

WBP Coastal Ecosystem Group 10th Meeting 22nd January 2014, NRW/WG Offices, Aberystwth

Present: Mike Howe (NRW) Joint Chair; Emmer Litt (NRW) Joint Chair ; Sean McHugh (WBP); Alan Kearsley-Evans (National Trust); Nick Edwards (NRW); Duncan Ludlow (NRW); Chris Wynne (Wildlife Trusts Wales) via teleconference

Apologies: Jane Hodges (Pembrokeshire Coast NPA); John Clark (WEL/RSPB Cymru); Matty Murphy (NRW); Mark Winder (Swansea CBC); Quentin Grimley (NRW); Ant Rogers (Pembrokeshire CC).

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the July 2013 meeting were accepted as a true record.

The meeting did not follow the original agenda order. The National Habitat Creation Programme item (Rick Park) was postponed until the Summer CEG meeting where it's hoped Olivia Burgess (Crown Estates) can join the meeting.

2. Mike informed the group that Peter Rhind (ex Chair of CEG) has taken early severance from his role at NRW and it was unlikely NRW would fill the position 'like for like'. In the interim Mike & Emmer would co-chair until the situation is clearer. On behalf of CEG, our thanks are extended to Peter for all his work and we wish him well in his future projects.
3. Group Updates. Recording coastal environmental change report preparation. Emmer introduced the item. In light of the coastal flooding and coastal defence breaching during the recent storms, WG have asked NRW to collate this information. Focus on 'hard defences' but important we capture 'soft defences', dunes, shingle ridges etc. in this work. It will be followed by a further review Feb/March which will help in prioritising coastal repairs/modifications. Records of coastal storm damage were outlined by the group including: shingle washout at Traeth Pensarn (Conwy); major beach slumps at Rhossilli & sea wall damage at Cwm Ivy (both Gower); flooding at Newgale with sea water overtopping the shingle ridge & soft cliff slumping at Aberiddi & Abermawr (all Pembs); sea water inundation at Whiteford Burrows (Gower) but not as far as the *Liparis loeselii* re-introduction site; cliff erosion at Merthyr Mawr Warren (Bridgend) & some beach sand removal; widening of notches at Kenfig (Bridgend)- a positive effect which will assist dune mobilisation; Cemyln (Anglesey) – shingle ridge over washed & shingle ridge movement inland; beach erosion near key lapwing site at Morfa Madryn (Conwy); dune erosion at Newborough Warren (Anglesey) & viewing platform washed away; sand dune breaches at Talacre Warren (Flintshire); dune erosion at Morfa Harlech & Morfa Dyffryn (Gwynedd); cliff erosion at Whitesands Bay (Pembs) which threaten rare water beetle (*Ochthebius poweri*) living in soft cliff seepages; and cliff erosion which threatens the mason bee *Osmia xanthomelana* at Porth Neigwl (Gwynedd).

The storms have had an obvious effect on the Wales Coast Path and Quentin Grimley (NRW) is producing a synthesis which will be added to the final report. The reporting to WG will happen in two phases. The first will be by the end of January, which will give WG the headlines about what happened where. A second more detailed phase will follow and the detail of exactly what that might include will depend on the scale and locations of change recorded.

4. Evidence Gaps. CEG needs to review & refine evidence gaps work; suggestions included the saltmarsh projects Rick Park (NRW) is involved with as part of the National Habitat Creation Programme; others include vegetated shingle dynamics at Pensarn and rates of erosion of soft cliff at various sites. Emmer & Mike will take forward with Angus & Rick in readiness for the Academics spring seminar in Cardiff.. All to review the evidence gaps projects page and suggest projects/evidence gaps.
5. REF. Two successful projects in the latest round. Swansea University investigating fungal- plant rhizome interactions & ecosystem functioning in coastal dunes (Mike Howe is NRW lead officer) and Carmarthenshire CC project removing sea buckthorn at Pembrey (NRW lead officers – Helen Howells & Glyn Lloyd Jones) . There is also a south Gower project removing cotoneaster from vegetated coastal slope- this project went through the INNS route. In terms of the £6m nature fund, Mike attended a funding workshop in Llandudno Junction but did not receive any coastal queries at the workshop. CEG members present have submitted ideas to the funds involving coastal sand dune regeneration, work on Gower and at Freshwater East (Pembs) and various projects in north Wales.
6. Article 17 Reporting. Condition assessment metrics available for qualifying species & habitat SAC features. JNCC has produced a UK summary spreadsheet and there is spreadsheet documenting features in Wales. Mike will pull out Welsh coastal features and circulate. In general, the assessment reported that a substantial amount of coastal SAC features are in decline in the UK and Wales.
7. Sea Cliff Symposium. The Symposium was held in Sept 2013, Mike Howe & Peter Rhind attended & both gave presentations. Mike reported that the presentations were of a high standard but the turnout (~40) was a little disappointing. Mike will send a link to the proceedings when available.
8. Priority Habitat Maps. Maps and associated synopsis are available for sand dune, saltmarsh, maritime hard cliff and soft cliff. Vegetated shingle map has yet to be produced. Mapping review is needed together with integration with particularly lowland grassland & heathland mapping to promote connectivity & landscape scale projects.
9. CEG work plan/ membership. Work plan needs updating & extending to 2016. CEG Membership list - Mike & Emmer will look at the NRW representation to ensure an involvement across NRW's remit and a stronger regional input. LBAP and WG membership to be reviewed. Chris will canvass Wildlife Trusts to seek a deputy in the event he is unable to attend.
10. **AOB** Mike is pushing for NRW to use land fill money for coastal projects. Whilst legal issues need to be clarified in terms of NRW's regulatory responsibilities, successful bids would secure much needed funds for dune work. Tree clearing from sand dunes - obviously this is a sensitive issue. Some clearance may go ahead at Newborough Warren, Morfa Harlech and Whiteford Burrows. Mike and Emmer are visiting Pembrey Burrows and will talk with colleagues and others to see how conifer removal and sea buckthorn control can be progressed. As LIFE nature funds need to be matched there is an option of working with devolved countries and a need to keep a watching brief on activities in Scotland where a project to remove conifers from dune sites is being led by FCS.

Proposed sand dune movement & hydrology project at Llangennith Burrows (Gower) as part of post graduate research proposal at Swansea University. Emmer has been in contact but not heard if it has progressed. The group suggested alternative sites e.g. Whiteford, Kenfig, Merthyr Mawr. Emmer will chase up.

Coastal Futures Seminar took place in London recently with a range of high profile speakers. Mike will obtain the links to proceedings. Emmer attended 'Future Vision for the Coast' conference in Liverpool earlier in Jan and will report to CEG. The conference considered long-term drivers and their effect on the coast.

There is now a coastal network within NRW. The network will share information with CEG and vice versa.

Date of Next Meeting

The group is aiming for a June 2014 meeting and the meeting will incorporate a field visit. Meeting link will be circulated in the near future

Actions

No.	Actions	Who	By	Comments
1	Coastal Environmental Change spread sheet	ALL	31 st January	Please fill in on behalf of your organisation Completed forms to go to Nicola Rimington (Nicola.Rimington@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk) Chris Wynne to collate Wildlife Trusts reports; Sean to contact LBAPs to make them aware of the spread sheet.
2	WBP Evidence Gaps Project	MH/EL/AG ALL	21 st Feb 21st Feb	Mike and Emmer to meet up with Angus & factor in the work of Rick Park Review the information, identify gaps and put forward potential projects. Details of evidence gaps and project proposals are on the WBP website. Link: http://biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/WBP-Evidence-Gaps-Project
3	Article 17 Reporting	MH	21st Feb	MH will work on distilling Wales coastal condition SAC features from the main spread sheet(s) & will make them available subject to release approval
4	Sea Cliff Symposium	MH		MH to circulate symposium proceedings when available
5	Priority Habitat Maps	MH	June 2014	Mike to talk with Jan Sherry (LHG Group) to look for joint project opportunities
6	CEG work plan CEG Membership	All	Feb 7 th Feb 28th	All to review the Plan and input. Mike & Emmer to fine tune NRW representation, LBAP and WG membership to be reviewed by Sean. Chris will canvass Wildlife Trusts to seek a deputy representative.
7	Coastal conferences	MH/EL	March 2014	Mike & Emmer will circulate links to recently held coastal conference events

8	Proposed sand dune movement & hydrology project at Llangennith	EL	June 2014	Emmer will investigate and update the group at the next meeting
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Previous Actions update

	Coastal vegetated shingle priority areas	Peter Rhind	Ongoing	Peter was working this up but was unable to complete. On hold pending NRW coastal team reconfiguration
	Sand dune Workshop Proceedings to be made available	Peter Rhind	Ongoing	Proceedings have yet to be finalised and published.