

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 12<sup>th</sup> February 2005

### 1. ATTENDANCE

Martin Anthoney	Butterfly Conservation / Gwent Wildlife Trust (Chair)
Deborah Beeson	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Gemma Bode	Gwent Wildlife Trust (speaker)
Julian Branscombe	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Colin Cheesman	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Richard Clarke	Gwent Ornithological Society
Erica Colkett	Countryside Council for Wales (speaker)
Heather Colls	British Lichen Society / Botanical Society of the British Isles
Dave Cooksey	Gwent Badger Group
Trevor Evans	Botanical Society of the British Isles
Sgt Ian Guildford	Countryside Council for Wales / South Wales Police (speaker)
Graham Harris	
Matthew Harris	Cardiff CC / Gwent Amphibian and Reptile Group
Roger James	Gwent Wildlife Trust
John Kennet	Gwent Badger Group
Janice Kinchington	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Abbey Lee	Newport CC
Jerry Lewis	Monmouthshire CC
Ian Rabjohns	Gwent Bat Group
Kris Roberts	Torfaen CBC
Steven Rogers	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Adam Rowe	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (speaker)
Dave Slade	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre
Ian Smith	Monmouthshire CC
Melanie Sutherland	Caerphilly CBC (Secretary)
Steve Williams	Torfaen CBC
Kate Woolcock	Monmouthshire CC

#### Apologies

Chris Hatch	Gwent Ornithological Society
Alison Jones	Caerphilly CBC
Sue Parkinson	
Tony Prater	RSPB
Kate Pryor	Vale of Glamorgan CC
Colin Titcombe	
Graham Wilcox	

### 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2004 / MATTERS ARISING

Minutes were agreed. Melanie Sutherland (MS) introduced the new LBAP Officers to the group - Kate Woolcock in Monmouthshire, Deb Beeson in Blaenau Gwent, Matt in Cardiff and Abbey in Newport. Martin Anthoney (MA) welcomed Steve Williams back to the group, now with Torfaen CBC.

The RAF Caerwent weekend visits and CROW Act species training were very successful. MS thanked MA for organising the trip to RAF Caerwent on behalf of the group. Over 60 species of moth were recorded on the Sunday evening by MA, MS and Heather Colls.

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### 3. Role of Police Wildlife Crime Officers in species and habitat protection (Sgt Ian Guildford)

Wildlife Crime Officers have a more hands-on approach than just 'liaison', which used to be called. Ian talked about the following subjects - bird persecution (Peregrine Watch, finch trapping and egg collecting), badger digging and lamping, poaching (deer, fish and rabbit lamping at night), marine wildlife issues, plants, invasive species, protection of habitat and SSSIs, and trade in endangered species.

Conservation priorities in the UK are listed below. These are highly publicised, for example, game shoots are visited to make those taking part more aware of hen harriers and the legislation protecting them.

- Bat crime – mainly developers (“Operation Bat”)
- Operation Charm (trade and CITES)
- Operation Artemis (North Wales – hen harriers)

Countryside Council for Wales local priorities (over other wildlife calls) – information packs and training are provided

- Otter
- Great Crested Newt
- Dormice
- Illegal burning of SSSIs
- Illegal off-roading on SSSIs

The role of recorders – eyes and ears out in the field. Police Wildlife Crime Officer (PWCO) knows the legislation and who to contact, but may not know what to look for, e.g. bat roosts.

Information was available at the meeting on wildlife crime and what information required for logging incidents/records (evidence). Need to ensure it is passed onto a PWCO and obtain an incident number so that it gets dealt with properly. Need good contact with local PWCO if want to report something; they could then contact the relevant police station and get them to deal with it. This eases the process involved (paper work), i.e. investigate it at the time it happens if an emergency, but the PWCO will follow it up and take forward afterwards.

Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) groups all organisations involved, headed by DEFRA, including trading organisations, as well as the usual, RSPCA and RSPB, etc.

PWCOs raise awareness and educate police officers on wildlife crime issues as much as possible. New Inspector in Gwent Police and PC Kevin Gullick – so hopefully see a change in attitude now.

MA asked for a list of all the local PWCOs which cover the Gwent area for the group.
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### 4. South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre Update (Adam Rowe)

Adam Rowe gave a powerpoint presentation on the progress made with establishing a biodiversity records centre. Start running on 1<sup>st</sup> August (go “live”).

## 5. SEWBReC and the Recording Community

MA thanked MS for all her hard work over the last 3 years as Secretary to the Forum and organising meetings. Also thanked the local authorities for their contributions to meetings over the last 5 years. Adam Rowe reported on SEWBReC's involvement in the Glamorgan Recorders' Group, and that SEWBReC are willing to take on the organisation to ensure the long term future of both recorder groups. Funding would then be through the Service Level Agreements with local authorities and other partner organisations. Need to build the momentum to prevent these groups fizzling out.

### Discussion Points Raised

Julian Branscombe – we're all in agreement with the motion. Seconded. No disagreement.

Trevor Evans asked about computer software. Adam Rowe reported that 2 pieces of software are most popular in SE Wales – MapMate and SEWBReC's chosen system, Recorder2002 – that support is there for people if necessary and that SEWBReC are willing to take records in other formats. People shouldn't get hung up on technology; options can be discussed with individuals – which are the best to use, so compatible with own system needs. Time and resources are there at the moment to offer help.

Julian Branscombe asked about the GlamBAG and Gwent BAG websites which could be hosted and maintained by SEWBReC to post training opportunities on – need to match number of courses available with demand for training. Gwent Wildlife Trust courses were very popular and if can find out about training and the two BAGs on a website, then that would be useful. Need another meeting with Gwent BAG to rubber stamp this idea, but on the verge of happening. SEWBReC website is: <http://www.sewbrec.org.uk>

Kate Woolcock asked about how deal with the Freedom of Information Act. Adam Rowe reported no problems. Consultation with DEFRA had originally missed out the recording community, so views were strongly put to DEFRA from record centres. There have been high level meetings between DEFRA, the National Biodiversity Network and record centres across the UK, etc. and the NBN are drafting guidance to include the recording community. DEFRA don't want to cause problems and so hopefully will enable record centres to operate as have done in the past. A couple of minor changes and will need to include a disclaimer on forms (why want data, etc.) If any further questions, Adam was available over lunch to discuss.

## 6. The role of CCW in species protection (Erica Colkett)

A powerpoint presentation given by Erica Colkett, Species Officer with the Countryside Council for Wales. The threat of a custodial sentence under recent legislation (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Habitats Regulations 1994), which includes the manager of the company and the site manager, gives wildlife crime much more weight than just fines.

Julian Branscombe suggested that the voluntary sector (Wildlife Trusts, etc.), CCW and local authorities need to work together more on planning applications to ensure "one voice" rather than submitting different viewpoints in comments and maybe not getting good outcomes. As soon as one of those involved has a "softer" viewpoint, then that can be exploited. MA agreed and suggested that need a network to find out who has been consulted and to discuss comments prior to submission. SEWBReC will play a vital role in supplying information and screening planning applications, both full and outline applications. This ensures up to date information to inform

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ecological surveys required and mitigation. However, as Ian Rabjohns stated, we need to be careful about saying "no records" as this can be taken to mean that there are no protected species on a site. Agreed that this should not be done.

Kris Roberts was interested in seeing CCW's remit re. commenting on planning applications as cannot enforce the local authority or the developer to do ecological site surveys, they can only inform that a species is present and then its up to the local authority (as compared to the Wildlife Trust's remit, e.g. more locally important species and habitats can be included in comments). Erica responded in that CCW can only object to a planning application in certain circumstances, for e.g. regarding SSSIs and European Protected Species, and there is guidance on what to object to. Need to let the local authority and developer know what the priorities are, what will or will not object to, so that not just rubber stamped of CCW don't object.

It was agreed that the sharing of information/discussion of comments prior to submission by the 3 different types of organisation involved in the planning process needs to be more apparent.

### **7. Wildlife Sites Project (Gemma Bodé)**

Wildlife Sites Guidelines document finally published after 4 years in production. Covers whole of South Wales, 13 local authorities and other partners involved. Lots of expertise gone into producing a worthwhile document. Everyone should now have a copy who needs one; some were available at the meeting for recorders to collect. This document is regional guidance for local authorities in designating local wildlife sites, so they can produce their own local criteria. Current funding runs out in March, but project will continue through Aggregates Levy funding onto next stage. 3 year project to achieve a complete register of SINCs in Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent. Other surveyors will be employed as well as Gemma. Important for recorders to input data on sites; botanical surveys carried out by Wildlife Trust, but bird records, etc. should be submitted to flag up potential sites whilst out and about. Also need to work more with landowners to make them aware of the important resource they own through open days, biodiversity newsletter, etc. to make them proud of being the owner of an important site; other than just a line on a map. Grant scheme for landowners for management of SINCs - matchfunding from Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent councils, and need to approach National Farmers Union, Farmers Union of Wales and farmers themselves.

### **8. Species Workshop Session**

#### **8.1 Gwent Species Audit**

MA thanked Colin Cheesman for all his hard work over the past few years getting the audit organised.

#### **8.2 Species Challenge Fund applications**

MA briefed the forum on the events over the last year since the last meeting, at which we identified species for project applications to the Countryside Council for Wales' Species Challenge Fund (SCF) in November. CCW then withdrew the SCF and MA wrote a letter to complain, along with lots of other organisations. SCF was then reinstated and a call for applications was likely to happen in early 2005. Erica Colkett updated the group on the process involved and said that it was likely to be opened up for applications in a month or so. Species subgroups therefore need to finalise what species to put forward and the type of project, and who will apply. If 2 or more

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species are included in an application (and possibly tag on a local species (not Section 74 CROW Act), then will be considered more “value for money” by CCW.

### Species Subgroup Reports

#### Birds

- Aquatic warbler – Goldcliffe Ringing Group project continuing for another 3 years
- Tree sparrow – survey, nest boxes, wintering food and management work (Richard Clarke)
- Lapwing – based on Monmouthshire’s project; £ for successful nests to amend cultivation
- Upland bird survey – reed bunting, skylark, curlew, etc. – next phase of scheme to provide management advice for species poor areas (based on findings from survey)
- Nightjar – coordinated survey already going on in Glamorgan and Gwent, and radio tracking project in Brecon Beacons National Park; advice to Forestry Commission on management practices
- Hawfinch – Forestry Commission funded scheme to cull jays to see what happens to breeding hawfinches in Monmouthshire

#### Plants

- Gwent Grassland and Fungi Project – to include a few species and e.g. churchyards
  - Need an organisation to act as applicant
  - BSBI and BMS – national societies
  - Perhaps Wildlife Trust could act as applicant? (not confirmed)
  - Look at Irish surveys as a model to duplicate in Gwent

#### Invertebrates

- Red wood ant – useful project, but not on section 74 list
- Small pearl bordered fritillary – also not on S74, but could base survey on high brown and pearl bordered fritillaries and then also record small pearl bordered as well (same food plant)
- Butterfly Conservation willing to put in a threatened fritillaries project application
- Small ranunculus – on S74 as being extinct, but has been recorded in Newport
- Hornet robberfly and fen raft spider – need to approach Gwent WT to apply for SCF

#### Mammals, fish and herpetofauna

Gwent Bat Survey Project – an application will be made for SCF by Ian Rabjohns with support from Melanie Sutherland. 5 volunteers for each local authority area in Gwent have been put forward and a project brief, including potential outcomes, etc. was provided at the meeting. Discussion about possibility of a badger survey/raising awareness project took place, but the badger is not eligible as it’s not currently on the S74 list.

It was agreed that a letter should be written to CCW about possible funding for badger and red wood ant projects, which currently fall out of the SCF application process.

9. **Date of Next Meeting** - to be confirmed through GGBAG. Please send agenda ideas to SEWBReC, which will be organising the next meeting in early 2006.