

Wales Mammal Biodiversity Action Forum
Minutes of the 4th Meeting

17 February 2011, CCW Offices, Aberystwyth

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Present: Liz Halliwell (CCW) Minutes, Rob Strachan (EA), Matthew Ellis (CCW), Jean Matthews (CCW) Chair, Kate Williamson (SNPA), Henry Schofield (VWT), Tracey Lovering (WBP, part of meeting)

Apologies: Rob Parry (WTSWW), Steve Lucas (BCT), Iolo Lloyd (FCW), Nida Al-Fulaij (PTES), Mike Jenkins (EA), Sarah Bird (Chester Zoo), Ian Danby (BASC), Isabel Macho (Carms CC), Lizzie Wilberforce (WTSWW), Brenda Mayle (Forest Research)

It was noted that attendance was low. Reasons for this were discussed and included illness and last minute changes to availability. It was suggested that occasional meetings by VC could be considered or a phone link could be made available (eg via Powwownow) to encourage people to take part in meetings.

Organisational updates:

Kate Williamson is leaving SNPA, but will still represent SNPA on the mammals Interreg project through the Park Wildlife Forum. Kate hopes to be able to still attend some WMBAF meetings to represent the Mammal Society.

All future EAW Biodiversity Funding will be directed at the CCW Outcome 21 Actions database (Remediation of protected sites to favourable conservation status) and Water Framework Directive actions for good ecological status of river basins. No stand alone BAP projects will be funded. The group expressed concern regarding EAW's ability to deliver BAP actions for which they are responsible (EAW is lead partner for otters and water voles in addition to many other species). It was agreed that this should be one of the three key messages to be reported from this meeting (see below).

There may be some similar concerns in CCW regarding the prioritisation of Outcome 21 over wider biodiversity work.

VWT – developing organisational conservation strategy setting out internal and external work. Only limited work on bat site management for bats and no polecat work not being done in 2011. Major projects will be Beacons for Bats and Mammals Interreg project.

API – suggestion that statutory agencies should have NERC visit

2. BAP Process update (Tracey Lovering present)

Ecosystem Groups have been asked to give an annual update (paper circulated to WMBAF prior to meeting). Groups (including WMBAF) need to feed back to TL issues that are preventing delivery. This includes reiteration of previous points if no

progress apparent. TL will send onto policy group or others as appropriate. Key people within the Ecosystem Groups will be appointed to work directly with WAG officials to resolve policy issues. Members of the group are encouraged to really look at the spider diagram which sets out successes and failures to date.

AP2 – TL to circulate BAP delivery ‘spider diagram’

WBP have been encouraging universities in Wales to get more involved in the BAP process. JM made contact with Mike Bruford of Cardiff University who is undertaking a mammals genetics project. He is keen to make contact with mammal groups and will attend a future WMBAF meeting.

WMBAF may be able to have a page on the WBP website, although documents may need to be translated. Agreed that should still circulate partner updates to LBAP contacts. A note should be added to the top to make clear that it is an informal update. Updates should include web or contact links for people to get additional info.

TL is involved in organising annual NERC visits where WAG/WBP visit local authorities to review BAP action and work of biodiversity champions (local authority councillor or equivalent who is responsible for promoting biodiversity throughout the authority).

Engaging with LBAPs – it is recommended that all groups identify priority actions for each LBAP. It was agreed that WMBAF should extend the current prioritisation exercise to identify a top 3 priority mammal actions for each LBAP. See below.

TL requested that after each meeting the group agrees the top three most important points/major actions or decisions from the meeting to be communicated around WBP.

AP3 – JM LHa to agree effective communication route to LBAPs with Sean McHugh and to get minutes and partner agreements onto WBP website.

AP4 – JM LHa to identify key LBAP contact who is willing to represent Wales LBAPs at WMBAF meetings.

Species Expert Group (SEG) meeting – 16 February 2011

- BARS – discussion on the suitability of BARS for the type of data collation species experts require. Further analysis of information needs to be undertaken.
- Environment Wales Funding – Steve Bladwell will be sending a note to WBP with comments on the recent application process. Mammal applications made to Environment Wales included:
 - Mink on Anglesey by Menter Mon
 - Barbastelles – BCT
- Habitat Challenge Fund – funding may be available from CCW for habitat work, including work to benefit species.
- Landscape scale project – SEG will be reviewing the RSPB’s Future Scapes project ‘the Three Rivers’ to look at opportunities for cross-taxa collaboration in the area of Carmarthenshire.
- SEG prioritisation exercise – LH had sent a draft list of priority actions to Reg Thorpe at RSPB based on the discussion at the last WMBAF meeting. However,

the group wishes to consider priority projects as opposed to actions. Reg will collate all the taxa priorities for discussion and further prioritisation at the next SEG meeting.

It was agreed that WMBAF should identify priority projects under agenda item 6.

3. Natural Environment Framework (NEF)

Work is progressing on the 3 work streams. Some work is underway within CCW to look at what makes a 'healthy ecosystem' including impacts of processes and service such ecosystems can give. Woodlands and estuaries are being used as case studies.

There is concern that species and habitats are not being properly considered in the NEF.

4. Glastir

The Targeted Element of Glastir is currently under review.

FCW are developing proposals for the woodland part of Glastir.

Jean and Liz have been asked to help with training for contract managers.

5. Project updates

WMBAF member project updates were circulated prior to the meeting.

Adrian Lloyd-Jones reported prior to the meeting that the beaver report has now been finalised and will shortly be sent to the Environment and Rural Affairs Ministers. The report will be made public in due course together with a public consultation exercise on potential catchments for a reintroduction.

6. Mammal Action Plans

Drafting of action plans is underway. The section on 'action implementation' should set out how each action should be implemented and not any obstacles or issues to implementation.

HS expressed concern about some of the targets and actions. It was agreed that these would be reviewed at the October meeting.

The following priority projects were discussed and agreed. The discussion was based on the priorities agreed at the last meeting.

Dormouse survey of Ceredigion

Water vole – catchment level mink control is highest priority via a properly co-ordinated strategic project using mink rafts. Funding may be difficult but development of an Interreg project may be one option if it possible to find funding and an Irish partner wanting to deal with invasive non-natives. Key regions are Anglesey, Llyn, Ceredigion (Pumlumon and Wye headwaters).

LBAPs would have a role in implementing work on the ground including setting up training and protecting key sites.

It is important to finalise the Wales and Regional water vole strategies.

Need to make link to INNS group (Invasive Non-Native Species)

AP5 JM/RS to look at Interreg opportunities for funding strategic mink control.

Barbastelle/Bechstein's bats – SL has applied to Environment Wales for funding work on barbastelles in west Wales and VWT previously had a project to identify woodlands with barbastelles. It was suggested that Matt Zeale's niche factor analysis could be used to identify potential barbastelle woodlands for local bat groups to survey. Once barbastelles have been located using bat detectors, trapping work could then be undertaken to look for other rare woodland bats such as Bechstein's bat – (barbastelles and Bechstein's bats have similar woodland requirements) and *Myotis alcaothoe*.

A rare woodland bat project would be a good opportunity to involve volunteers which would suit Environment Wales funding.

Need to make link to Woodland Ecosystem Group due woodland management issues.

AP6 HS/JM/SL to develop ideas for the first stage of a rare woodlands bats project.

Lesser horseshoe bats – it was not possible to get funding for the Landscapes for Lessers project from HLF, but a GIS workshop is being held on March 16th to look at a habitat suitability model developed by BIS and how this might be rolled out and used regionally.

Harvest mouse – survey work is high priority. Volunteers could be trained to do survey work, so funding would primarily be needed for volunteer expenses. MISE project will be able to co-ordinate work in the Interreg areas and develop harvest mouse survey pack for volunteers. KW willing to promote harvest mouse surveys in other LBAP areas. Linkages need to be made with Grassland Ecosystem Group to identify rough grassland (and also Farmland Ecosystem Group). Others such as Chester Zoo could potentially run training course in non-Interreg areas. Survey pack needs to be ready for October-November survey season.

Red squirrel – priority action is the preparation of management plans for Focal Sites. Grey squirrel control is also a high priority, although this could be addressed in the management plans. Funding for GS control continues to be a problem. LH will be advising FCW on the GS control element of the woodland element of Glastir. However, Glastir is unlikely to enable control in all woodlands. It is likely that there will still be the need for a GS control project, perhaps as part of the mink Interreg project discussed above.

Other potential projects

Greater horseshoe & lesser horseshoe bat interactions. HS noted concern about GHB displacing LHB when they move into summer roosts. Some data being collated on distribution through CCW connectivity project.

Hedgerows for dormice – improving connectivity within the landscape by working with landowners to encourage better management of hedgerows and establishment of new hedgerows. Would also benefit other species.

VWT may be organising a dormouse workshop in Wales.

AP7 – HS to send details of dormouse workshop to LHa

ME – need to make link between the priority species and Ecosystem Goods and Services, particularly since this could help with making the case to WAG for funding species conservation. Whilst this was agreed, it was also felt that the importance of species in their own right needs to be acknowledged.

AP8 – LH/JM to write up list of projects, circulate to WMBAF for comment and then forward to SEG.

AP9 – Species Leads to talk to Action Leads and all to look at other actions in targets/actions spreadsheet to identify other projects that can be ready to go as funding opportunities arise. Actions still need to be delivered. How?

ME suggested it would be valuable to undertake mapping work to identify key areas locally to improve connectivity.

Identification of priority actions for individual LBAP areas (see 2 above – use Task and Finish Group

AP10 – JM, LH and KW to form Task and Finish Group to identify priority actions for LBAPs. Invite to anyone else to join.

7. Work programme Annual Progress Bulletin

A brief review of the work programme identified a few amendments or areas where work needs to be undertaken, eg needs to include ongoing review of priority projects.

ME to make link with INNS group re non-native work.

AP11 - JM to draft report on 2010/11 work for next meeting.

8. Minutes and action points from meeting on 20 October meeting 2010.

No comments were received on the minutes.

	Actions from meeting 20 October 2010	By whom	Progress
1	Ask WBP Secretariat Sean McHugh to send WMBAF minutes to LBAP officers.	LH/JM	Underway – need to agree best mechanism for dissemination
2	List reps from UK groups & to request written updates for this meeting	JM	Completed, although will need to be kept under review
3	Circulate ARC response to the NEF and also the pan-European biodiversity consultation	ME	Carry over
4	Send Scottish fisheries contact details for RP/AL-J.	LH/JM	Completed
5	Finalise WMBAF membership list	LH/JM	Completed
6	All to send any additional updates or amendments to LH by 1 November, and then LH to send updates to Sean McHugh for circulation to	ALL LH	Completed

	LBAPs		
7	Circulate plan to Action & Species Leads (clarify Action Lead in table) & list Species Lead.	LH	Completed
8	Action leads to aim to have some further ones finalised in advance of SEG meeting to send out by 15 th November	Action leads	Ongoing
9	Speak to Steve Bladwell re timetable for submitting priority actions	LH	Completed – draft actions submitted. Need priority projects

9. Any other business

None

10. Date of next meeting

Monday 20th June 2011 – MISE and University of Wales genetics project

Wednesday 12th October 2011 – targets/actions review

Key Messages from meeting

1. List of priority projects drawn up.
2. Suggested list of priority species/actions for each LBAP Wales will be produced.
3. Concern about ability of some species leads to deliver, particularly EAW where their focus is now Outcome 21. We recommend NERC visits are applied to statutory agencies.