

Avon BAP Agriculture Group Meeting

Agenda

March 28th 2007

10am – 12.30pm

Duchy of Cornwall Office, Newton St Loe

Chair: John Martin (RDS)

Minutes: Matt Hamilton

Avon
Biodiversity Partnership



The variety of life

Item	Actions
<p>1. Introductions & apologies</p> <p>Present: John Martin (NE), Matt Hamilton (ABP), Chris Westcott (NE), Tim McGrath (AWT), Robert Moreton (Tortworth estate), Dan Merrett (B&NESC), Craig Stenson (AWT),</p> <p>Apologies: Ann Fay (British Horse Society), Lucy Rogers (AWT), Mark Smith (FWAG), Nick Mould (Duchy), Susan Stangroom (NSC), Stuart Hales (AWT), Robin Marshall-Ball (BASC), Bill Morris (NT), Karen Renshaw (B&NESC), Mark Connelly (Cotswold AONB). Gordon Milward (Avon Gorge & Downs), Dave Villis (SGC), Les Davies (Mendip Hills AONB), Matthew Bufton (HMP Leyhill), Mike Rogers (Hawk & Owl Trust), Nick Ward (BTCV), Sally Pattison (SGC), Tim Corner (BRERC), Helen Hall (BCC), Samantha Jarvis (NSC), Rupert Higgins (Wessex ecological consultancy).</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported a good response from members in returning their Terms of Reference. MH to remind those who haven't yet returned theirs • CS raised the omission of arable land from Nature Map. • JM noted that though Naturemap had deliberately left out arable areas we could use spatial targeting (e.g. of HLS for farmland birds, which are somewhat mobile, but perhaps less successfully for arable plants, which can be very site specific) for AES. • JM reported that good arable land in Avon has been mapped and that data is held at AWT [or was it Craig that reported that?] . • JM has a list of notable arable plants, designed to be used nationally for assessment of important arable plant areas and based on Plantlife publication, he will pass to MH to be circulated to the Group • DM asked who in NE is covering Avon. • JM reported that there is no Avon team but it is covered 	<p>MH</p> <p>JM/MH</p> <p>JM</p>

<p>by staff from various teams. Will circulate a list of who to contact for which area.</p>	
<p>3. HLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was reported that a high number of HLS applications have been rejected due to lack of budget. ▪ JF and CS expressed serious concern at the effects on management for biodiversity and farmers – noting that even HLS application on SSSIs had been rejected. ▪ JM reported that applications have all been rejected but once the position is clear regarding the budget available it is hoped that we will be able to re-visit/assess the applications and after this a proportion of them may be recommended for re-activation. ▪ The wide gap between HLS and ELS was discussed ▪ CS asked if it was possible to target ELS as is the case with HLS. This would be something to be considered during a national review of ELS, planned for later this year. ▪ CS also raised concerns that many projects were relying on HLS to deliver their outcomes. ▪ JM reported that in the last few days voluntary modulation has been agreed by Europe enabling the transfer of funds into the agri-environment scheme budget. An announcement is expected this week on the level of modulation and government contributions. <i><announcement on 29/3 set modulation at 12, rising to 14% with 40% match funding from the government, resulting in a doubling of the ERDP budget></i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CW acknowledged the lack of options for ditch management and reported that Karen Pollock is drawing up an amendment to the boundary management scheme to include ditches. But any significant changes to schemes must be ratified by the EU. 	
<p>4. Horse Grazing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item deferred until next meeting as Ann Fay unable to attend 	
<p>5. Grassland project update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported on behalf on MS. • Little Solsbury Common – contractors have finished clearing the boundary line and fence should be in place next month. Fencing more expensive than estimated, so permission be gained from SITA to transfer some funds from the Goblin Combe site. • Goblin Combe – boundary clearance has started, fencing is an issue due to steep scree slopes, but 	

<p>should be completed by summer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further issues at Goblin Combe with presence of yew – TM asked if there was any technical guidance on grazing animals and yew – JM/CW to investigate • Horsecombe Vale – focussing one day a week on getting landowners into agri-environment schemes. • Meeting with MH and LR in April to discuss rolling out the project across the rest of Avon. 	<p>JM/CW</p>
<p>6. Arable farmland project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar project has just come to an end in Wiltshire and was very successful, running training projects on identification, status and management of sites for scarce arable plants and farmland birds and linking with the local bird club and botanical society. Surveying many sites and bringing them into agri-environment schemes etc. • CS reported that Phil Quinn had done a lot of work on scarce arable plants in the past • CS and TM reported that the hotspots for good arable habitat are areas south of Keynsham and north of Marshfield. • JM reported that there are options for uncultivated margins in ELS, but that uptake is currently poor, and this would be a good basis for a project. • TM reported that the reserves team at AWT were looking to acquire a good arable site, and a project could help identify one. • CS to provide details from Phil Quinn’s work. JM and CW to provide maps of those areas already in agri-environment schemes, and MH to draw up project brief. 	<p>JM/CW/ CS/MH</p>
<p>7. BARS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MH reported that volunteers from the AWT had been collating progress reports on BAP Actions. They have received and input onto BARS progress reports from almost all partners. They are now starting to archive those actions that are part of partners ongoing work so as to concentrate on actions that have been bought about by the BAP 	
<p>8. Updates around the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DM reported that he was continuing to work on the Combe Down Mines Project • TM reported on AWT reserves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folly Farm: Grassland restoration: the landscape enhancement works are on-going (start of third year of 5 year program), resulting in the division of North Hill as a separate grazing unit from the East and South Hill within the SSSI, the latter two being divided during 	

<p>2007/08. Water supply now enhanced and reliable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown's Folly: ongoing scrub removal and treatment. AWT are unable to secure interest from any grazier due to vandalism and remote nature of the site. • Purn Hill: restoration of grazing after two years through the establishment of an independent water supply to be completed in April 2007. • Lawrence Weston Moor: Vandalism continues to be a huge problem resulting in no interpretation, poor public access and lack of correct grazing pressure. • MH reported for RMB – BASC are running a series of farmland diversification days in partnership with the NFU. The first one is in Gloucester today, further locations and dates will be confirmed later. Also running a cover crop walkabout in Wroughton in early September. 	
<p>9. Next meeting date Wednesday 5th September, from 10-12.30pm at Duchy Offices</p>	