

## Draft Minutes Wales Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group Meeting WBPSG19 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013, The Environment Centre, Swansea

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
Matthew Quinn (Chair)	Welsh Government
Melanie Dodd	ALGE
Alys Edwards	WBP
Sean McHugh	WBP
Tracey Lovering	WBP
Mike Wilson	National Museum Wales
Clive Walmsley	Climate Change Commission Wales/ CCW
Stephen Bromley	Groundwork Wales
Hazel Drewett	CCW
Deborah Hill	City and County of Swansea/WLGA
Neville Rookes	WLGA
Chris Tucker	FCW
Adam Rowe	Welsh LRCs
Nigel Ajax-Lewis	WEL/Wildlife Trusts Wales
Laura Palmer	Cardiff City Council

### Apologies

Name	Organisation
Mike Bruford	Cardiff University
Sean Christian	WEL/RSPB
Glenda Thomas	FWAG
Chris Mills	Environment Agency
Shaun Russell	Wales Environment Research Hub (WERH)
David Jenkins	Coed Cymru
David Parker	CCW
Amanda Davies	ALGE
Helen Buckingham	National Trust
Clare Burrows	CCW
Dusi Thomas	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
Steve Spode	Welsh Government
Lizzie Webster	North Wales LBAPs
Danielle Fry	South Wales LBAPs
Lynda Warren	Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership
Matthew Howells	Dyfed Powys Police
Jo Mullet	City and County of Swansea

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Matthew Quinn chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees and thanked them for their continuing work supporting the partnership. A number of attendees have sent apologies for the meeting and therefore it may be necessary to defer a number of decisions until after the inaugural meeting of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB).

## 2. Update: Wales Biodiversity Implementation Framework

Matthew thanked attendees for the comments received on John Watkins paper tabled at WBP SG18. Feedback from the consultation on the Welsh Government paper 'Adoption of the Wales Biodiversity Framework' has been delayed until after the initial meeting of the WBSB, which will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at Garwnant. A revised version of the framework incorporating comments will be taken to the WBSB meeting in March.. The overall aim of the framework is to provide governance, a clear line of reporting and the establishment of work programmes. The initial WBSB meeting will discuss current structures and remit of WBP and future delivery mechanisms.

There is a need to collectively decide on appropriate membership of the Biodiversity Strategy Board and. At present membership of the Strategy Board is being worked up, and a list of invites will be circulated to WBP Steering Group Members when available. Membership of the WBSB is aimed at chief executive level and will consider drawing members from the current Living Wales Reference Group to ensure appropriate representation. Local representation of the WBSB needs to be firmed up. WBP are invited to comment or suggest representation once the WBSB invite is circulated.

Matthew confirmed that discussions are also on-going with the Living Wales team in Welsh Government, to ensure linkages with the Living Wales programme.

### Discussion

A discussion followed around the intention of the review and how comments, provided to Welsh Government in December, would be addressed. Matthew reiterated that the aim of the review was to clarify the role and scope of WBP, and where it receives its operational instruction, providing the partnership with a clear mandate within which to operate and ensuring this is understood and agreed by all. The establishment of the WBSB will define the detail of the remaining structure and would be responsible for developing a mandate for the WBP Groups.

The role of the WBSB will be to guide the work of the WBP and ensure action needed is developed in co-production. Matthew reiterated that there is no intention to bypass communication from the local level to WG and this needs to be maintained. The intention is to include WBP representation on the WBSB.

Concerns were raised that under the proposed structure the replacement for the Outcome 21 (OC21) group appears to focus solely on N2K and SSSIs, with no reference to local sites, which are also under the remit of this group. *“Sites of international, Welsh and local importance are in favourable condition to support the species and habitats for which they have been identified”*

The need to address issues raised by the Marine Ecosystem Group was reiterated and it is vital that the revised framework addresses this, ensuring stronger links with the Marine and Fisheries teams within Welsh Government and their work programme.

The issue of membership was discussed at length. Concerns were raised over the potential lack of representation from local partnerships, and for those organisations such as the LRCs or ALGE where no overarching Chief Executive or Director is present. There is also a need to avoid duplication as many organisations may be unable to be represented at all levels in the new structure. Representation by Biodiversity Champion on the Biodiversity Strategy Board was raised to aid greater understanding of the role of WBP and issues around biodiversity at cabinet level within local authorities. Attendees agreed there is a need to ensure advice and support from local staff feeds into decision making. Landowner representation on WBP was mentioned as an area for consideration.

Attendees agreed that setting a suitable remit for WBP and associated groups will be critical, as this remit will drive the structure. It was suggested that a future role for a Steering Group could be gathering information at a local level and from WBP Groups etc. and making sense of it at a delivery level and feeding this back to the Biodiversity Strategy Board.

Questions were raised over the availability of WBSB papers prior to the meeting. Matthew noted that working styles need to be determined but he would look at this.

- ACTION 1.** Welsh Government to share draft membership list for initial meeting of the WBSB
- ACTION 2.** SG members to review draft membership, identify possible gaps and make suggestions to be considered by the first meeting of WBSB..

### 3. s42 Revisions

Hazel Drewett presented the paper on behalf of Clare Burrows who was unable to attend. A paper (WBPSG18 paper 05) outlining a proposal to amend the Section 42 list to include ffridd (coedcae, upland fringe) as a new habitat was presented to WBP Steering Group on 14 November 2012. The proposal addresses a key gap in the list of priority

habitats for Wales - the addition of ffridd as a habitat of principal importance to biodiversity conservation in Wales.

The previous proposal had been favourably received however there were concerns over the wider implication of addition of ffridd to the s42 list. Following November's meeting the issues have been reconsidered and CCW's Directors' Team opinion was also sought. The Directors' Team endorsed the proposal to amend the Section 42 list to include ffridd habitat as they consider that there is a good evidence base to support the inclusion of this valuable habitat on the list.

The technical information supporting the addition of ffridd was considered previously, this, along with the clarity provided in the paper over the remit of the s42 list was felt to be adequate to make a decision over the principal importance of the habitat for conserving biodiversity in Wales. Mosaic habitats, such as Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land (OMHoPDL) have been added previously, and therefore set a precedent for habitats of this type to be included.

## **Discussion**

A discussion followed around the merit of adding ffridd as a s42 habitat. Concerns were raised over the lack of a tight definition for ffridd, which may be inadequate to defend through planning, and uncertainty over which broad habitat type it would sit under. It was noted that work on a definition for OMHoPDL has only been undertaken following its inclusion on the UK BAP priority list, and ffridd could potentially follow this scenario.

Inclusion on the s42 list does not exclude development but rather ensures decision-makers have regard to ffridd and consider its importance, furthering conservation by ensuring compensation and mitigation would be provided as a result of any planning impacts. Inclusion on the list also ensures other benefits such as consideration by decisions making bodies, forward planning, funding opportunities, exploring contribution to an ecosystems approach, development of agri-environment options etc. all of which would have a positive impact on ffridd.

It was noted that amending the s42 list to include the reason for addition of species and habitats (such as awareness arising, further research etc.) would be beneficial and make defending species and habitats easier. A similar approach is already taken in England.

Ffridd is already included as an LBAP habitat in some Local Authorities, such as Caerphilly, where ffridd is considered at a landscape scale. Nigel Ajax-Lewis noted that the Wildlife Trusts are supportive of proposal but there is concern about it swallowing up other priority habitats such as Inland Rock and Scree, which often occur in the same location.

As well as definition, we need to be clear about implications of adding it to the list. If habitat definition is not sufficiently tight it could impinge on wider environment

government policies. It was noted that that the recognition of ffridd does not exclude possibility of future woodland creation.

Opportunities exist, through the development of the Environment Bill, to be clearer about the requirements and scope of the s42 list. Ffridd habitat also provides a good test case for application of the ecosystems approach through the Living Wales programme and in the development of Natural Resources Wales.

**Decision point:** The majority of the attendees endorsed the proposal to amend the s42 list to include ffridd.

**Decision point:** Welsh Government agreed to take the amendment to the Minister for official approval and action, following further work by CCW around the definition and consideration by CCW Council.

**ACTION 3.** Hazel Drewett to ask for inclusion of a tighter definition and guidance on management process to accompany proposal and circulate to WBP Steering Group.

**ACTION 4.** Hazel Drewett to explore outcome of CCW Council Meeting, and include decision as part of advice on addition of ffridd.

#### 4. WBP Wales-level Groups Annual Reporting

Tracey Lovering introduced the paper, which is provided annually following contribution from the WBP Wales-level Groups. Reports from the individual groups can be found in the Annex, which includes more detail on work of the individual groups.

Over the past few months the Wales level groups have undertaken a varied work programme including identification of evidence gaps and building links with academic institutions throughout Wales, a process which the WBP Wales-level Groups have contributed significantly.

Work has also continued around the identification of priority areas and continued workshops with LBAPs across Wales to further communicate this work and stimulate and support project development.

Details of this work, including maps and areas synopsis has been added to the recently refreshed WBP website under the individual group pages and for a number of groups (Upland, Coastal, Enclosed Farmland and Lowland Grassland and Heathland) have also been added to the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). A number of groups are yet to complete this work and this should be prioritised for the coming year

A significant amount of time was also contributed by the WBP Groups to assess applications for the 2012/13 Ecosystem Resilience and Diversity Funding (ERD).

Successful projects are now drawing to a close and there is a need to encourage groups to work with organisations and groups on project development in advance of future funding to ensure the quality of project proposals.

## Discussion

A discussion followed around some of the key issues highlighted within the paper.

Group membership and representation/buy in from partner organisation remains an issue and is often inadequate. For CCW staff contribution to WBP Groups is included in job descriptions, however this is not the case for some partner organisations and a push is required from senior management in individual organisations and Welsh Government to ensure work is prioritised within relevant departments. The possibility of securing buy in through conditions in funding letters from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was suggested as one mechanism to address this.

Matthew Quinn confirmed that the aspiration is to have increased funding going in to this area of work, as evidenced by Welsh Governments continued commitment to the ERD funds. The issue of resource should be addressed by the WBSB and the proposed development of a Wales Biodiversity Strategy which will raise profile of the work and ensure targets/work is included in strategic planning etc.

The Marine Ecosystem Group has a very wide scope in comparison to the terrestrial & freshwater ecosystem groups, covering numerous ecosystems from marine intertidal to offshore benthic habitats and species and at present faces an uncertain future and requires stronger links with Marine/Fisheries Teams in Welsh Government. A specific role exists for Welsh Government to address the current issues and identify ways forward. The importance of Local sites as a resource in Wales was also highlighted.

**Decision point:** Attendees welcomed the paper and the overview of work undertaken and challenges encountered and agreed to raise the profile of WBP work within their individual organisations.

**Decision point:** Attendees supported the continued work of the Marine Ecosystem Group and agreed that dialogue should be sought with relevant Welsh Government departments to ensure continuation of the group.

**ACTION 5.** Matthew Quinn to raise current issues with the Marine Ecosystem Group with the Marine and Fisheries Teams in Welsh Government and suggest a meeting between relevant staff and new Chairs of the group to discuss ways forward.

**ACTION 6.** Tracey Lovering to share material with Welsh Government for use at inaugural WBSB meeting.

**ACTION 7.** WBP Support Team to collate information on WBP Groups to include details of current membership, Chairs, Terms of Reference and forward work programmes and share with Welsh Government in advance of March meeting.

**ACTION 8.** Sean McHugh and Matthew Quinn to raise WBP Group remits/membership/work programme at the WBP Chairs Group Meeting

**ACTION 9.** John Watkins to ensure revised OC21 group includes reference to local sites and that this is picked up in revised structure.

## 5. WBP Planning and Budgeting

Sean McHugh introduced the paper, the aim of which is to highlight and seek support for the development of the WBP Conference programme, and to review and confirm WBP Budget proposals for 2013/14.

The 2013 WBP Conference will be held at Bangor University on the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> September, with a proposed theme of ‘Developing Ecological Networks – planning, integration and delivery for Wales’ Focusing on how we plan, integrate and deliver ecological networks in Wales. Chairs for both days have now been confirmed with Peter Matthews Chairing day 1 and Matthew Quinn Chairing Day 2.

The Environment Bill White Paper is likely to be published in the late autumn, and so will not be available for launch at the event, however the Wales Water Strategy may well have been published by September and could potentially provide input at the event.

### Discussion

A discussion followed around the proposed theme and potential speakers. Attendees were supportive of the theme and suggested a number of potential speakers including the Trunk Road Agency (TRA), Emyr Williams, Tim Pagella from Wales Environment Research Hub (WERH), Professor Jane Nemett, who is working on urban pollinators and pollinator networks and Jim Latham who could provide a remote sensing/connectivity mapping update. Additional suggested topics include LUCS woodland planting, the EU Strategy for Invasive Alien Species, CAP reform and use of social media to promote awareness of green working.

In order to provide a local perspective it was suggested that Geoff Hobbs from Bridgend County Borough Council be approached to provide a presentation on the Councils Green Infrastructure Project.

Marine issues will also need to be considered and could be covered by a separate marine symposium or considered in an afternoon session.

**Decision point:** The conference theme and outline was approved by attendees

**Decision point:** Attendees suggested a number of topics and potential speakers and workshops. Additional suggestions are welcome.

**Decision point:** Attendees agreed to circulate the WBP conference date & location within their individual organisations.

- ACTION 10.** Matthew Quinn to discuss proposal of a water/marine afternoon back to Welsh Government and feedback.
- ACTION 11.** ALL to send suggestions for potential speakers and workshops to Sean McHugh [smchugh@wtwales.org](mailto:smchugh@wtwales.org)
- ACTION 12.** Sean McHugh to further develop conference outline and circulate for comment.
- ACTION 13.** ALL to circulate date (18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> September) and location (Bangor) of WBP Conference 2013 to their networks.

## WBP Budgeting

Sean McHugh provided an overview of past and current CCW Funding of WBP. CCW grant aid for WBP activities in 2013/2014 is £100,000 covering the period 1 Apr 2013 - 31 March 2014. Approximately 70% of the WBP budget comprises overheads (salaries, hosting costs etc.) and 30% of the WBP budget is allocated to project costs.

The budget framework was outlined and discussion welcomed. Attendees commented that to date WBP had provided excellent value for money and approved both the fixed costs items and the broad project areas put forward in the paper.

Attendees also welcomed the work of the WBP Support Team and endorsed a 1.5% pay increase for 2013/14

**Decision point:** Attendees discussed and approved the budget framework as presented.

**Decision point:** Attendees supported the proposed project areas.

## 6. Papers to Note

### Paper to Note A: Wildlife Crime Update

**Decision Point:** The group considered the paper and continued to endorse the work of the Welsh Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group.

- ACTION 14.** WBP Support Team to circulate contact details of Ian Guilford replacement to WBP Wider Partnership.



## **Paper to Note B: South East Wales Local Wildlife Sites Project**

Melanie Dodd provided a brief introduction to the paper which outlines the proposed south east Wales Local Wildlife Sites Project. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) contain a large number of Annex 1 habitats and therefore the project, which would be led by the local Wildlife Trusts, has the potential to deliver significant gains.

A Project sub group has now been established in order to develop the evidence base and secure funding and support. However, a long development phase is envisaged in order to fully develop the detail of the project.

The project needs to reflect the ecosystems approach and inform the way of thinking

Attendees suggested that if habitat regeneration is already occurring on some sites as a by-product of other work which is being undertaken, such as flood defence schemes etc. there is potential to use this work as match funding to draw down additional funds.

**Decision Point:** Attendees endorsed a pilot project for a LWS system in South East Wales

**Decision Point:** Attendees agreed to support a funding application for the project and a letter of support from the WBP Chair can be provided on request

**Decision Point:** Attendees agreed to assist in identifying and securing funding for an initial 1-year development phase and suggested that the ERD Funds for 2013/14 could be utilised if available again next financial year.

**Decision Point:** Attendees supported the proposal to seek longer term funding for a pilot project.

## **Paper to Note C: Taxonomy and Identification Training: Assessing Needs and Provision in Wales**

Mike Wilson provided a brief overview of the paper in Graham Oliver's absence. The paper restates the intention, initially outlined at WBPSG18 (November 2012) to complete a survey of taxonomic training needs and provision in Wales via an electronic questionnaire. Progress has been halted since last meeting as a result of restructuring proposals at the museum.

**Decision point:** A task and finish group has been established to progress this work and additional attendees are welcomed.

**Decision point:** Attendees agreed that this is an important area of work and approved the proposal.

**Decision point:** WBP members are encouraged to engage with the process and respond to requests for information when circulated.

**ACTION 15.** ALL to engage with museum questionnaire once circulated.  
**ACTION 16.** Graham Oliver to provide further clarification on how this review will happen in practice.

### **Paper to Note D: WBP Awareness Raising Activities**

**Decision Point:** Attendees agreed to circulate the WBW date (8th – 16th June) to their networks

**Decision Point:** Attendees agreed to review the activity update/Natures Calendar and look for links and event ideas to which they can contribute.

**Decision Point:** Attendees to circulate details of any nature-based events planned, to their local LBAP and WBP ([smchugh@wtwales.org](mailto:smchugh@wtwales.org)) for publicity purposes.

**ACTION 17.** ALL to circulate the WBW date (8th – 16th June) to their networks  
**ACTION 18.** ALL to review the activity update/Natures Calendar and look for links and event ideas to which they can contribute.  
**ACTION 19.** ALL to circulate details of any nature-based events planned, to their local LBAP and WBP [smchugh@wtwales.org](mailto:smchugh@wtwales.org) for publicity purposes.

### **7. Feedback from Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership (WCMP)**

WCMP is hosting 2 workshops on 27 March, the details of which are still be put together by the main participants. The first is a Bathing Water Workshop which is being led by MCS under the instigation of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. The second is a workshop on the Wales Coastal Directory Project commissioned by the Marine Team in Welsh Government; it will be led by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) and Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) who are carried out the research. At the end of the event a brief update will be provided on the future direction of WCMP.

### **8. Four Countries Update**

The Welsh Government representative at the Four Countries meeting was unable to attend and therefore no update was available

## 9. Minutes and Actions from WBPSG18

The minutes from the SG17 meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

- ACTION 20.** Matthew Quinn to discuss Biodiversity Champion workshop/engagement with WLGA and Welsh Government colleagues and take forward.
- ACTION 21.** Matthew Quinn and Neville Rookes to discuss engagement with Biodiversity Champions at upcoming Environment Directors meeting.

## 10. AOB

Matthew enquired about the state of financial and staffing issues across Wales. Laura Palmer updated attendees on the situation in Cardiff Council where proposals are in place to cut both the Ecologist and Tree Officer posts from two to one and a suggestion to coordinate regulatory services with Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils.

- ACTION 22.** WBP support team to develop picture of where LAs are in terms of staffing and funding cuts etc. and forward to Welsh Government.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is currently developing their Single Integrated Plan, the biodiversity element of which needs a significant amount of work. The document is available online <http://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/communityplanning/content/single-plan> and comments would be welcome.

Clive Walmsley updated attendees on a NERC Knowledge Exchange project initiated by Professor Chris Thomas at York University with support from CCW, along with the other Country Agencies, CEH and a wide range of NGOs involved in collecting biodiversity monitoring data. The project demonstrates the importance of protected sites under a changing climate and sought to explore the importance of protected areas (SSSIs) across GB for colonisation by dispersing species at their northern range boundary.

- ACTION 23.** Alys Edwards to circulate Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) paper and summary document to WBP members.

## 11. Date of Next Meeting:

**SG20:** The date for future WBP Steering Group meetings are yet to be set.

Matthew thanked everyone for their participation and continued support.