

Avon BAP Steering Group Meeting  
 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008, 10.00pm – 12.30pm  
 Avon Wildlife Trust  
 Chair: John Martin (NE)  
 Minutes: Matt Hamilton



<b>Agenda</b>	
<p><b>1. Introductions &amp; apologies</b>  <b>Present:</b> John Martin (NE), Matt Hamilton (ABP), Melissa Clarkson (EA), Allan Davies (WEP), Sally Pattison (SGC), Dave Willis (SGC).   <b>Apologies:</b> Lucy Rogers (AWT), Rob Bacon (BZG), Susan Stangroom (NSC), Helen Hall (BCC), Karen Renshaw (BANES), Tim Corner (BRERC), Chris Westcott (NE), Jim Fry (FoA), Naomi Brooks (SWBP).</p>	
<p><b>2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JM reported that Angus Bloomfield has been appointed to the West of England team in NE and will be working on estuary matters. Kevin Turnbull has been transferred in to the Avon area and is working on planning and development. NE have also interviewed for two other posts in the government and communities team and hope to appoint shortly.</li> <li>• JM reported that he is currently first point of contact for species work.</li> <li>• SP reported that South Glos have adopted the biodiversity indicator and have received £800 to help formulate a baseline for future assessments - they have contracted AWT to do this. BANES have not adopted the indicator.</li> <li>• JF reported that the Green Infrastructure Toolkit will be launched on Tues 22nd April.</li> <li>• JM will circulate finalised MoA to the group</li> <li>• JM reported that the Access to Nature grant was still pending.</li> </ul>	<b>JM</b>
<p><b>3. NERC Act and awareness raising events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NERC Event April 4th - around 25 non-ecology related council employees and councillors attended representing three local authorities, however no attendees from BCC. Mike Oxford and Helen Hall are looking to hold a repeat event in Bristol around June - this should benefit from word-of-mouth publicity from those who attended the first event. South Glos also looking at holding their own event (and possibly one for parish councils) - MH to send Mike Oxford's contact details to DV</li> <li>• Mike Oxford presented the risks of not complying with the NERC Act for LAs and offered examples on how they could carry out their obligations towards biodiversity. This was interspersed with case studies from different councils.</li> <li>• Legislative information was presented in an interesting and clear manner, and appeared to be successfully understood by all - good feedback received from those attending</li> <li>• This format worked well and will probably be used by the Communications group when they run their event for public bodies that aren't local authorities.</li> </ul>	<b>MH</b>

**4. Joint working between organisations with BAPs and the Avon BAP**

- JM asked for comments on how the group felt the Avon BAP was meshing with other BAPs
- DV commented that it was working well, but that the number of meetings was a problem as it was not possible to attend them all.
- This was discussed further and it was highlighted that the four Unitary Authorities were in the unique position of sitting on all five focus groups and the steering group and most had severely limited time in which to attend. Possible solutions were discussed including:
  - holding all day meetings on topics that cover more than one focus group (e.g. a 'coastal day')
  - varying the location of meetings (particularly the steering group)
  - UAs prioritising the steering groups and only attending focus groups when particularly relevant.
  - UAs only attending one of the two focus group meetings a year (having one big and one small meet a year)
- MH agreed to have a look at this and draw up a solution that he will send out to the four UAs for consultation.
- The group then discussed the merits of holding a 'coastal day' to focus on the land margins that are under threat of development. A wide range of people could be invited to bring together all current work on the area and to look at the future. This would be a good opportunity for all people working on coastal issues to meet each other. A focus for the day could be the proposed South Glos. Landscape Partnership bid based around the Chittening Wharf and Severn Beach area.
- MH to pass this on to the Coastal and Marine group for implementation

MH

MH

**5. Funding sources available for BAP work – All**

- MH reported that the Access to Nature Grant was due imminently

**6. Unitary Authority BAP Updates**

- SP reported that the South Glos BAP had been launched
- SP reported that lots of hedgerow work had been carried out, gapping up hedges round Lower Woods and flagging up trees that will remain un-flailed and grow into the next generation of veteran trees. Glow worm walks are planned for the summer. There is a possible new water vole sighting in Charfield.
- DV reported that the council is now involved in managing 11 community orchards and that there is a possible orchard project looking at comparing the nature and distribution of orchards in the past to how it is now in order to identify restoration sites. If anyone knows of a student interested in taking on this study please let DV know.
- MH to pass on details of a tutor at UWE.
- DV reported that he is meeting with developers at Barn Hill Quarry to look at the possible creation of a crayfish arksite within the quarry.
- MH reported that the Bristol BAP is being launched on September 17th

MH

**7. Focus Group Updates**

- Please see minutes from focus groups (the Agriculture and Communications groups have met since the last steering group)
- DV recommended that Mark and Claire Kitchen be shown the arable plant maps as they may have more records.

## **8. Progress with projects**

### **Grassland**

- MH reported that fencing has been completed at both sites and that water was currently being installed at Goblin Combe. Two graziers are being investigated for Goblin Combe. Large amounts of scrub clearance have been undertaken especially at Goblin Combe and two voluntary groups have been working on the sites which makes up for the extra budget that had to be spent on the fencing.

### **Pondways**

- MH reported that the results from last years surveys were now complete and that Lydia was currently training and recruiting volunteers, and targeting ponds for this years survey.

### **Urban Gardens/Urban Wildlife and Green Spaces Project**

- MH reported that the project brief had been circulated to potential partners and had received favourable responses. AWT have just received a large HLF grant to pursue a people and wildlife project, MH is meeting with those involved next week to determine how much, if at all, the projects overlap and what potential there is for working together. Also waiting for the Access to Nature Grant as that has been identified as a good source of funding for the project.

### **Arable Farmland**

- MH reported that all the AWT records of scarce arable plants had now been digitised and the map passed onto NE. NE are going to add their own records and those from BRERC and then over lay the environmental stewardship data. Once this has been done we will be able to determine the best way to proceed.

### **Water Vole**

- MH reported that progress was being made in identifying who was responsible for managing each rhine. Meetings have been held with the IDB, Highways Agency and Cabot Park. All previous surveys of Avonmouth have been digitised and an introductory leaflet for landowners has been produced. A habitat management guide is currently under construction

### **Veteran Trees**

- MH reported that a budget had been drawn up and an expression of interest submitted to HLF. HLF had been very positive about the project but only for their £50k grant scheme. We are currently shrinking the budget, and have been helped in this by the Ancient Tree Hunt, who can provide us with all their records for Avon, a ready-made recording form, and will train up our project officer as a verifier on the ATH website. We are also talking to BRERC about hosting the project.
- Even with a shrunk budget would still need to find around £40k more funding, but we are hopeful this will be possible.

<p><b>9. Regional and National Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please see attached document for update from Naomi Brookes</li> <li>• Concerns were raised regarding Nature Map, namely that it is a useful tool, but is not the 'whole picture' for biodiversity, but that it is presented as the whole picture in the RSS</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Updates round the table</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MC reported that EA are still considering the best way forwards for the white clawed crayfish problem in Avon.</li> <li>• MC reported that Turkish Long-clawed crayfish had been found in a pool at Aztec West - these are a non-native species, but are susceptible to plague and so are not carriers.</li> <li>• AD reported that a workshop had been held on the SW Bristol urban extension and was fairly productive. Green Infrastructure got a good mention and two more days will be held at the end of the month to feed back opinions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>13. AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DV asked if the data that BRERC hold could be used as part of any government research into climate change</li> <li>• DV raised the question of geodiversity and whether we should look at an Avon-wide plan - it was decided to pursue this through the LSP.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11. Next meeting date and location</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 3rd July 2008 – Trimbridge House, Bath</li> </ul>	