

Wales Mammal Biodiversity Action Forum

Minutes of the 6th Meeting

14 November 2011, CCW Offices, Newtown

1. Welcome, introductions

Present: Liz Halliwell (CCW - Chair), Rob Strachan (EA), Jean Matthews (CCW - Minutes), Jenny Macpherson (VWT – MISE), Lizzie Wilberforce (WTSWW), Steve Lucas (BCT), Ian Danby (BASC), Sarah Bird (Chester Zoo), Kate Williamson (The Mammal Society), Henry Schofield (VWT), Rebecca Pritchard (Menter Mon)

Apologies:

Matthew Ellis (CCW), Ceri Morris (CCW – MISE), Rob Parry (WTSWW), Iolo Lloyd (FCW), Nida Al-Fulaij (PTES), Isabel Macho (Carms CC), Paul Sinnadurai (BBNPA), Adrian Lloyd Jones (NWWT), Brenda Mayle (Forest Research), Rob Parry (WTSWW), Tracey Lovering (CCW), Mike Bruford (Cardiff University),

Organisational updates

CCW/FCW/EAW – work continuing on the development of a single environment body in Wales. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of emphasis on the environment/biodiversity.

EAW - devolution from England is in progress.

2. BAP Process update

The Welsh Government Ecosystem Resilience, Diversity and Compliance fund received applications for projects worth £22m for £1m of funding available.

Species Expert Group – involved in reviewing applications for Environment Wales and WG funding.

There is a review ongoing into the role of Ecosystems Groups in relation to NEF. LHa concern about possible “disappearance” of species in current prioritisation
NEF – pilot or demonstration projects are being established, but no information currently available on areas or whether projects have been agreed.

AP1 – JM/LHa (or others) to find out more information on NEF pilots.

In England Defra funding is available for 12 Nature Improvement Areas. Final projects will be taken from 20 shortlisted projects.

3. Glastir

Targeted Element training has been postponed while staff concentrated on All Wales Element. Take up of AWE not as high as hoped. It was reported that biodiversity will no longer become a priority as previously suggested. It was also noted that contracts will only require each farm to have one action per objective per action.

4. Project Partner Updates

Partner updates were discussed. See Annex 2 for brief notes.

AP2 - JM/LHa to contact Mike Bruford to disseminate findings of research into polecat genetics and identify implications for conservation. Do they need samples for analysis?

AP3 – ALL to send in partner updates asap if not already done so.

5. Targets Review

It had previously been agreed that the focus of this meeting would be to review the species targets as concern had been expressed whether some targets were appropriate. SL expressed concern that he didn't want changes to hold up the publication the action plans as LBAPs want advice now. It was agreed that this would be a swift process with the aim of getting the plans out before the end of the year.

A paper on target setting was circulated prior to the meeting and JM introduced the key principles. In particular, a resilience target has been added to the type of targets possible. The aim of the resilience target is 'to improve the capacity of habitats and species populations to respond to environmental change, in particular climate change'. Whilst it was agreed that this could be a valuable addition, it wasn't clear what target units would be and how it would be possible to account for long term changes or stochastic events. It was agreed that at this stage it would better to add a new section to the Mammal Action Plans on the resilience factors for each species, eg reduction of fragmentation and including major factors outside our control. Resilience targets could be added in the future once there is a better understanding of the issues.

Action Point 4: JM/LHa to circulate format for resilience section of Action Plan.

Species targets review

Water vole: RS has reviewed the targets and also identified a series of milestones which could be used as sub-projects towards achieving the targets. It was agreed that this was a very useful approach and should be adopted for other species where appropriate.

Action Point 5: JM to incorporate RS email on water vole into Action Plan format & circulate draft.

Action Point 6: ALL to send any milestone monitoring ideas to appropriate species lead.

Barbastelle bat: the targets currently use a baseline distribution of 4 10km squares which contain known breeding roosts, but there are a number of other records from across Wales. The concern is that these are mostly bat detector records and may not represent breeding roosts or hibernation sites. It was agreed that the target unit for occupied squares should relate to maternity sites or multiple records of hibernating animals over more than 1 year. It was noted that there is a need to add records held in England to get more accurate information on 10km distribution.

Hedgehog: currently has no targets due to absence of good distribution information. KW suggested that it should be possible to collate distribution info and agree an interim target to be updated when have better survey info.

Brown hare: targets for Wales need to be updated as survey information shows hares are more widespread and it was felt that this did not represent an increase in range but improved data. The second target relates to % increase in population size. Concern was expressed regarding the usefulness of this target and the fact that the population index used is unlikely to be available at a Wales only level. It was agreed that this could be changed to a target to expand the range. It was also felt that expanding range within 10km squares may be useful target. However, it was noted that it would not be

possible to monitor targets at a lower resolution than 10km squares. It was agreed that this would still be a useful objective and could be used by LBAPs to target action.

Otter: monitoring of coastal areas needs to be improved, although this is partly being addressed through the MISE project. The targets are OK.

Pine marten: targets are based on current range of 10 occupied 10km squares. This is probably not accurate, and so it was agreed that the target should be changed to 1 10km square or removed with comment added to explain why.

Harvest mouse: as with hedgehog, there are currently no targets set for harvest mouse and there is a need to collate records to determine a preliminary target.

Action Point 7: MISE project to collate records or CCW as part of data review. Target to be reviewed in the light of new knowledge to give minimum target.

Dormouse: may need to be revised in the light of new information. Population index is based on England and Wales, but work is ongoing to get enough sites in Wales to have Wales only trend data. Latest information on the index needs to be checked.

Action Point 8: LHa to review targets and check data availability with PTES.

Polecat: current range target does not need revision. It is not possible to get population estimates at present, although a pilot is in progress. There are some gaps in known distribution and JMCP is trying to encourage more records for Pembs, Carm, Ceredigion, and Anglesey.

Bechstein's bat: it was felt that not enough is known about the distribution in Wales for have targets. It was agreed that the figures should be removed, but the text retained.

Noctule: currently has no targets, and so it was agreed that records should be collated to identify a suitable target.

Action point 9: SL to email BGs to ask for presence and location of known noctule roosts to start process of collating records and estimate target.

Common and Soprano pip: How was the target percentage determined and is it appropriate? Need to consider whether that target is kept.

Action point 10: SL to ask how many sites are being monitoring in NBMP

Brown long-eared bat: also need info on range for this species.

Action point 11: JM/LHa to include as part of LRC data search. SL to ask NBMP re how many more sites needed for Wales trend data (need 40 sites for trend analysis).

GHB: It was suggested that the range target could be expanded. But it was agreed to keep current target, as it is not possible to influence range.

Action point 12: JM to collate data and add note re range expansion.

LHB: T2 has probably already been met. T1 – JM to review colony count information.

Action point 13: JM to use LHB habitat suitability model to check number of squares currently occupied and for range expansion.

Red squirrel: suggest review of current range to expand range target for Anglesey and maintain for mainland.

Action point 14: LHa to review red squirrel targets.

POST MEETING NOTE – it is estimated that there are 283 10km squares in Wales. Although this does include a number of squares on the coast/border that include only a small area of land.

The action plans are all almost completed. Each needs an additional section on resilience if considered appropriate and any revision of targets.

Action point 15: Deadline for action plan revisions – 23th January, to send to Sean McHugh by 27th January.

It was agreed that species that have (or will have) a published strategy should still have a summary action plan (pine marten, red squirrel and water vole).

Action point 16: All species leads to send list of LBAP areas to JM/LHa to produce maps.

7. Priority Mammal Projects

See updated information in Annex 1.

8. Minutes and action points from meeting on meeting 20 June 2011.

No comments on the minutes were received.

AP1 – LHa/JM to identify who has replaced Barbara in representing CCW on NERC Knowledge Exchange project - Andy Jones within the Terrestrial Ecosystems Group has replaced Barbara Jones

AP2 – LHa/JM to discuss otter DNA analysis with WIT - actioned

AP3 – AB to circulate some specific questions to WMBAF on the types of woodland management projects they are interested in – no information received.

AP4 – LHa agreed to collate information on dormouse work (update distribution map for Wales & check overlaps & gaps) to circulate to partners – ongoing and will be completed as part of data review discussed during meeting.

AP5 – Rob Parry to co-ordinate a Task and Finish Group to investigate funding opportunities for mink control. Others to be involved – Jean Matthews, Rob Strachan, Ian Danby. Group has met and work is ongoing

AP6 – ME to send out link to GB INNS website and portal. Actioned.

AP7 – MB to send data on polecat genetics to JM/LHa and also details on where to send any samples from dead polecats. Not received. JM/LHa to follow up. (see AP2 above).

AP8 – HS/JM/SL to develop ideas for the first stage of a rare woodlands bats project.

Teleconference to be arranged. AP17

AP9 – JMcP to investigate running workshop as part of MISE project – being considered for next year.

AP10 – JM to draft report on 2010/11 work for next meeting. Carry Over AP18

9. Any other business

None

10. Date of next meeting

Thursday 1st March 2012 – preparation for surveys – collaboration

Tues 26th June 2012.

Key Messages from meeting

1. Targets need to be revised to reflect updated species information
2. To direct species conservation work, some species require targets, even where we may not have sufficient information.
3. Species Action Plans needs to consider the issues to ensure the longer term resilience of priority mammals within ecosystems.

Annex 1 - WMBAF - Priority Projects for LBAPs

Text in blue – updated info from 6th meeting

Harvest mouse / hedgehog – ideal to have national surveys to establish baseline. In meantime use opportunities such as MISE, TMS, links with RSBP, BTO. Need also to discuss at SEG.

Dormouse survey of Ceredigion – nut hunts – may need verification of identification of nuts – who can offer that. May also be suitable for other LBAP areas. In progress for MISE areas. Add sites to national dormouse monitoring scheme. Don't forget sites outside MISE area.

Water vole – use map of national & regional key sites to flag up areas where mink control is a priority. LBAPs need to have copy to help them prioritise work, including updating survey or monitoring where required.

Also need to find out where mink control is being done and if there are gaps in coverage of priority areas. Could use long term work experience volunteer to collate information (either sitting within LBAP or WT?).

(Interreg funding stream now is focussed on generating jobs, though haven't checked if that would be appropriate, e.g. through countryside manager/keeper or angling interests – would be useful to have BASC input here. Life+ funding is a possibility and needs to be considered in detail. The UK portion of Life+ is currently undersubscribed).

Rare woodland bats

HS/JM/SL haven't met to discuss. Phone conference to be held to discuss how to take forward – various small modules, e.g. bat boxes to collect droppings.

Could identify LBAP/Bat Group areas with highest potential and with keen & some experienced volunteers. Matt Zeale's niche factor analysis could be used to identify potential barbastelle woodlands for local bat groups to survey. Once barbastelles have been located using bat detectors, trapping work could then be undertaken to look for other rare woodland bats such as Bechstein's bat – (barbastelles and Bechstein's bats have similar woodland requirements) and Myotis alcaothoe.

A rare woodland bat project would be a good opportunity to involve volunteers which would suit Environment Wales funding. Need to make link to Woodland Ecosystem Group due woodland management issues.

Long term prospects - there is a Defra project to find methodology for rare woodland bat survey & monitoring suitable for volunteers, but won't report for some time (years?)

Lesser horseshoe bats – working with Cofnod to get local bat groups to verify data to update habitat suitability model. Won't be ready for this funding round, but need to develop project on habitat connectivity for when it is.

Harvest mouse – is it part of MISE officers jobs to get survey pack ready & organise training sessions for Sept/Oct? LBAPs can carry out surveys in Oct/Nov (poss Dec if weather suitable). Possible training sites Harlech, Cheshire, Ynys Las – others known in mid, south Wales (Rob P?). In progress, but need to roll out to rest of Wales.

Red squirrel – MISE event in Jul or Aug. If successful then could do something similar in marginal red squirrel areas.

Other potential projects

Greater horseshoe & lesser horseshoe bat interactions. HS noted concern about GHB displacing LHB when they move into summer roosts. [Colin Morris doing some work in VWT.](#)

Could get someone to go through lhb summer roost counts & look for data – possible student project.

Hedgerows for dormice – useful to update distribution map for Wales. Needs to link with PTES dormouse database. [LHa to link to data collation project.](#)

Otters – Emma Broad (Wrexham LBAP officer) has been in discussion with Pete Turner & has project proposal suggestion for project on Dee. [Jenny doing Teifi.](#) Ceri has met with Emma and thinks that there is good potential to develop a project. Possible to use as a pilot, but need to find out what sort of information can be generated using the dna analysis – i.e. what can it tell us about otter populations and then decide where it is best to focus. [Add in coastal areas to national survey – priority action for LBAPs.](#)

Possible future projects – hair tubes, hedgehog footplates being trialled. [Ongoing – roll out where possible. Use MISE to host training days, or via LBAP regional days or LRCs. Use also for small mammals – guide with measurements & angles](#)

JM, KW & LH 16 Jun 2011

Annex 2. Partner reports – brief notes from meeting:

BCT involvement in projects

SMG Otter spraint analysis of Llyn samples. Need to change sampling/survey methodology for DNA analysis (methodology devised for diet analysis). Analysis of other areas to follow (Carms, Anglesey, NE Wales coast).

VWT pine marten strategy - working groups ongoing. Our Beacon for Bats, WTSWW – harvest mouse survey, dormice habitat assessment, squirrel project. WG contract on Tir Gofal (water vole & brown hare) due to report next year – generating lot of new records).

EAW – Otter project – extension to funding for another year & aim for 4 year contract after that. Masters student project 40 sites id as priority. Report being produced with maps of sites for action. Analysis of wv droppings – prelim findings Anglesey unique population – closely aligned to Scottish pop, couldn't genotype using droppings.

Upland wv similar, but they also had more similarities to English type. Report expected in Dec. Mink raft projects – Wye & Usk Foundation INNS project to protect wv areas to uplands of Wye. Gwent project precursor to introduction at Magor Marsh. Looking at WFD project for tree planting for flood risk management – poss use for habitat links for Our Beacon for Bats

Menter Mon – Envir Wales funding to cover areas not covered before. One mink caught on Alaw close to report of 3 attacking cat. Also catching polecats – recommendation to collect scats & take photographs. Hoping to work with MISE.

BASC – New finding of dormice in Hafod Wood, Conwy. Pine marten boxes up in same area, but no animals using them. WV Llyn training event 20 rafts up, 2 more training events planned. Joining up areas already trapped by BASC members. Using web system to get info from members – more sustainable.

Chester Zoo – meeting Thurs assess what's happening with existing network.

Bontuchel project results presented at conference. Finding that not typical as edge of range population, but breeding is occurring twice a year and young of the year are breeding. Need more detailed work to get better information on populations.