

TEES VALLEY BIODIVERSITY STEERING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 15th January 2008 at Billingham Beck Visitor Centre

Present:

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| Geoff Barber | INCA |
| Graham Clingan | Stockton-on-Tees BC |
| Martin Coleclough | Middlesbrough BC |
| Rob Lunan | Redcar & Cleveland BC |
| Graham Megson | Teesmouth Bird Club |
| Jeremy Garside | Tees Valley Wildlife Trust |
| Sue Antrobus | Tees Valley Biodiversity Coordinator |
| Ruth Jackson | Natural England |
| Helen Herring | Wildflower Ark |
| Ian Bond | Hartlepool BC |
| Nick Brodin | North East Biodiversity Forum |
| Anne Gladwin | Middlesbrough BC |
| Naomi Hewitt | Exploring Your Environment |
| Malcolm Steele | Tees Valley JSU |

1. Apologies

Dave Askey – Stockton-on-Tees BC; Katy Dickson – Environment Agency

2. Minutes of last meeting

Agreed

3. Matters arising

FWAG membership - Malcolm Steele reported that he had approached the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) regarding membership of the Steering Group. FWAG (Jennie Stafford/Vicky Knowles) indicated that they would be interested in joining the Steering Group and hope to attend the next meeting in April.

RIGS Group – Jeremy Garside reported that he had spoken to the chair of the Tees Valley RIGS and agreed that respective group minutes should be exchanged and circulated for information.

Tees Forest representation – following the departure of Debbie Scott it was agreed that the Tees Forest should be approached to nominate another representative.

4. Steering Group Terms of Reference

The amended terms of reference had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Steering Group agreed and formally adopted the terms of reference.

5. Exploring Your Environment Project

Naomi Hewitt – co-ordinator of the region-wide Exploring Your Environment project - had been invited to the meeting to explain her role and provide background information on the EYE project.

The main aims of the EYE project are to improve access to biodiversity records and to raise the profile of environmental recording. It is a 3 year project and has received funding from a number of organisations including Heritage Lottery Fund, Natural England, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Northumbrian Water.

Specific objectives of the EYE project are:

- To develop a regional data hub that is accessible to all, although with some protection for sensitive data/information
- Manage the old Tyne & Wear Museums database
- Add new records to the database (some 75,000 records have been added so far)
- Resolve data sharing issues
- Gather data from a wide range of sources – larger organisations down to individuals
- Supply data to local authorities and others; data can usually be tailored to meet specific requirements

63% of the project's funding is from the Heritage Lottery Fund and continuing public involvement in the project is important. There is an active public participation programme with a series of monthly events.

The project is able (fortunately) to call on a volunteer task force to input historic data.

A major issue still to be resolved concerns data ownership and discussions on this are continuing. The EYE project will however act as a sign post to other data sources.

Nick Brodin noted that the EYE project had emerged from the Regional Environmental Records Centre proposal and the consultancy work undertaken a few years ago by Sarah Hawksworth. The NE Regional Biodiversity still have an aim to develop a regional records centre in some form, and a sub-group has been set up to look at how this can be taken forward in future, based on the work carried out by the EYE project.

The Steering Group thanked Naomi for her presentation on EYE. It was agreed that Tees Valley Steering Group minutes and agendas should be circulated to Naomi and that she would be welcome to attend future meetings.

6. Biodiversity Co-ordinators Report

TV Biodiversity Partnership Website

Setting up a website should be a high priority. There would probably be 3 main users of the website:

- a) Partner organisations – to keep up to date with news; get access to up to date action plans; gain access to minutes of meetings; and information source on biodiversity matters – national to local;
- b) Local authorities and other professionals, including developers/planners, and industry sector – understanding BAP process; information on action plans; information on legislation and biodiversity planning;
- c) Interested people (wildlife recorders, schools, community groups etc) – ideas for practical action; links to related activities; basic understanding of BAP process.

Sue Antrobus presented a spider graph demonstrating that from the home page the website would include pages on:

- Biodiversity basics
- TV Biodiversity Action Plan
- Priority habitats and species
- Get involved
- Library
- News and Diary
- Contact us

The Steering Group fully supported the website proposals. The main issues raised during discussion included:

- Keeping habitats and species data up to date
- Whether maps could be included, particularly for priority species and habitats

It was agreed that the habitat section authors should consider further the mapping issue.

A number of alternative logos were displayed for comment. Some useful suggestions were made and Sue Antrobus will take these on board and produce a preferred logo.

BARS Training

Seven places were available for a BARS training event in Darlington on 18 February.

TV Partnership annual event/site visit

There was strong support for an annual event. It was agreed that this year's event should focus on an industrial site – possibly the Corus works at Redcar. Sue Antrobus agreed to investigate.

Annual Report

There was still support for idea of producing an annual report on behalf of the Partnership but this clearly needed further thought about its role and purpose, particularly given the decision to proceed with a website. A report should focus on key milestones and delivery and must give added value to the BAP process. Malcolm Steele and Sue Antrobus will give the issue of the annual report further thought and report back at the next meeting.

Regional Pond Survey

The TV Partnership were planning a public participation survey on ponds in 2008 but did not wish to duplicate work planned by the EYE project who are running an annual survey. Sue Antrobus and Naomi Hewitt are therefore working jointly on a regional pond survey and the TV Partnership could then promote the project sub-regionally. Data would be verified by the Wetland and Coastal Action Group. The survey is awaiting the approval of Northumbrian Water as sponsors, and would need to be launched in February 2008.

Graham Megson also reported that Teesmouth Bird Club is to carry out a waterbodies survey.

7. Feedback from Action Groups

Wetland/Coastal Action Group

- Draft Ringed Plover Species Action Plan now prepared – translated into SMART targets and actions through BARS
- Considering SNCI criteria for ponds, based on criteria developed by North Yorkshire County Council; indications are that wider criteria are likely to be needed to cover amphibians and other important (locally distinctive) ponds
- Ponds Habitat Action Plan – group has reviewed current actions and is developing a strategic approach to pond creation; also developing a targeted survey for certain ponds; developing monitoring systems, and raising awareness

Rural (formerly Farmland) Action Group

- Farmland surveys – only 1 survey undertaken in 2007 but group recommended that contact be re-established in the form of a summary of the last 3 years results and rolling programme of surveys; farm visit events with FWAG to continue
- Hedgerow BAP – draft plan to be circulated for comment
- Heathland HAP – new management plan drawn up for Eston Moor
- Unimproved grassland – Wildflower Ark to submit grant to HLF re. wildflower grasslands in E Cleveland; TV Wildlife Trust planning submission to Biffa on practical grassland management

Industrial/Urban Action Group

Priorities have been identified as Brownfield Land; Parks & Amenity land; School Grounds; and Roadside Verges.

- Brownfield Land – some issues over definition of brownfield land; Graham Megson agreed to forward copy of N Yorks guidelines to Geoff Barber
- Parks & Amenity – Jim Moody (Middlesbrough) is to act as ‘champion’
- Roadside Verges – potential project identified in Stockton

8. Proposed Annual Report

Covered under item 6.

9. Regional/Sub-Regional Policy Document Arrangements

Although the practical arrangements for the TV partnership to review and comment on regional and sub-regional policy and planning documents still needed some thought and fine tuning, it was agreed that this initiative should be progressed. Sue Antrobus agreed to prepare a matrix/table showing reports likely to come forward for consultation over the next few months, together with an indication of the most appropriate person/persons to provide comments.

Malcolm Steele noted that the Tees Valley Minerals & Waste Preferred Options report was likely to be published for consultation in February and Graham Megson provisionally offered Teesmouth Bird Club's assistance in providing comments and views.

10. National and Regional Events and Updates

NE Biodiversity Forum Annual Partnership Conference is to be held on 14 March at Dolphin Centre, Darlington. A major theme will be promoting the NERC Biodiversity Duty locally.

The Regional Marine & Coastal sub-group is also promoting an event on NERC in February,

The NE Biodiversity Forum had recently commissioned some market research into attitudes towards biodiversity. Up to 990 people were interviewed spread across the region. It has produced some interesting and informative results. The report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.nebiodiversity.org.uk/docs/166.pdf>

11. Any other business

Graham Megson reported that the N York Moors National Park Authority was planning to re-introduce Black Grouse onto the N York Moors.

Graham Clingan reported the NE State of the Environment is to be launched during February.

12. Date of next meeting

10.00 a.m. on 22 April 2008. Venue confirmed as Billingham Beck Visitor Centre.