

Tees Valley Wetland and Coastal Action Group

10th January 2008

Meeting notes-draft

Attendance – Allan Snape (Northumbrian Water), Keith Ferry (R&CBC) Ian Bond (HBC), Neil Docherty (SBC), Robert Woods (INCA), Emily Barrett (MBC), David Laing, Russell McAndrew, Sue Antrobus (BAP Co-ordinator).

Apologies – Helen Herring (Wildflower Ark), Katy Dickson (Environment Agency), David Braithwaite (RSPB). Steve Cooper (HBC) Carl Watts (NE)

Outcome of Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership 2007 postcard survey on Amphibians and Reptiles

This postcard survey has been very successful both in terms of level of participation and in producing useful biological data. Ian undertook the data analysis (and has produced a survey report that Sue is sending to participants. 407 records received. To put into context there were only about 1,000 reptile and amphibian records known for whole of Tees Valley including Darlington. The report is attached with minutes. Paper copies are available from Sue.

Russell expressed the need to ensure that in future there needs to be wider availability in public places of survey cards which Sue will ensure.

Action: Sue to send any late coming postcards to Ian for inclusion on Tees Valley data base.

A big thank you to Ian for this piece of work which was done in his Christmas holiday

Ringed Plover Species Action Plan (SAP)

Keith has produced a draft species card with possible objectives. Issues and measures were discussed with Russell being able to add much information from coast north of the Tees, complimenting Keith's knowledge south of the Tees. It was considered that the main issues are disturbance of beach nesting sites by recreation activities and beach cleaning operations south of Tees. It was noted that there are opportunities on Industrial sites but they weren't always taken up by the birds and that fencing for turns could help the plovers

- The following actions were discussed. These were felt to be realistic actions that various members of the group were able to deliver.
- Investigate possibility of erecting little tern fencing earlier (in Feb instead of April) to see if it assists nesting of ringed plover (Robert INCA)
- Discuss changes to beach cleaning operations with relevant operators in Redcar and Cleveland (Keith Redcar and Cleveland BC)
- Produce an attractive information board at Saltburn on nesting waders (Sue and Keith to investigate with Heritage Coast for funding)
- Seek opportunities on industrial sites to create suitable nesting and feeding sites, e.g. BP CATs (Robert INCA)

Action: Keith and Sue to reword these to form appropriate SMART targets and actions and then to circulate plan for approval. Also to refine species card by consulting Vic Fairbrother for updated data and local status.

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Pond SSCI selection Criteria

Ian led discussion on what criteria we use in the Tees Valley for selecting SSCI. Ian introduced different criteria we could use

1. Ponds are now a national priority habitat. However it is not all ponds. The Pond Conservation Trust has come up with a set of criteria which covers about 20% of ponds. These are very wide and to do the PSYM method needs specialist aquatic invertebrate skills... A copy is enclosed. Concern that these criteria may be too wide and produce too many SSCI locally,
2. Classify using botanical data. Helene Herring is doing work on this, based on the North Yorkshire list. All agreed very complex habitats and that vegetation surveys are not enough, that some ponds that are good for invertebrates and /or amphibian do not always have good vegetation.
3. A criteria based on pond macroinvertebrates. Martin Hammond has suggested those with over 40 species. This would need testing on the ground.
4. Use of amphibian species as criteria. Could adapt from the North Yorkshire system which is a points system, again this could give too many SSCI.
6. Need to ensure that "other important ponds" are recognised such as saline ones.

Another method discussed was the work of Jill Sexton on ponds in Redcar and Cleveland, using her data she can up with a simplified way to score ponds. This could be tested in other areas and used to categorise ponds so that the more promising ones can be surveyed in more detail. A summary of her criteria and a paper by Martin Hammond is attached. (Please treat MH invertebrate data as confidential)

Result: agreed that Ponds very tricky habitats to rank in importance. And probably need to use a combination of the above

Action All: Anyone wishing to input further to discussion should email Ian soon.

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Pond Habitat Action Plan

Pond data

We worked out that between us we could put together for the first time a "pondscape" picture of the Tees Valley. Allan has the expertise in GIS and volunteered to put everyone's material in. At this stage we need a Grid reference and pond name. For Stockton Neil will produce this information using Aerial photographs available on internet, adding local knowledge. Emily volunteered to do the same for Middlesbrough consulting with Anne Gladwin, Ian will provide the Hartlepool data and for Redcar and Cleveland Keith will be able to use Jill Sexton's report. Additional information on the ponds can always be added at a later date

Action: All people above to provide their data on an excel spreadsheet to Allan by 28th Feb

Action: Sue to send a little reminder mid January

Action: Allan to have data inputted by next meeting.

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All new targets need to be biological or data collection based, therefore about extent of habitat and condition of habitat and about survey data base.

We went through the existing targets and actions

Existing targets

Pt 1 Ensure no net loss or decrease in biodiversity of ponds by 2006

Delete, not measurable, not achievable

Pt 2 Ensure SSSI sites are in favorable condition using English Nature standards

Take out as an EN target

Pt 3 Increase biodiversity on pond sites by 2010

Delete, too vague, how would you measure?

Pt 4 Create 20 new ponds of conservation value by 2010

Yes want to create ponds, we need to have a good think to come up with a number by consulting with people who are able to create ponds, change to "x" ponds. When we have pondscape we may want to come up with a percentage and may have more of an idea on where we want new ponds to be created

Pt 5 Promote good pond management

Yes this is good, need to reword so that it a biological target and have a specific actions, see action list

Pt 6 Survey all pond sites by 2008

This is not within resources and if had the money probably would not be the best use of it, this would amount to hundreds of ponds, also it doesn't say how detailed a survey

Pt 7 Monitor status of key sites at 5 yearly intervals

Yes, if decide key sites as SNCIs, we should and could do this

Pt 8 Raise awareness of the importance of wetland habitat for wildlife by 2005

We will be doing this with public pond survey but this under new system would be an action not a target

Actions

Pa1.1	Identify the important pond sites in local plans and development plans Yes keep, sing ponds that are SNCIs to be the "important" ponds
Pa1.2	Ensure important sites are protected by the appropriate designation (SSSI, SNCI, LNR) Keep
Pa1.3	Encourage the development of sympathetic water abstraction policies, water level management policies and appropriate coastal management schemes. Is this a national BAP action for Environment Agency, should it be in a LBAP-ask Nick Brodin and Katy Dickson
Pa1.4	Ensure the grant schemes for wetland management continue to be developed and promote schemes effectively We have no power to do this at a local level, do we?
Pa2	Assess using EN standards What are the EN standards and would it be desirable even if possible to measure all ponds? Perhaps we could use Jill Sextons scoring method?
Pa3.1	Undertake management that will enhance the biodiversity of 20 ponds Want to do, need to think about number and who would carry out the projects
Pa3.2	Encourage inclusion of pond management in agri-environment schemes Need to discuss with FWAG and NE=lots of potential Idea of having a pond day for farmers alas part of work of the Rural Action group Action: Sue to discuss with Ruth Jackson at a meeting next week.
Pa3.3	Encourage the minimal use of nitrate fertilizers where these may enter pond systems via run-off or drainage Need to discuss with FWAG, Natural England and Environment Agency
Pa4.1	Encourage the inclusion of new pond creation in agri-environment schemes As above

Pa4.2	Encourage the creation of new ponds (including as part of the landscaping of new developments) Yes there is potential, perhaps more on business park development rather than housing developments. Best practice for Planners adapt from an existing one produced by a different BAPpartnership. Tie in with SUDs and reedbeds/o wetlands as reedbeds/wetlands may be more appropriate on some developments
Pa5	Promote guidelines for good pond management to landowners, developers and managers Yes Biodiversity Partnership run a training event (Sue to action)
Pa6.1	Create an inventory of sites and identify the key sites of conservation importance Yes we can produce a "pondscape" data base
Pa6.2	Use aerial photographs to help locate sites Delete as part of Pa 6.1
Pa6.3	Carry out specialist surveys on key sites (Amphibians, Odonata etc) A lot being done on amphibians already, we didn't know about Odonata?
Pa7	Monitor the status and distribution of key species associated with ponds Delete, duplication
Pa8.1	Arrange walks programme targeted at wetland habitats For general public have a workshop on garden pond creation, tie is event with pond survey
Pa8.2	Produce an information leaflet on value of wetlands for wildlife. Replace with regional pond survey and pond pack and associated press and promotion work

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Also considered having target and action for pond restoration and need to look at the issue of pollution by runoff in urban ponds.

Regional Pond Survey

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership where planning a public participation survey on ponds for 2008. However the TVBAP did not want to duplicate work being done by the EYE project who have an annual survey and thought that a more beneficial approach was to work with the EYE Project on their annual regional survey. Discussions have taken place for Naomi and Sue to work together on a regional pond survey, writing and designing the pond survey and pack .The Tees Valley BAP could then work to promote the project in the Tees Valley and use the money set aside for the Tees Valley postcard survey to produce printed resources for people who respond to the survey. The survey is awaiting approval of project sponsors, Nothumbrian Water. The survey would need to be launched in February 2008.

Rational and objectives of Pond survey

- Involve a wide range of people in surveying a wildlife habitat either in their locally of garden
- Provide useful records of ponds and amphibians for LBAP process
- Highlight the important contribution garden ponds can make to local biodiversity especially amphibian
- Promotion of Ponds as a biodiversity habitat
- Increase awareness of EYE and Local Biodiversity process
- Address threats to pond biodiversity by communicate key messages such as Issues of invasive pond plants and release of fish into ponds

Specific Tees Valley objectives

- Use resulting survey data for Tees Valley pond GIS data base for new revamp of Tees Valley HAP
- Provide a focus for Wetland Action Group

- Provide opportunity for people who have responded to previous surveys to take part in a more detailed survey
- Tie in pond awareness events, and training course for countryside managers and local authorities on Pond management for biodiversity (also tie in pond events for public)

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Input from wetland and coastal action group

- People liked the idea of being data verifiers for their local patch (issue of licences for GCNs, Keith Ferry to check whether R&C staff have a generic licence and pass info on to other authorities) - this will really improve robustness of survey (would not do for garden ponds! Why not if people are happy for us to do so – some of the GCN records may be from garden ponds says Ian) and be a great excuse for group members to get out on their patch.
- Neil and Ian (and Helen) would like to look at Pond survey at design draft stage
- Ian asked if depth of pond could be included on survey as this would give us useful information in relation to ponds selected by toads from breeding.
- Cowpen Bewley was suggested as a good site to launch the survey
- Suggested that we could have a public pond creation workshop
- Suggested could have a pond survey branding on some of the countryside centre pond events

Everyone looked really exhausted by this point after a hard mornings work so we stopped.

Thank you everyone!

Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 March 10 am Billingham Beck