

Avon BAP Steering Group Meeting
 29th March 2007, 10.00pm – 12.30pm
 Avon Wildlife Trust
 Chair: John Martin (NE)
 Minutes: Matt Hamilton



Agenda	
<p>1. Introductions & apologies</p> <p>Present: John Martin (NE), Matt Hamilton (ABP), Dan Merrett (BANES), Steve Grainger (AWT), Helen Hall (BCC), Melissa Clarkson (EA), Tim Corner (BRERC), Jo Illsley (BRERC), Lucy Rogers (AWT), Sally Patterson (SGC), Jen Nightingale (BZG).</p> <p>Apologies: Chris Westcott (NE), Allan Davies (WEP), Karen Renshaw (BANES), Sam Jarvis (NSC), Susan Stangroom (NSC), Michael Legg (JSPTU), Dave Villis (SGC), Rob Spence (FC), Bob Corns (NE), Jim Fry (FOA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported that three of the focus groups had new chairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Group – Chris Westacott (NE) • Woodland Group – Jim Fry (FOA) • Coastal and Marine Group – Bob Corns (NE) 	
<p>2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LR reported that Sian Parry (Planning Officer, AWT) was meeting with local authority planning departments quarterly. • BAP species list – a complicated topic! AWT volunteers have looked at it further with JM and TC. MH to progress. • TC raised the issue of the BRERC notables list, which it is difficult to update – he asked if the ABP would set up a sub-group to look at species lists. The idea was agreed - TC to set up group, MH and JM to join, possible rep. From BANES and South Glos. • MH reported a good response from members in returning their Terms of Reference. MH to remind those who haven't yet returned theirs. 	<p>MH</p> <p>TC</p> <p>MH</p>
<p>3. Presentation on mapping SNAs – Jo Illsley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See below for presentation notes and attached for presentation. 	
<p>4. Nature Map Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported on an e-mail received from Naomi Brookes of the South-West Biodiversity Partnership: they have received funding to host a series of workshops with a range of key stakeholders across the South-West to explore how to use, understand and implement Nature Map. They are looking for our help to host these workshops. MH will keep the steering group informed when he finds out more details 	<p>MH</p>

5. Funding from Natural England – LR

- The post of Avon BAP co-ordinator has been funded for the next year, as usual with funding from other sources for project work.
- Some funding has been received from the Natural England underspend to allow the co-ordinator time to develop projects and seek funding for them, for the mapping of SNAs (with BRERC) and for responding to regional consultations.
- Funding also received for Pondways project enabling officer to go up to 4 days a week and include privately owned ponds within the survey.
- Further funding received for crayfish and Greater Horseshoe Bat projects.

6. Funding sources available for BAP work - All

- SP reported that Defra has small pots of money (£2-3k) for hedgerow surveys
- MH reported that the deadline for Aggregate Levy funding from Natural England was April 16th
- JM reported that NE hoped to make further funding available in the autumn.

7. Work with Unitary Authority BAPS

- DM reported that BANES had received funding from the Duchy of Cornwall to survey post-industrial sites with a view to designating them as SNCIs. DM to send a copy of Wild Things to AWT.
- HH reported that 4 HAPs had gone to consultants to be written this year, with funding for the rest to be written next year. Hopes to publish the BAP next year, supported by the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
- SP reported that the deadline for responses on the BAP consultation was almost up, and that the BAP is due to be ratified by the Council on April 11th. A launch is planned with the development control department.
- MH reported back from a North Somerset Action for Nature meeting – a series of events are planned to mark the 5th birthday of the plan.

DM

8. Progress with projects - MH

Grassland

- 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 should be completed by summer.
- 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 MS and LR in April to discuss rolling out the project across the rest of Avon.

JM/CW

Pondways

- See below for Pondways Project update from Lydia Robbins

Urban Gardens

- Project brief has been written for pilot project in South Bristol, meeting next week with HH and Ben Barker

Arable Farmland Project

- Discussed at agriculture meeting yesterday – project to survey for scarce arable plant hotspots and farmland birds and encourage landowners into agri-environment schemes – MH to develop project brief.

MH

Bristol Birdwatch Project

- Results starting to come in. MH to send HH copy when processed.

MH

9. Updates round the table

- JM reported that 90% of HLS schemes had been rejected due to budgetary constraints. Voluntary modulation has now 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.

<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>

- JM also reported that the HLS Scheme may be changed to an ‘invitation only’ scheme, where farms are initially assessed by an advisor and only those likely to meet the criteria would be allowed to apply – this would cut down on unnecessary FEPS expenditure.
- JM reported that NE and TWTs are undertaking a costing exercise to see how much would be needed to meet the SNA targets.
- HH reported that Kate Jeffreys is being replaced, and her replacement will hopefully be based in Bristol. JM to circulate contact details for NE contacts
- SP reported that the South Glos Natural Environment Team are being restructured, splitting the planning and project teams.
- SP reported that she is hoping to carry out an orchard project, and the process to designate Severn Beach as an LNR has begun.
- DM reported that he is finishing off the Batscapes project, and investigating funding sources for GCN work.
- TC reported that SITA and HLF are targeting SNAs for funding bids
- TC reported that BRERC are bidding for a major mapping exercise as part of a consortium.
- TC also reported that the Cotswold project finished successfully and the SNA presentation was well received at BIRG.
- LR is concentrating on the Rebuilding Biodiversity, aiming to create a living landscape in the Gordano Valley – has received 50% funding from the Tubney Trust and is looking for 50% match.
- LR reported that the Somerset Mendips project was launched 28/3/07
- HH reported that she had a lot of planning work and was also progressing the management plan for the Avon Gorge.
- HH reported that the Parks and Green Space Strategy is due out in June and that it contains biodiversity targets.

JM

- MC reported back from the water and wetlands focus group (see Water and Wetlands minutes for further details).
- MC reported that EA had bid for a strategic water vole project covering most of the South West, and should find out soon if they have been successful.
- MC reported that her area of responsibility had been changed to include Avonmouth.
- JN introduced herself as the new Native Species Officer at BZG, the post is initially one day a week, and she will be taking over Neil Maddison’s role with the ABP.
- JN reported on the water vole reintroduction at Portbury Docks – surveys indicate that the water voles have reached their population maximum at the release site, and a large scale survey is planned to see how far they have spread. JN to provide data from surveys to BRERC.

JN

10. Our position on renewables

- AWT have written a policy on wind turbines, but are delaying publication until after TWT’s policy is published.
- HH reported that there are three applications for wind turbines in Avonmouth. The application on the docks has been granted planning permission, but with the condition that effects on birds are monitored for the life of the turbines, and that the monitoring is overseen by an advisory group of local wildlife organisations. If an impact is discovered, then various mitigation strategies can be applied.
- TC asked if ASERA had a position on renewables – MH to check

MH

11. AOB

- 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
- DM reported that BANES have drawn up a sustainability checklist that will be out for consultation soon.
- TC reported that BRERC have uploaded all their records onto the NBN Gateway at a 1km resolution. Permission has also been given to NE to upload all the data (excluding confidential data) onto their intranet at full resolution.
- TC is keen to receive feedback on the usefulness of this data – one early result has been contact from the national crayfish expert, to inform us that we are the only county in England that has Noble Crayfish (a non-native, but globally threatened species).
- TC also reported that BRERC are opening a small communications office in BANES.
- SP reported that the BBC’s Breathing Places campaign have identified Bristol as a target city and will be helping with the Festival of Nature.

14. Next meeting date and location
 Thursday 21st June 10-12:30 at AWT

Pondways: Progress January 2nd - March 20th 2007

- Six Publicity Events including one in each of Avon's local authority areas, has helped to recruit volunteers and inform the public about Pondways aims
- Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group (ARAG) has been reinvigorated with many of its members volunteering for Pondways
 - Some volunteers doing Pondways and NARRS (ARAG)
- Final survey form devised with BRERC
 - Incorporates other national survey methodology (NARRS and NPMN)
- 35 volunteers have been recruited from the local community through public meetings, newsletter and email/website publicity.
Widely publicised through local conservation groups/environmental organisations (over 70 volunteer enquiries), including:
Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group
BRERC newsletter
Avon Wildlife Trust and its volunteer network
Bristol Naturalists
Bristol Zoo
Bristol University
BTCV
Environment Agency
Local Authorities
FWAG
Various local wildlife/conservation groups; plus others
- Two Training Days organised to take place at Stockwood LNR (BCC/AWT)
- A further £10,000 funding from Natural England received at the beginning of March - Pondways Project Officer position extends to four days per week from April
- Due to increased funding Pondways can now also survey private sites as well as public access sites - specifics to be decided
- Most landowner permission to public access sites confirmed but many not on Council land - some complications

Lydia Robbins - Pondways Project Officer
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BRERC SNA Presentation Notes

Summary of Current Situation

Slide 1 South West Priority Habitat

- The NBN Pilot Project 2002 has offered a rigorous approach to mapping UK BAP Priority habitat in the region based upon data quality criteria. This has been applied regionally during this project to give the most accurate and up to date dataset available for these habitats.
- The South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership is holding the regional Priority Habitat dataset.

Slide 2 NBN Methodology and Criteria

Slide 3 Avon Priority Habitat

- Each South West Local Record Centre is holding the local dataset which was provided for the regional dataset.

Slide 4 Maintenance Target Methodology

- Criterion 1 polygon extent + Criterion 2 polygon count (x minimum mappable unit) has provided the Habitat Maintenance Targets to the Regional Spatial Strategy 2006.

Slide 5 Nature Map

- Nature Map 2004 has provided an agreed aspirational map of Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) to focus conservation activities.
- It has also provided the basis for Habitat Restoration Targets where 30% or 60% of the SNA area is assigned for Priority Habitat coverage within 50 years.
- This map and these restoration targets have been supplied as 2010 and 2020 targets to the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- The South West Observatory is holding Nature Map

Slide 6 Avon SNAs

Slide 7 Overview Flow Chart

Slide 8 Reporting Table

- Nationally, BARS is recording actions and that's running parallel to this work
- Regionally, in 2010 there is a review of the RSS targets for 2020. South West Local Record Centres will be asked to supply those mapped figures. BRERC are making a presentation to the South West Records Centres to outline the importance of continuing to standardise the approach to habitat mapping using a criteria based approach in order to be in a position to meet that request.

- We will also be presenting the tools that we are developing locally eg SNA reports and the Priority Habitat Evidence Sheets as efficient and pragmatic tools to achieve this end.
- The SNA report tool and PH Evidence sheets have been received favourable by Biodiversity south West.

Slides 9 – 16 SNA Report Detail

- Examine SNA reports in detail
- Locally - SNA Reports can be useful – up to you to say if they are.
- If we meet the SNA targets (allowing for and including maintenance and restoration outside of SNAs) we will be meeting our regional targets.
- **Agri-Environment Scheme Analysis** Stewardship Agreements can be used as a monitoring tool.....dependent on up to date datasets being made available by Natural England.
- If other conservation targets are developed within SNAs the reports can be developed to report both positive and negative

- **High Potential mapping**

Currently with Phase1

Slide 17 Priority Habitat Evidence Sheets

- To encourage the recording of priority habitat in the field by surveyors
- To provide an audit trail of evidence for mapping which will then provide the evidence for target statements within monitoring documents

Slide 18 Habitat Layer

- Because habitat data at BRERC is being stored in a consistent and compatible format it can be used by many different agencies for analysis and reporting, locally, regionally and nationally.
- Importance of data flow into the layer from all projects receiving public funds

Other Tools context target planning /habitats need development foot print layer.
Bats?