

WBP Coastal Ecosystem Group Meeting 14 Actions NRW Offices Newtown

21st January 2016

Present: Angus Garbutt Chair (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology); Emmer Litt (NRW); Sean McHugh (WBP); Julie Creer (NRW); Duncan Ludlow (NRW); Heather Lewis (NRW); Alan –Kearsley Evans (National Trust); Martin Skov (Bangor University); Mark Underhill (RSPB Cymru / WEL);

Apologies: Mark Winder (Swansea CBC); Wendy Harris (Swansea University); Sarah Mellor (Pembrokeshire Coast NPA); Rick Park (NRW)

1. Introduction

Angus welcomed everyone to the meeting; the meeting is an opportunity to revisit the direction of the group and this will inform the CEG work programme. Also CEG need a clear idea on how the groups engages with the Evidence Gaps Project and the new structure identified by the Wales Biodiversity Framework. The Wales Biodiversity Partnership Strategy Board is designing the governance structure (Wales Biodiversity Framework) and the overall fit of the ‘expert groups’ in the structure. In the interim, the CEG is represented at the WBP Chairs Meeting which brings all the ecosystem chairs and species expert chairs together.

Sean gave a quick update on the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) launched in December 2015. The key points are listed below. The NRP will have a formal launch in the spring.

Nature Recovery Plan for Wales

The Nature Recovery Plan for Wales is aimed at addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by:

- putting nature at the heart of our decision-making
- increasing the resilience of our natural environment
- taking specific action for habitats and species.

It sets out how Wales will deliver the commitments of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the decline in our biodiversity by 2020 and then reverse that decline.

Part 1

The Strategy for Nature sets out:

- our commitment to biodiversity in Wales
- the issues we need to address and our objectives for action.

It sets out how our current and proposed action, particularly through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and through the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, will contribute to reversing the loss of biodiversity in Wales.

Part 2

The Action Plan sets out those actions which have been specifically identified to meet our objectives to reverse the decline of biodiversity. Working groups for each objective will now further develop the detail under each of these actions, putting in place:

- targets and milestones
- identifying appropriate funding mechanisms
- taking actions forward as appropriate.

Part 3

(In development) the Nature Recovery Framework, will show:

- the governance structure for the Nature Recovery Plan
- the roles and responsibilities of everybody involved in the delivery of action for biodiversity in Wales
- the accountability measures in place to ensure delivery.

2. Group updates

Martin Skov Ocean Sciences Bangor University

Martin's work includes the investigation of ecosystem services and function; coastal wetlands (including saltmarsh); involvement in the CBESS Project- a NERC funded project focused on biodiversity, ecosystem services in mudflat and saltmarsh habitats. One of the outputs will be a predictive tool matching NVC communities with other characteristics including carbon storage to deliver ecosystem services. Martin is also involved with the Resil Coast project again focused on saltmarsh habitats and looking at what underpins 'resilience', gathering historical and contemporary data to build a picture of saltmarsh change over time. The project will integrate theory with practical elements.

Emmer Litt, NRW

Emmer presented to the group the progress of the sand dune rejuvenation programme in Wales. Highlights include a 1% increase in bare sand created at Newborough in Anglesey as part of 3 dune rejuvenation works covering 18.5Ha. The positioning of the 'notches' connecting the dunes to the sea has helped funnel sand into the system. At Kenfig, 3 phases of work have resulted in 10.2Ha of dune rejuvenation and at Merthyr Mawr 8.5Ha.

Mark Underhill RSPB Cymru

Mark introduced himself to the group. His background is in reserve management and his current work is focused on creating coastal wetlands across Wales as part of a programme outlined in RSPBs

Wales' strategy. Sites, particularly in south Wales are welcome to complement the success in north Wales e.g. Maltraeth Marsh on Anglesey where 'booming' bittern was recorded in the summer.

Mark has produced an outline of the project which will be circulated to CEG members with the minutes.

Heather Lewis NRW

Heather is focused on salt marsh and sea cliff habitats and is involved with the National Habitat Creation Programme. Sites across Wales are being looked as possibilities with two sites in north Wales offering good potential. Working also on the SoNNaR Report and Cardiff Lagoon scoping which if it goes ahead could potentially affect saltmarsh sites in the Severn Estuary. A tender for an NVC contract to map coastal cliff habitat in the St David's area (Pembrokeshire) is live focusing on sites receiving management.

Julie Creer NRW

A HLF bid (£5m) is being developed in partnership with Natural England with the potential for Scotland and Ireland to join. The project is focused on sand dune rejuvenation and 5 potential sites identified in Wales with another 20 sites across the UK. This could then form part of a bigger LIFE bid (£8-10m) though match funding could potentially be an issue. Lessons learnt from the sand dune rejuvenation in Wales would feed into the bid. Important to note that sites will have different drivers e.g nature conservation; recreation etc.

SSSI guidelines are being revamped and NRW are working with Natural England on the project. No major issues envisaged- the main change will be in the 'areas of search' and the guidelines will look at coastal cells as a whole which will take into account potential coastal realignment. The new guidelines will be subject to consultation.

Alan Kearsley-Evans National Trust Wales

National Trust (NT) is focused on 5 coastal sites across wales; Cwm Ivy; Mochras; Newgale; and Harlech. Mochras is a potential site for coastal realignment and at Cwm Ivy which CEG visited back in June, the sea wall is still eroding. Lessons learnt from the Cwm Ivy realignment would be useful as a case study. Discussions are ongoing at Newgale with respect to the coastal road, NT don't own all the land in the area but own land where the road could be potentially diverted to. At Whiteford on Gower, the Plantlife project is due to start; Alan will chase with Plantlife on progress to date. As part of the project Neptune anniversary, NT held a conference in Swansea (Future for our Coasts), Alan will forward proceedings to the group.

Duncan Ludlow NRW

No funding this year for the sand dune rejuvenation work at Merthyr Mawr. Looking at the potential of a translocation of rabbits to Merthyr Mawr to help with the grazing (potential project proposal); a few cattle are on site but additional grazing would help.

Angus Garbutt, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Angus is involved with the CBESS project (mentioned earlier). He is also investigating a wider project with other NERC organisations to link expertise across the UK coast. There is a need for joined up monitoring that brings the various data sets together under a common framework. Angus is also working on an internal project to examine historic data to measure coastal change over time with the aim of recruiting two staff members to deliver the project.

3. Membership Review

The group discussed membership and recognised that CEG is an excellent network forum and source of expertise covering coastal biodiversity and coastal physical processes. The group also promotes partnership working and project collaboration. Recognised there is a need to have representation across Wales e.g at North Wales coastal sites and for representation from the NRW technical specialists based in NRW's Natural Resources Management Team. Heather attended the WBP Chairs meeting which discussed the WBP habitat mapping project. A clear vision for the work was not forthcoming but there is potential to link the priority mapping working with the Prioritised Improvement Plans (covering Natura 2000 sites) and evidence gap work. CEG could also provide expertise in refining the priority coastal habitat maps but it was recognised that further clarity required on the direction the priority habitat work is heading.

Academic representation on the group to engage with the Evidence Gaps project is extremely useful and Martin Skov and Angus will lead for CEG on this. The group has the expertise to build a national picture of biodiversity and ecosystems on the Welsh coast with the core principle centred on biodiversity. A common framework for the CEG meetings would be useful as well as member issues/updates in advance of meetings. The group could operate a core membership and a corresponding membership; the latter could feed in issues and attend if presenting an agenda item or have a specific interest in an agenda item. It would be helpful if members who are unable to attend meetings are able to suggest a replacement.

In terms of the CEG work programme update, the work on the evidence gaps can feed into the work programme.

4. Evidence Gaps

Members identified potential project proposals during their general update and were encouraged to follow this up and submit proposals. Angus called on the group to engage with the project which has high level support and a high profile launch. Knowledge gaps have the potential to be plugged at a local level through to a strategic level. Undergraduate projects together with projects with a strategic focus are welcomed. Details are listed on the WBP website where there is a proforma for potential projects. Martin can work with academic institutions to help them engage with the project and

broaden its reach and engage with sand dune experts. Heather will work with Martin in identifying NRW evidence gaps.

5. Scoping the South Wales Wetland vision – Mark Underhill RSPB

RSPB’s vision for wetland in Wales covers the next 50 years (2065). The focus is largely on south and west Wales (Chepstow to Aberteiffi). The project is looking at landscape-scale delivery in addition to smaller projects incorporating biodiversity and economic benefits. Project delivery through NGO’s, businesses and funds allocated to coastal risk management. RSPB will work with partners to produce opportunity mapping and build consensus around the best opportunities. A more detailed outline of the project is attached to the actions from the meeting.

6. Date of next meeting

The group will aim to meet on July 6th in north Wales, details to be announced. The meeting will focus on vegetated shingle.

Actions

No.	Actions	Who	By	Comments
1	WBP Evidence Gaps Project	ALL	On going	All CEG members to review the information around the coastal evidence gaps, refine and prioritise gaps and identify new gaps as appropriate using the proposal form on the WBP website. All updates to be forwarded to Angus & Martin. Details of evidence gaps and project proposals are on the WBP website. Link: http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/WBP-Evidence-Gaps-Project
2	WBP Evidence Gaps Project	Martin Skov	On going	Martin to act as a representative to publicise the evidence gaps work with academic institutions
3	Nature Recovery Plan	Sean		Send Nature Recovery Plan to CEG
4	Future Coast conference	Alan		Alan to send Future Coast conference proceedings to CEG
5	Membership review	Sean All	On going	Sean to email CEG members who are not currently active All to canvas colleagues to ensure Wales-wide coverage of coastal issues & NRW to approach technical specialists
6	Meeting format	Angus		Angus to produce a framework outlining format for future meetings
Previous Actions update				

	Coastal vegetated shingle priority areas		On hold	NRW coastal team will take this forward
	Priority Habitat Map Integration		On hold	This work is on hold. NRW coastal team can take this forward if the project restarts.