

Wales Mammal Biodiversity Action Forum
Minutes of the 10th Meeting
(incorporating MISE Advisory Group meeting)

8th October 2013, by VC

1. Welcome, introductions & organisational updates

Present: Bangor: Jean Matthews (NRW), Becky Clews-Roberts (The Mammal Society) Liz Halliwell (NRW - minutes), Adam Daniel (Cyngor Gwynedd), Audrey Watson (BASC), Lizzy Webster (Denbighshire CC), Sam Dyer, Amy Green (Flintshire CC), Ceri Morris (NRW, MISE)

Llandeilo: Steve Lucas (BCT), Jenny MacPherson (VWT, MISE – Chair), Huw Denman, Rob Strachan (NRW)

Apologies: Iolo Lloyd (NRW), Isabel Macho (Carmarthenshire CC), Mike Jenkins (NRW), Lizzie Wilberforce (WTSWW), Henry Schofield (VWT), Jane Garner (NRW), Matthew Ellis (NRW), Rob Parry (WTSWW), Kate Williamson (The Mammal Society), Bradley Welch (BBNP), Gethin Davies (SNPA), Dan Forman (Swansea University), Nathan Walton (WTSWW), Colin Russell (WWBIC), Roy Tapping (Cofnod), Annie Haycock (Pembs Mammal Recorder).

Actions from the last meeting

ACTION 1. Steve to raise issue of lack of WG representation & report back from WBSB. Jean to raise with Julia.

Completed. Steve continues to attend meetings and will feed back information as relevant to the group.

ACTION 2. Jean & Rob S to report back on revised water vole advice and licensing process.

Jean has received legal advice which states that NRW should be able to issue licences for water vole translocation under the W&CA. This isn't thought to be contrary to previous advice that can't issue conservation licences for development purposes if it is applied in limited circumstances Formal advice will be produced once Rob has finalised the technical advice on the appropriate use of the displacement technique.

ACTION 3. All Please send updates through by end of week.

Completed

ACTION 4. Jean to ask Tracey if she attends meetings of N. Wales LBAPs to ask for rep & deputy.

Completed. Lizzy Webster and Amy Green both stated that they'd be willing to represent NE Wales, although would have to take to back to NE Wales Biodiversity group. **Post meeting note, the group has agreed that Lizzy will represent them on WMBAF.**

ACTION 5. ALL – feed to Becky any suggestions for contacts & projects e.g. flyers for NRW FC education section & link to website.

Completed - lots of information received.

ACTION 6. Jean to forward link to Jenny to harvest mouse report. *Completed.*

ACTION 7. Liz & Jean to consider how to circulate harvest mouse report to others. Aim is to focus survey effort on most likely sites first. *Completed*

ACTION 8. Steve via WEL– continue to raise lack of availability of TG data. The Tir Gofal monitoring report has now been published on the WG website. Still not clear whether the data from the work has been released, although have been told it should be going to the LRCs.

ACTION 9. SPECIES LEADS to look at reviewing targets for discussion & sign off at next meeting 8 October. (Jean & Steve to discuss timetable for revision of bats' APs). *Carry forward. NEW ACTION 1*

ACTION 10. Species Leads to check if Article 17 distribution maps are correct. *Completed.*

ACTION 11. Jean to talk to Tracey for feedback on evidence gaps process and how it is working and to send out Priority Species spreadsheet to members. *Completed.* Jean has received some advice from Tracey, including a note on how to frame a research question. See further discussion of evidence gaps below.

ACTION 12. ALL to look at Priority Species spreadsheet & fill in possible projects. *Some suggestions received.* (See 5 below)

ACTION 13: Carried forward. Liz Ha to identify whether any of the remaining mammal species action plans could be amalgamated into overarching plan. *Completed.* There is some overlap between the species (especially in relation to Glastir), but also lots of actions that are specific to individual species. Using the action prioritisation spreadsheet (see below) may help to address this.

2. BAP Process update

SEG & Ecosystems Groups meetings

No news reported from these meetings. Next SEG is scheduled for November.

UKBAP groups

Liz and Ceri recently attend the UKRSG meeting in Newcastle. There was a short site visit to the Red Squirrels North of England project. The project has over 20 wardens undertaking GS control, mostly funded through the England Woodland Grant Scheme.

Liz is attending a workshop organised by Natural England to look at conservation priorities for dormice.

3. Project/partner updates

MaMoNet (Mammal Monitoring Network) project - Becky carried out harvest mouse bait pot surveys and has 5 nest searches planned. Harvest mouse/hedgehog conference on 15th February 2014 – Aberystwyth University. Bookings can be made via TMS website. New Mammal Groups being established in various regions.

WBP conference – Liz and Jean ran a workshop looking at landscape scale approaches to mammal conservation, including harvest mouse and bats.

ACTION 2 All Please send updates through by end of week for Liz/Jean to circulate.

4. MISE Advisory Group update

The MISE Advisory Group was established as a forum to encourage involvement in the MISE project. Membership of WMBAF is quite similar to the Advisory Group so it was decided to hold a joint meeting on this occasion.

Ceri and Jenny described the work they have been undertaking recently – see written updates circulated prior to the meeting.

It was agreed that the recent MISE volunteers trip to Waterford had been a great success. The Irish partners in the project are bringing a group of volunteers over to the forthcoming Dwyrdd otter survey.

5. Mammal BAP update

SL noted that WG are very keen to find out what the mammal priorities are for the Wales Biodiversity Strategy paper ('nature conservation recovery plan'). Need to feed priorities into the Wales Biodiversity Board as soon as possible. Board is currently meeting monthly.

It was agreed that we need to focus on high priority actions, rather than high priority species. The Article 17 report also identifies species which are data deficient.

Also need to consider species relationship with ecosystem approach and ecosystem services. Red squirrel conservation could be argued to contribute to economics of woodlands through grey squirrel control. Lizzie Wilberforce has prepared a paper for the Wales Squirrel Partnership.

ACTION 3: Liz to circulate Lizzie Wilberforce's paper on red squirrels and the ecosystem approach

ACTION 4: Jean and Liz to draft covering paper on mammal and ecosystem services.

Steve has prepared a spreadsheet setting out progress and priorities for the various bat BAP actions. It was agreed that this was a useful approach and could be used as the basis to identify priority mammal actions for WBSB. Lizzy also noted that the BAP actions are very helpful for their work as LBAP officers in providing context and justification for local action.

ACTION 5: All species leads to prepare prioritisation spreadsheet by 30th November.

Liz and Jean to collate and circulate. Will also consider holding a teleconference to discuss outcome of the prioritisation exercise.

Evidence gaps – additional evidence gaps have been identified and added to the Wales BAP mammals summary spreadsheet. Rob S has completed the action assessments and prioritisation for otter and water vole. In doing so he has reviewed and incorporated the evidence gaps.

ACTION 6: All species leads to review evidence gaps as part of Action 5 above and circulate.

6. Review of priority projects

Following the 'biodiversity summit' at the Royal Welsh Show, the Environment Minister announced £6 million funding for environmental/ecosystem projects.

Projects preferable need to be able to demonstrate change/improvement by 2015. People will be asked by WG to submit 'concept projects'. Preference is for big projects that involve farmers/landowners/group action. Some of initial ideas may be grouped by WG staff. Farming community/landowning community will be encouraged to submit project ideas. Priorities that will need to address: Ecosystem health and resilience; wider services that come from ecosystems; area based action and collaborative action. Ideas: capacity building, innovators. Need to produce a side of A4 outlining project ideas.

WG keen to get changes in attitudes to biodiversity and conservation so that it becomes 'second nature' to consider nature conservation.

NRW staff were asked to submit project ideas within the space of one day. Jean and Liz suggested two projects – landscape for lessers and a landscape scale approach to mammal INNS control, ie mink and grey squirrel (developing the approach taken in NE Scotland for mink control, see: <http://www.scottishmink.org.uk/> .

Huw Denman has been approached by Confor (Confederation of Forest Industries) asking for ideas and thoughts re grey squirrel control project. Would be a good example of collaborative action – between wildlife groups, volunteers and the forestry industry and could be developed as a national strategy. It could encourage the industry to take possession of the need to control grey squirrels.

Rob S noted that the VWT project, Our Beacon for Bats has been successful at mobilising volunteers, working with landowners to develop corridors for bats – contributes to resilience of water courses. Would be a good example project.

Keep Wales Tidy have a project called 'The Long Forest' project aimed at improving and creating hedgerows: <http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk/longforest.html> It is currently based in Powys, although looking to extend. Conservation Grade Farms noted as another group that we could work with.

The WG Resilience Ecosystems fund was heavily oversubscribed. The group was aware of two mammal projects which were successful – the Deer Initiative Wye Valley project (monitoring deer and their impacts, and working with landowners to deliver sustainable deer management), and WTSSW water vole project, aiming to work primarily with private landowners to identify additional water vole sites around existing known sites, but particularly to map habitats, and identify works that could improve water vole habitat and connectivity and create an inventory of potential work with landowner permission that will allow them to apply for future funding for work they know can be delivered.

7. Any Other Business

None received.

8. Dates of next meetings

19th February 2014 – chair Rob Strachan

4th June 2014 (possibility of holding in conjunction with the MISE Advisory Group).

It was agreed to continue to hold meetings by VC, although the Llandeilo office will be closing. The Cross Hands office in Carmarthenshire was suggested as an alternative.