

WBP Coastal Ecosystem Group 13th Meeting June 26th 2015

Cwm Ivy Lodge, Gower

Present: Angus Garbutt Chair (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology); Emmer Litt (NRW); Sean McHugh (WBP); Julie Creer (NRW); Alan –Kearsley Evans (National Trust); Mark Winder (Swansea CBC); Simeon Jones (Carmarthenshire County Council); Deborah Sazer (Environmental Consultant/Swansea CBC)

Apologies: Heather Lewis (NRW); Nick Edwards (NRW); Olivia Burgess (Crown Estates); Mark Underhill (WEL/RSPB Cymru); Martin Skov (Bangor University); Sarah Mellor (Pembrokeshire Coast NPA); Jenni Hartley (Welsh Government); Chris Wynne (North Wales Wildlife Trust); Duncan Ludlow (NRW); Shelagh Malham (Bangor University); Mike Howe (NRW).

1. Introduction

Angus welcomed everyone to the meeting; the main focus today is on the field visit to see the breached sea wall at Cwm Ivy. Operational items (work plan/membership/Chairs actions) will be deferred to the autumn meeting. Angus is the new chair of CEG & takes over from Mike Howe and Emmer Litt who stepped in as interim chairs until a permanent chair was appointed. The group thanks Mike and Emmer for steering the group through the transition. The group is in transition period in that The REF Funding Panels are not active and the ecosystem groups did not participate in the Nature Funding panel (though they did attend workshops designed to bring potential project partners together). The Wales Biodiversity Partnership Strategy Board is designing the governance structure and the overall fit of the ‘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.

2. Evidence Gaps

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. The prioritisation of the evidence gaps identified by CEG will need to be addressed and the academic representatives on the group could take a lead on this. CEG could also identify an academic representative from each university to encourage greater engagement. The group discussed the overall project and will suggest projects, and were in favour of ‘keeping it simple. There was a consensus from members of the group present that baseline monitoring projects in particular were required for some systems and locations which add to the knowledge base and provide evidence. WG project funding for biodiversity projects have the potential to include monitoring was also mentioned, details will be sent out to CEG when available.

3. Group updates

Mark Winder, City & County Swansea. Swansea LBAP are currently rewriting the coastal HAPS & SAPS. A major cotoneaster removal project is nearing completion on the Gower Coast (REF funded) with a good success rate and it will encourage flora and fauna to establish on the cleared sites. Monitoring will now take place and top up treatment as it’s not known how much cotoneaster will

return. Julie mentioned a study on the Great Orme that could help and she will send Alan/Mark details.

The proposed tidal lagoon in Swansea Bay has received a large amount input from NRW and City & County of Swansea.

Simeon Jones Carmarthenshire CC

The Plantlife WREN Bid with National Trust, MOD, NRW, National Trust and Carmarthenshire CC focused on the Carmarthen Bay dunes was successful. The bid outlines a 248k project over 4 years at 4 sites and includes removal of sea buckthorn and conifers from dune habitats at Pembro, Whiteford and Pendine. The bid also contains provisions for hydrological and topographic surveys, flora and fauna surveys, grazing infrastructure and some sand remobilisation activity at selected sites.

Alan Kearsely-Evans, National Trust Wales

Alan mentioned the conifer removal at Whiteford including de-stumping. Plantlife will appoint a project officer for the WREN project mentioned above. The officer will be required to obtain a felling licence which may be challenging due to the national tree planting targets. Other updates include a potential realignment and costal compensation project on the River Taff in Carmarthenshire and the Ceredigion coastal vegetated slopes project is approximately half way through.

Julie Creer, NRW.

Heather Lewis (NRW/CEG) has an NVC monitoring project out to contract at St David's, Pembrokeshire. Clogwyni Penllyn: Nature Funded project ongoing – funding capital works to get grazing management and scrub control where needed. Efforts are being made at the moment to highlight other areas where connectivity can be improved both on and off protected sites, information is ready if further funding can be obtained in the future. Potential areas in north Wales have been scoped for coastal realignment. *Frankenia laevis* (Sea-heath) is a native of eastern England and is potentially invasive in Wales. The Newborough Warren sand dune rejuvenation contracts are being managed with input from Mike Howe, there has been some progress but some issues remain. A potential UK LIFE coastal project is being discussed and a meeting will take place probably at Kenfig in September.

Emmer Litt, NRW

Dune rejuvenation works have taken place at various sites in Wales as mentioned in previous updates. The project will now take stock and monitor the results. Newborough Warren celebrates its 60th birthday this year and various events are planned. Shingle replenishment will shortly commence place at Traeth Pensarn which is an important breeding area for Little Tern. A National Habitat Creation Programme (NHCP) scheme will take place at Morfa Friog shortly and City & County of Swansea have released a guide to Swansea Bay which gives an overview of the bay and covers coastal and marine habitats and species. The Natura 2000 Life project in Wales will put in place a Priority Implementation Plan whereby priorities identified across N2K sites and will be cross-referenced when funding bids are received.

Angus Garbutt, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

CBESS project is active. £2.5m project focusing on saltmarsh and mudflat habitats delivering biodiversity and ecosystem services with trials in Morecombe Bay and Essex and a trial planned for Wales. One of the outputs will be a predictive tool matching NVC communities with other characteristics to deliver ecosystem services. A workshop in the autumn will present findings to date. The Resil Coast project again focused on saltmarsh is gathering historical and contemporary data to build a picture of saltmarsh change over time. The project will integrate theory with practical elements.

4. AOB

The WBP annual 2-day conference will take place on 9-10 September in Aberystwyth. Details will be sent to the group when available.

5. Date of next meeting

The group will aim to meet in November 2015.

Field excursion to Cwm Ivy

At Cwm Ivy, the sea wall breached naturally in the winter 2013/ early 2014 and is now part of the managed coastal realignment establishing an area 40Ha of embryonic saltmarsh. A combination of storms, rain and tidal surge undermined the wall and a channel developed which has grown over time and is now around 3m. This is probably the maximum extent of the breach until the sea wall itself slumps away. The breached area will be separated from Llanridian Marsh SAC by fencing to prevent over grazing.

Soon after the breach, saltmarsh plants colonised including scurvy grass, *Salicornia*, sea blite, sea lavender, and thrift. Otters have utilised the developing saltmarsh and breeding lapwings are present. There are plans to erect an osprey platform in the next few weeks. A management plan and monitoring regime will be prepared for the site. National Trust has worked with the community during this period of change and has largely received a positive reaction. The sea wall was also the coastal path which is now diverted.



CEG members at Cwm Ivy. The area to the right is the developing saltmarsh



Left to right: Seawall breach. Saltmarsh development on landward side (right)



Salicornia and sea blite established on the Cwm Ivy saltmarsh

Video of sea wall breach at Cwm Ivy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFVXYnx_iEk

CEG would like to thank National Trust Wales and Alan in particular for arranging the use of the lodge at Cwm Ivy and for leading the field visit.

Actions

No.	Actions	Who	By	Comments
1	WBP Evidence Gaps Project	ALL	October 2015	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 & Sean. Details of evidence gaps and project proposals are on the WBP website. Link: http://biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/WBP-Evidence-Gaps-Project
2	WBP Evidence Gaps Project	Angus	October 2015	Angus to canvas for a coastal academic representative from Aberystwyth University.
3	WG Project Funding award	Sean	When available	Details of the project funding have yet to be announced. Details of WG core funding recipients have just been published. Link: http://gov.wales/newsroom/environmentandcountryside/2015/150529-22m-of-funding-for-environment-and-sustainable-development-organisations-in-wales/?lang=en
4	Cotoneaster	Julie	When available	Julie to share the project report from the Great Orme cotoneaster removal project with CEG
Previous Actions update				
	Coastal vegetated shingle priority areas		On hold	NRW coastal team will take this forward
	Sand dune Workshop Proceedings to be made available		On hold	Proceedings have yet to be finalised and published. Will monitor and chase up with NRW coastal ecologists
	Priority Habitat Map Integration		On hold	NRW coastal team will take this forward
	CEG work plan CEG Membership	All		CEG to review the Plan and discuss in 2015 winter meeting Heather and Julie to fine tune NRW representation, LBAP and WG membership to be reviewed by Sean. Chris will canvass Wildlife Trusts to seek a deputy representative.
	Proposed sand dune movement & hydrology project at	EL	Ongoing	Emmer will investigate and update the group at the next meeting

	Llangennith			
	Sea Cliff Symposium			Proceedings have yet to be finalised and published. Will monitor and chase up
	Integrated Management of Coastal Dunes conference			Proceedings have yet to be finalised and published. Will monitor and chase up