

Minutes of the 12th WBAP Freshwater Meeting

Held at Aberystwyth University at 10:30 am on Thursday 1 May 2014

Present:

Tristan Hatton-Ellis (THE) Natural Resources Wales (NRW) (Telecon)
Huw Jones (HJ) NRW
Janet Buckles (JB) NRW
Barbara Spence (BS) NRW
Adrian Lloyd Jones (ALIJ) North Wales Wildlife Trust
Hannah Powell (HP) Powys County Council
Kyle Young (KY) NRW

Present by Telecon:

Dusi Thomas (DT) Welsh Water
Kris Roberts (KR) Torfaen Council, LBAPS
Jeremy Biggs (JBG)
Nick Bialynicki Birula (NB)

Apologies:

Robin Woodyatt
Emma Guy
Dai Roberts

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Minutes of last meeting

Outstanding actions:

6.4 All: Information for freshwater section of Biodiversity website to be sent to JB by end of June.

Matters arising:

3.5 Non-Native Species Directive

- Progressing positively, regulations will be in place soon.
- Actions will have staggered timescale.
- List can be amended to be appropriate to each member state.

Action: THE to contact Iwan ?

6.1 Siltation Tools

- Focussed on lowlands.
- Detects severe siltation so Wales comes up as high.
- Links for website can be sent to Sean McHugh.

6.3 Evidence spreadsheet

- Freshwater evidence section at launch of spreadsheet in Cardiff.

9.2 Future role of LBAPs

- Torfaen LBAP strategy completed.

Action: ALIJ to follow up.

10.1 Cypermethrin

- NRW now has position statement. Cypermethrin should be avoided. but may be required for insect pests. Application for derogation is required.
- Freshwater Habitats Trust has contacts re. academics and regulators.

Action: JBG to consult BS and write summary to be circulated to Freshwater Group.

10.2 Water Framework Directive funding from Welsh Water (DT)

- 79K left, but number of applications has been small. May need more publicity.
- Similar funding may be available again if Ofwat approve business plan.

3. NRW Change Update

- Draft structures for Operations now available.
- Areas will be North, Mid, South East, South West.
- Appointments for middle tier of management (Tier 4 recruitment) in progress.
- Operations area level management will be announced in April 2015.
- Place based teams will be supported by specialist teams.

4. NRW Corporate Plan

- Corporate plan available on new website
- Business plan in preparation, will be implemented by Directorate delivery plan.
- Teams will deliver via objectives.

5. Work & Projects Update

5.1 Freshwater Work Plan for Welsh Biodiversity Partnership

Plan: Previously circulated as draft by THE, few comments received. Must be agreed and sent to website.

5.2 Habitat Creation/Restoration Actions:

Maps for lake habitats: draft circulated, to be revised possibly in 2016.

5.3 Rivers & Headwaters:

Difficult to discuss prioritisation, should postpone until next year. Lakes document could provide framework.

6. Lake BAP Prioritisation

6.1 Important freshwater areas to be discussed with 7. (JBG)

6.2

- How will water bodies outside SAC be linked with WFD status? Need to identify priority waterbodies. (KY)
- Good status may not deliver for biodiversity, natural processes approach may not be specific enough
- Could use same principles for small headwaters as for standing waters.

- Goal is to protect high quality sites that WFD may not address.
 - Could provide headwater/catchwater prioritisation strategy, headwater function is core.
 - May not get finance to increase good status to high status.
 - Priority maps may help to focus on biodiversity ecosystem function hotspots.
 - Possibility of arranging workshop?
- Only 36% (less than half) of waterbodies in Wales are good status. Need to link WFD and biodiversity targets and protect current good status waterbodies rather than restoring bad ones.

Actions:

JBG to distribute document indicating good locations.

JBG & KY Outline approach, based on Classic Bioscience article on Process-based River Restoration.

THE Headwater prioritisation to be included in agenda of next meeting.

6.3 Lakes Document

Document is easy to read and informative.

Needs appendix and full list of protected sites.

Ponds should be termed as ponds of high ecological quality (top 20%).

Next step could be a few candidate flagship sites for Freshwater Habitats Trust.

7. Lake Survey

Two species thought to have been lost in Wales have been re-discovered.

These are *Carex rudis* at Gors Goch and *Utricularia ?* in a ditch in Garndolbenmaen.

Llyn Eiddew Mawr in the Rhinogydd is recovering from acidification.

Luronium natans has been found in Llyn Dinas.

Condition assessment monitoring has been carried out on other lakes.

8. Evidence Gaps Workshop

8.1 Last held 30 April 2014 at Cardiff University, well attended (50+)

8.2 Topics discussed included:

- Amalgamation of document
- Knowledge transfer
- Literature reviews
- Accessible formats for practitioners to act on
- KES fund to be available for projects providing good evidence base
- Use of evidence gaps list & project list by academics
- Project students as resource

8.3

- Smaller projects may be suitable for undergraduate & Masters projects
- May be problems with multilayer projects, but some projects could be split.
- Project list should be reviewed.

- Gaps should deliver outcomes for policies in managing natural resources.
- Need clear structure to prioritisation process
- There is a risk that a list of gaps may fail to clarify what opportunities are informing.
- THE needs links to policy agenda and what policy changes may be considered.
- Timescale can't cover primary research, but would be suitable for literature review.
- May be opportunities to add in workable bolt-ons to existing large projects.
- Living documents will be open to additions and suggestions.

Action: HP to provide details of Pilwort project to JBG

8.4 NB noted that there is no information re. development opportunities available on the spreadsheet.

Action: NB to send text to THE for inclusion.

9. Sustainable Fisheries in Wales (NRW document)

- Now available on NRW website.
- Concerns re. fisheries monitoring and increased angler involvement.

10. Freshwater Work Plan

10.1 Lake Prioritisation

- Sub-committee to look at producing outline approach to prioritisation JBG & KY to lead, THE to represent NRW. Deadline is December 2015 but need to produce outline by end of June for first meeting.
- Sharing prioritisation document, key project and action to get relevant bids.
- Use of priority mapping in NRW business. Should be accessible, need to share NRW & LRC data and encourage use. Could be useful for targeting resources in areas with critical need. Can these be incorporated as evidence in rigid WFD plan?

Action: Need to formalise and publish Lakes document urgently. THE to finish, but will need comments.

10.2 Ponds Document

- Priority ponds document included GNC.
- ARK doing modelling work with funding from England.

10.3 Resilient Ecosystems Fund:

- Possible 6 million may be available.

10.4 Whole catchment management: Few lakes in chosen catchments so not important areas for ponds.

Action: THE & KY to discuss

10.5 Habitat and Site Management

- No new actions on work plan .

10.6 Habitat categorisation and restoration:

- Some ecosystem groups have direct link to restoration projects, Freshwater Group should participate in three trial areas to create natural resource management plans in the Tawe, Dyfi and Rhondda catchments.
- Initial phase will be internal but will then be more widely available, should concentrate on process rather than biodiversity outcomes.
- Guidelines re. management of watercourses, ponds etc. Could be circulated.
- Fewer guidelines available in synthesised form for headwaters.

Actions:

BS to send contacts for Dyfi to Kyle, then will be circulated.

BS to circulate OS maps showing boundaries.

THE to circulate links for Freshwater Habitat Trust website.

KR & LBAPs to identify gaps.

10.7 Heritage Lottery Fund

- Application for ponds database developed in England, three phase project. Second phase to concentrate on volunteer monitoring and focus on biodiversity. Third phase will involve popular survey with test kits.
- Three quarters of funding for England and one quarter for Wales, funding required for matching.

10.8 Queries

- LBAPs can advise on individual cases through phoning contact or by downloads from website.
- Need to filter queries and provide list of advisors.
- Mailbox would need ownership, possibly Sean McHugh feeding back to panel.
- Customers would be LBAPs, conservation professionals and knowledgeable general public.
- Local information required for local queries, general local contacts already listed.
- Suggest use of Linked in to start group for Freshwater Ecosystems element. Research, policy matters and legislation could be uploaded and gaps reviewed regularly, but need detail and contacts.
 - Role of FEG is expert advisory rather than lobby.
 - Need to avoid duplication of effort e.g. response to consultations.
 - There is no Welsh Government representative on the group
- Should Freshwater Group produce good practice information and add to website? **(NB)**

Action:

NB to remove word 'advise' from work plan but retain 'terms of reference'.
NB to discuss re-wording of policy and legislation with Tracey Lovering.

10.9 Monitoring

- Freshwater habitats monitored by existing plans, but there are some gaps and issues with headwaters.
- Local Record Centres do some co-ordinating of species and habitat surveys, but there may be issues with sharing IT.
- Pond net has a process for ponds and small lakes.
- Need to identify gaps in data that won't fall into WFD category or similar and add a line of text to suggest what needs to be done.
- Also need to liaise with Species Expert Groups re. species issues not picked up elsewhere and what is/is not being done. Possible species/habitat conflicts eg. ponds/Great Crested Newts.

10.10 Forestry

- Forest resource planning has started, Helen Cariss is contact.
- LIFE & sites teams will review actions for key sites.

10.11 Designations

- More info should be available re. new designations and extension of sites with no current protection, especially sites for freshwater birds. Example two lakes on Cadair Idris. **ALIJ** noted reluctance to designate new sites.

10.12 Data bases: Freshwater Group does not hold databases apart from priority mapping.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 Cypermethrin: Still under investigation. A workshop held in March was well-attended. Presentation notes will be available shortly on NRW website.

Action: **BS** to circulate copy of notes from meeting.

11.2 Retirement: **BS** will have retired by time of next meeting.

12. Date of Next Meeting

18 September 2014

