will cost benefit analysis be applied individually?(DR)
- No cost benefit advantages at present for competing schemes.
- Duty for ecosystem approach, existing notes have been translated to hydropower but some legal & scientific conflicts obvious (KY).
Questions to KY, Natalie Hall, Sian Rowlands, Gideon Carpenter or Louis Pilkington.
- Board paper available on-line, other material for internal consultation has been seen by Hydropower liaison panel.
- Application process should be made easier for applicants
- HEPs are likely to disproportionately affect headwaters BAP priority habitats. Is guidance required to mitigate impact?
- Assessment for cumulative effects is challenging, guidance notes are available but focus on legislation. Impact can be minimised at site level but harder to quantify at catchment scale.
- Suggestion that monitoring will be co-ordinated from Aberystwyth. May include collection of pre and post scheme data and targeting individual schemes.
- May assess effects in a variety of conditions and form partnerships with Wildlife Trusts & Rivers Trusts.

5. Biodiversity Projects & Funding

5.1. Ecosystems Resilience Fund

- Fund in its 3rd/4th year, ALIJ, HJ & THE have been involved in discussions.
- Five projects put forward, two of these are directly funded. Severn Rivers Trust & Freshwater Habitats Trust (formerly Pond Conservation) projects are underway.
- Wye & Usk Foundation project under consideration by Welsh Government.
- Concerns were expressed regarding lack of clarity in expectations.
- Budget increase and efficiency in delivery have been planned in general programme and could be made permanent.
- It is likely that funding will run again next year so plans could be prepared for April/May 2014.

5.2. Welsh Government Funding

- Six million funding announced at Royal Welsh Show, response in State of Nature Report. Available for next two years for landscape projects.
- Information has been circulated regarding three workshops (one each in Llandudno Junction, Merthyr & Aberystwyth). Some FEG members already booked to attend Llandudno venue, volunteers required to attend Aberystwyth & Merthyr.
- Linked to ecosystem approach to deliver good well-founded biodiversity outcomes preferably self maintaining and with emphasis on jobs and community values.

5.3. Pearls in Peril Update (HJ)

- Elain Gwilym (Project Officer) and Tim Roberts (Monitoring Officer) currently in post.
- Ongoing actions include fencing and habitat restoration.
- 600K available until Sept 2016
- Four Freshwater Pearl Mussel populations currently **viable** but non-recruiting, three in North West Wales and one on the River Wye.
- Some animals could be transferred to cleaner streams, but it would be difficult to find streams with suitable gradient, energy levels and gravel stability.
- May be possible to carry out Redox monitoring on the Dwryd and move mussels upstream.
- Juvenile mussels are very vulnerable for at least the first 10 years of adult-hood, particularly to phosphate enrichment after clear-felling.

5.4 Beaver Re-introduction update (ALIJ)

- Afon Rheidol is currently top choice for re-introduction but there is some opposition amongst local landowners and residents. However one farmer is positive and has offered land for release.
- There has been some consultation, ALIJ has given presentations to the Capel Bangor community and to Aberystwyth Anglers.
- May be possible to agree to release further up catchment from current proposed release site.
- Alternative sites surveyed eg. Llyn Peninsula, which has unmanaged willow carr and possibility of spread within area contained by Snowdonia mountains.
- First re-introduction likely to increase attraction for third party funding.
- Conservative estimate of tourism benefits on the Rheidol are 350K per annum.
- A meeting will be held with Welsh Government Officers in December to discuss future plans for the Rheidol, also need presentation to directors of NRW and the Minister.
- NRW own land on the Rheidol that would be suitable for willow planting. Also overlaps with Montgomery Wildlife Trust's Pumlumon Project.
- Guidelines are required for removal of beaver dams, should be available before release. Need to train staff and volunteers.
- ALIJ has requested a second meeting with Aberystwyth Anglers to discuss potential need to remove dams.
- The Rheidol is a constrained area. Spread of animals would be easier on the Llyn Peninsula or on Anglesey and there is less fishing interest.
- There is a need to discuss potential issues if a beaver is killed. At present the government could be prosecuted under European legislation, but not individuals, as the beaver is not include in current habitats/species legislation.

6. Freshwater Evidence

6.1. Siltation Tools

- Adapted for WFD, effects on inverts & communities.

- Need to quantify impacts, PSI percentage.
- **Silt sensitive impacts, bolt-on to Riv packs.** Applies to lowland sites with high levels of silt deposition, more applicable to large scale arable in England, masks problem in Wales.
- Tool developed by **Q May/Defra** could be better for farms with livestock, emphasis on organic fraction of silt.
- Next round of river basin management will be 2021, **too late for current round.** Current maps don't show siltation.
- Ian Kileen contracted to take redox readings for Freshwater Pearl Mussel, but technique is not universally accepted. Life project compares with general invert sampling.

Action: **THE** to contact Chris? and Iwan? who attended last week's meeting.

6.2 Freshwater & Climate Change:

Two projects discussed at meeting two weeks ago:

Keeping Rivers Cool: Environment Agency and Forestry research follow-up to study effects of shading on invert communities and mitigation. Pilot catchments are Lune. Hampshire Avon & Wye, but Welsh Wye work has been 'lost'.

Refresh:

- Compare rivers and lakes at different scales across Europe and predict changes over next 60-70 years.
- Streamside corridors
- Buffering and reduced flow and nutrient loadings to rivers.
- Temporary effects of shading (Spain).
- Drought stress, thresholds and cooling up to 10C.

Action:THE to circulate link to discussion and responses on website.

Beaver dams can have a warming effect due to tree felling, but can cause river cooling too. Study concludes no overall effect (ALIJ).

6.3. Evidence Spreadsheet/Ecosystem Group Chairs

- Discussion has taken place regarding the purpose of the evidence spreadsheet and who should maintain/use it. Tracey Lovering has asked for some changes in phrasing and for some columns to be added.
- There is a need to update proposed projects on the spread sheet, but consideration should also be given to relevance of projects.
- Need to consider what actions could attract more academic interest, should new projects be added?
- Freshwater examples were used at latest Eco Chairs meeting, but some detail requires working up.
- It was suggested that freshwater studies might be combined with other eco-system groups eg. catchment level water resource management. (ALIJ)

- The group is flagging up need eg. contacts with the enclosed farming group. (THE)
- BS asked if there was a follow-up column on spreadsheet to record outcome.
- DT asked if the purpose of the spreadsheet is to record projects only, or is there an element of prioritisation?
- Offers of projects to fill evidence gaps should be requested from academics and this could provide advantages for academic funding applications. (THE).
- A mechanism is required for potential up-dates.
- It may be advantageous to raise the profile of the spreadsheet within Wales (e.g. Science Advisory Council for Wales) and outside Wales.

Action: All to look at the spreadsheet, action the following, feed back to Tracey Lovering and copy to THE:

- Review relevance of own projects & update.
- Look at other proposals within Freshwater Group.
- Look at other proposals from other ecosystem/species groups and ways of increasing freshwater input.

6.4. Biodiversity Partnership website

- Freshwater ecology info can be exchanged for habitats and species, including less well-known species.
- THE has contacted one author for ecological information on potomanthus.

Action: All to look at website and feedback comments to THE.

7. Changes within Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

- Structures: There are currently 7 directorates with various tiers of management appointed.
- Areas: Current plan is for 4 areas covering North Wales, Mid Wales, South East Wales & South West Wales.
- Land Drainage Consents: Will consents for ordinary watercourses come back to NRW from Local Authorities?

8. NRW Corporate Plan: Three year plan currently under consultation on website until January 10 2014. Comments from outside NRW welcome.

9. Welsh Government White Paper

9.1 Natural resource plans

- HJ outlined paragraphs and requirements. NRW policy requires integrated approach.
- Legal definition of natural resources and natural resource management required for planning purposes.
- NRW will respond as a public body
- Document is out for consultation from October 2013 until January 2014.

9.2 Future role of LBAPS (KR)

- Local Authorities are moving in different directions to implement landscape, ecosystem and wildlife projects for ERF.
- Torfaen have reviewed LBAP and will build framework with communities and raise awareness of climate change, land management, stream corridors and adjacent habitats. They have mirrored actions in BARS for 2003 to 2013.
- There should be more clarity and direction on how the partnership should progress.
- Local Authorities are making cuts and there could be redundancies in biodiversity. LBAPs not properly resourced.
- Specific management prescriptions are required to work with communities, advise communities and support volunteers. These could be uploaded to BARS.
- North East Wales floodplain and rivers project not reported to Freshwater Ecosystems Group.

Action: ALIJ to report Torfaen Strategy to North East Wales.

9.3 Freshwater Ecology Website

Not discussed?

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Cypermethrin

- DT has asked ex Forestry Commission for information on Cypermethrin but has not received a response. BS will send information to DT and all members of the Freshwater Ecosystem Group.

Action: BS to send information to all.

- Derogation for the use of cypermethrin in woodlands which are certificated to the Forestry Stewardship Council lapses in June 2014. NRW will be included in an application to continue using it. NRW are undertaking a review of its use in the woodlands it manages.

10.2 Water Framework Directive funding from Welsh Water

Funding is still available but will be reviewed every three months.

Action: DT to send update to Wales Biodiversity Partnership website.

10.3 Eel Regulations

ALIJ has suggested that this should be discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting

Action: HJ to find an appropriate person to give a presentation.

10.4 River Access in Wales

Welsh Government held a workshop with stakeholders in September 2013. A green paper should be published later in 2014.

10.5 Angling Website

This is now up and running (DR)

11. Date of next meeting

Action: JB to set up meet-o-matic with possible dates.

