

**GREATER GWENT BIODIVERSITY ACTION GROUP
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2009
AT CIVIC CENTRE, EBBW VALE - COMMITTEE ROOM 2.**

Present:

Martin Anthony	Gwent Recorders' Forum
Rebecca Davies	SEWBREC
Katie Godfrey	Newport CC
Chris Hatch	Chair Torfaen LBAP
Sean Hathaway	Swansea CC
Juliet Hynes	Wales Biodiversity Partnership
Margaret Iles	Caerphilly CBC
Roger James	Chair Newport LBAP
Tom Lunn	Torfaen CBC
Sinead Lynch	Newport CC
Katie Partington	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Richard Poole	Welsh Water
Claire Pooley	Blaenau-Gwent CBC
Camilla Smith	RSPB Lapwing Project
Melanie Sutherland	Caerphilly CBC
Steve Williams	Torfaen CBC (GGBAG Chair)
Jerry Lewis	Monmouthshire CC (GGBAG Secretary)

- 1 Apologies:** Stephen Bladwell (RSPB)
Gemma Bode (GWT)
Richard Jones (CCW)
Steve Lucus (WBG)
Rick Park (GWT)
Rebecca Price (GWT)
Kate Stinchcombe (MCC)
James Tinney (FCW)
Mike Wilson (NMW)

- 2 Minutes of the meeting** of 12 August 2009 were agreed

3 Matters Arising

Item 3 c) Forgotten Landscapes– the project will be submitted to HLF w/c 30 Nov and a funding decision is expected before year end. The biodiversity elements have changed to include a reed bed at Garn Lakes and bracken control (for heather restoration).

Item 10 SEWBREC– the Gwent Recorders' Forum is booked for 20th February at Newport Wetlands Centre, the theme will be wetland species and offers for presentations were requested.

Item 6 a) SW Eco-net – a seminar covering a guide to the website was hosted by CCW last week, and any feedback (especially on how easy the tool kit is to use) should be sent to Gayle Wootton. Despite some drawbacks, initial thoughts were that it should be seen as an opportunity rather than a constraint. Some habitats - conifer woods (PAWS) and hedgerows are not included, and the information is based on old Phase 1 data, There is an urgent need for a new Phase 1 survey, or at least a study to

identify the current constraints (**SEWBREC will investigate the feasibility of doing this**). CCW are repeating the Phase 1 survey, with remote sensing, but progress is very slow (**SW will enquire about the current position**).

Item 6 c) Heads of the Valleys – The Valleys Regional Partnership Environmental sub-group will meet on 8 Dec (Phil Jayne is chair, Russell De'ath is secretary).and representatives have been requested from GGBAG (**MS or SW would attend**) and GlamBAG. CS also attends.

4 WBP update (JH)

a) Wales targets for HAPs and SAPs will be published between now and Feb 2010, except for open mosaic habitats (which are still being defined). The most appropriate target should be incorporated into each LBAP, and actions would need to be written into BARS by the individual partnerships. There will be regional seminars (one in Caerphilly scheduled for 12 May) to which partnership members and recorders would be invited.

b) the last Steering Group had a presentation on small mammals, with a request for more small mammal sampling areas (bait traps) to be set up.

c) there were discussions on unlawful development affecting European protected species and damage to European designated sites.

d) a draft agreement for data sharing will be available in Feb.

e) the next Steering Group meeting will be in Caerphilly on 10 Feb.

5 GlamBAG winter bird feeding project presentation (MS)

Two types of feeding were undertaken – conventional hanging feeders (3 per site) and game cover crop planting. The crop comprised King's "wild bird food seed mix" and was seeded in March/May and re-seeded each spring. The project was funded by CCW through the Caerphilly CBC programme (Alison Jones is lead), with match funding by LBAP Officer and volunteer's time. Total grant of £15,000 over 3 years ending Mar 2011. Individual site costs were c£900 for feeders (over 3 years), and £500 for sowing 2 acres (per year). **Details of the project/presentation to be sent out with minutes.** WAG Ecosystem Group grants should be available from next spring, and a similar project for the GGBAG area would be worth considering. **The relative success of feeders/crop would be investigated by MS (with Alison Jones), and JH would make enquiries (with Plantlife & RAPB) about using a native seed mix for the game cover crop. AJ would sound out CCW's views on a similar project in Gwent and the proposal would need to be raised in each LBAP partnership.** One UA (or another body such as GWT) would need to coordinate the project – **suggestion for host body needed. Local Authorities, and other partner organisations, were also asked to consider their level of involvement before the next meeting and report back to SW/JL.**

6 Invasive Species presentation (SH)

Invasive species are now seen as one of the main drivers of habitat change. ID charts (for c75 species) are available at www.nonnativespecies.org and a strategy for dealing with them goes back to 2003. Case studies reveal that it is much more cost effective to deal with a problem early, rather than letting the species get firmly established. From Mar 2010 no herbicides will be available to control submerged weeds, the "friendliest" herbicide is currently Roundup.

7 **LBAP updates**

MCC (JL) – Kate Stinchcombe is now back after maternity leave, Danielle Fry's contract has been extended.

NCC (SL) – the Biodiversity and Schools Officer post (Natalie Waller) is funded 50% by CCW and 50% by SLAs with schools. She gives advice, provides plans for the grounds and develops partnerships with local firms. Other activities have been a Peregrine watch, Fungi walk, review of the LBAP and review of SINC sites.

CCBC (MI) – three ponds have been created in Parc Cwm Darren (under the Million Ponds Project), and there will be a repeat bird event there in Jan. The Coed Cymru post is being advertised.

BGCBC (CP) – Katie Partington has just been appointed. Two management plans for LNRs are being written and 128 SINC's have been formally approved. The award ceremony for the SNAP photographic competition is being held later in the week.

TCBC (SW) – recent focus has been on inputting plans onto BARS, a review of the LBAP is scheduled for next year. The birds sub group meets quarterly and has agreed a Grey Partridge survey for next spring. Some 120 SINC's have been designated so far with 30 more in preparation. There will be a presentation on NERC to key officers in Dec. Some scrub/invasive species clearance has taken place on LNRs.

8 **Terms of Reference (SW)**

These needed to be updated to reflect the current issues, our action programme priorities and to make reference to the joint meetings with GlamBAG. (who are also in the process of reviewing their ToR), although general comments would mean it would not be so quickly outdated. No views had been received after our last meeting but SW had made some suggestions for the update, **which would be circulated with the minutes.** The chairs of the LBAP partnerships are now invited to meetings, and there was support for this re-direction towards the partnerships. It was suggested that Gwent Police be invited to future meetings, **MS would ask Sgt Ian Guildford who would be the most appropriate person.**

9 **Joint meeting with GlamBAG**

GlamBAG are having their meeting next week, and had requested we suggest some dates/venues. The second week of March was suggested for a half day meeting at Caerphilly or the Newport Wetland Reserve (cost at this location may be prohibitive). Proposed themes were Connectivity (presentation by Gayle Wootton), Data Sharing and/or a Landscape Scale Project presentation from each area. **Once the date/venue confirmed, two from each Group to organise details. Meeting subsequently arranged for Thurs 18 March at Ty Penallta, Ystrad Mynach at 2pm, thanks to MS.**

10 **AOB**

HoV Lapwing Project - may continue for 1 or 2 more years if funding is available. There is a Strategy consultation meeting on 15 Dec 2pm, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.

BREEAM Scoring - a number of issues have been identified eg scoring is targeted only at plant numbers. Caerphilly have recently charged the Council's property dept to carry out ecological surveys and suggest mitigation recommendations for two new schools. There was concern over discrepancies between the "suitably qualified ecologist" report and how many BREEM credits were granted in the information submitted with the planning application.

11 Date of Next Meeting

Tues 11 May 9.30 am at Bell View Park, Newport.

MINS GGBAG 24 Nov
JMSL 02.12.09