

## Minutes of Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at Billingham Beck Valley Visitor Centre

### Present:

Sue Antrobus	Tees Valley Biodiversity Coordinator
Robert Woods	INCA
Katherine Pinnock	ERIC
Ben Ralston	Northumbrian Water
Graham Megson	Teemouth Bird Club
David Askey	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Anne Gladwin	Middlesbrough Council
Rob Lunan	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Ian Bond	Hartlepool Borough Council
Nick Brodin	Natural England – Biodiversity Delivery Leader
Philip Roxby	Darlington Borough Council
Julia Quinonez	Darlington Borough Council
Malcolm Steele	Tees Valley Unlimited

### 1. Apologies

Jeremy Garside – Tees Valley Wildlife Trust; David Braithwaite – RSPB; Katy Dickson – Environment Agency; Graham Clingan – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council; Helen Herring – Wildflower Ark; Ruth Jackson – Natural England

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

Accepted as an accurate record.

### 3. Matters arising

#### i) Service Level Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding

All have now been agreed and signed off by the Tees Valley local authorities.

#### ii) LWS Guidelines

No further comments have been received since the last Steering Group. The Guidelines are now posted on the Partnership website. Any further changes to the Guidelines will be considered by the Steering Group when appropriate e.g the pond guidelines will be further developed through the Pondscape Project

#### iii) Hartlepool LDF Core Strategy

Sue Antrobus collated comments and these have been forwarded to Hartlepool on behalf of the Partnership.

#### iv) Partnership Bulletin

Recently circulated and well received. Thanks to Sue Antrobus for pulling this together. Any items for the next Bulletin should be sent to Sue. **Action: all**

#### v) Darlington LWS

Jeremy Garside and Ian Bond had met with Darlington officers to discuss their Local Wildlife Sites. The meeting highlighted a number of data issues still to be resolved and a revised list of Darlington LWS will be presented to the Steering Group in due course.

#### **4. Securing Biodiversity and Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas**

Nick Brodin, Natural England's Biodiversity Delivery Leader gave a presentation on the Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas initiative.

The initiative stemmed from the Securing Biodiversity report published by Natural England in 2009. The report placed emphasis on landscape scale biodiversity delivery that will benefit habitats and species through the creation of a mosaic of habitats. Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas (IBDAs) will be the principal mechanism to achieve this.

IBDAs will be developed by Natural England on behalf of the England Biodiversity Group. Biodiversity Integration Groups (BIG) provided details at national level and then sought an input from the regions. A North East Regional Workshop was held in March and 3 areas were selected as the region's recommended IBDAs:

1. Border Uplands & Kielder (Northumberland)
2. Derwent Valley & Pennine Fringe (Tyne & Wear/Co. Durham)
3. East Cleveland (Tees Valley)

These 3 areas (together with areas selected by other regions) were due to be considered by the England Biodiversity Group on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010. This group will also look at draft boundaries.

In practice the designation of an IBDA will mean greater alignment and co-ordination of activity within a targeted area. Once the IBDA boundary has been ratified there will then be an assessment of what can be delivered and quantified. This will be given further consideration by the BIG; there will then be some consideration of local projects and involvement, before the detail goes back to the regions for ratification.

For the East Cleveland IBDA there are a number of issues that need consideration, including:

- Links with the Tees Estuary
- Part of the East Cleveland area is within the North York Moors National Park which in turn comes under the jurisdiction of Yorkshire and the Humber Region
- Close partnership working is required to bring all stakeholders together – it is hoped that the TV Steering Group will be able to take a lead
- The process needs to be on track by this summer
- Projects will need to contribute to BAP targets

Natural England has a (small) budget of £15k to cover the 3 North East IBDAs, but will also be able to offer help, advice and other resources.

Sue Antrobus agreed to make initial contact with stakeholders and partners for the East Cleveland IBDA. **Action: SA**

Nick Brodin was thanked for attending the meeting.

#### **5a. NI 197 – evidence of management**

Thanks were expressed to all 5 Tees Valley authorities for submitting management summary tables before the meeting.

Overall the evidence submitted was considered satisfactory. **The Steering Group, in its role as Local Sites Partnership, agreed to ratify the NI 197 evidence of management for the sites submitted by the local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees, with the exception of the following:**

- **Hartlepool – The Howls**
- **Middlesbrough – Middlebeck**

The Howls was excluded because the management plan is out of date and requires review; Middlebeck because the grass cutting regime was not adequate for water vole management.

It was also agreed that the management evidence tables should follow a standard format for all authorities. Sue Antrobus offered, on behalf of the Wildlife Trust, to compile a standard XL spreadsheet, include the submitted data, and circulate to the local authorities. **Action: SA**

#### **5b. Redcar & Cleveland LWS**

Teemouth Bird Club (TBC) had been approached by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council to provide feedback on the ornithological value of potential local wildlife sites in the Borough. A schedule of TBC's comments was circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed that TBC had provided a great deal of useful information that will contribute to the positive management of LWS in Redcar & Cleveland.

TBC also proposed 3 additional sites for designation as LWS based on the ornithological criteria set out in the LWS selection guidelines:

- Flatts Lane Country Park
- Scaling Dam (western end)
- Lockwood Beck Reservoir

The latter 2 sites are also within the North York Moors National Park and therefore for planning purposes not part of Redcar & Cleveland's Local Development Framework. Previous discussions with the Park authority have shown that they are not interested in designating LWS. It was agreed however that Scaling Dam and Lockwood Beck should be considered as LWS as part of Redcar & Cleveland's NI 197 management evidence.

After some debate on the ornithological criterion it was agreed that Flatts Lane Country Park should be recommended as a Local Wildlife Site. It was also agreed that criterion O3 in the LWS Selection Guidelines should be reviewed, in particular further clarification of 'significant' and 'unique'. **Action: JG**

**The Steering Group, in its role as Local Sites Partnership, agreed that Flatts Lane Country Park should be recommended as a Local Wildlife Site, and that Scaling Dam (western end) and Lockwood Beck Reservoir should be considered as Local Wildlife Sites for NI 197 management.**

#### **5c. Northumbrian Water Candidate LWS**

A list of Northumbrian Water potential LWS was circulated prior to the meeting. The list included Scaling Dam and Lockwood Beck that had been considered under agenda item 5b, plus:

- Billingham Sewage Treatment Works and Portrack Marsh (both Stockton)
- Broken Scar Sewage Treatment Works (Darlington)
- Eston Sewage Pumping Station and Westworth (Redcar & Cleveland, the latter also being within the National Park)

It was agreed that further detailed information should be compiled on these potential sites by Northumbrian Water (including the boundary of Portrack Marsh) for consideration at a future Steering Group meeting. **Action: BR**

There was also some discussion about the process for incorporating new/additional LWS into the planning process after consultation on sites and ratification by the Local Sites Partnership. Malcolm Steele offered to raise this at the Tees Valley Development Plans Officers Group. **Action: MS**

#### **6. Local Sites – guide for landowners and managers**

A question and answer type guide had been prepared by Sue Antrobus and circulated prior to the meeting. The Steering Group agreed the content of the Guide and considered that it would prove valuable in discussions with landowners. It was noted however that there had been no response from the National Farmers Union.

#### **7. Tees Valley Ancient Woodland Initiative**

A copy of the proposal which will survey the characteristics, condition, management and ownership of ancient semi-natural woodland in Tees Valley was circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that the Forestry Commission had unfortunately retracted the amount of funding it had originally indicated for the project to bring it more in line with the funding to be provided by Natural England. However the project will still go ahead on the basis of these contributions, 50% from the TV Wildlife Trust and other in kind contributions. The project has an 18 month timescale and will make a valuable contribution to NI 197 reporting.

A training session on ecological condition monitoring of woodland has been arranged for 6 May, led by Emma Goldberg of Natural England. The session is now fully booked although it anticipated that space could be found for a Darlington representative.

#### **8. Species Action Plan – Priority Moth Species**

Robert Woods introduced this SAP which reflects survey work on 5 species which nationally scarce. They are also associated with four of the priority habitats identified in the Tees Valley BAP.

After some discussion it was agreed that:

- These 5 priority moth species should be added to criterion I4 in the Local Sites Selection Guidelines **Action: JG**
- Forester moth should be added to the Priority Moth Species SAP and the revised SAP circulated electronically to the Steering Group **Action: RW**

#### **9. Action Group updates**

Rural Group – noted that the Farmland Birds Action Plan is not to be updated as it will be covered by the Arable Field Margins HAP.

There was also some discussion about how to deal with species of conservation concern in the Tees Valley, and where for example further ecological survey work is likely to be required, but where there is no action plan. It was suggested that preparing short ‘species statements’ may be a way of addressing this issue, based on the list of national BAP species.

Wetland Group – funding has been secured (including contributions from RSPB and NWL) for the proposed North Tees Sites Visitor Guide. A separate working group has been established and it is hoped that the Guide will be published by mid-summer.

#### **10. Planning Policy Statement/Biodiversity Circular consultation**

CLG has issued for consultation a new draft Planning Policy Statement on Planning for a Natural and healthy Environment. In its final form the PPS will replace, among other, current PPS9 on Biological and Geological Conservation. CLG and Defra have also issued for consultation a revised version of ODPM Circular 06/2005/Defra Circular 01/2005 on statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system. Consultation deadline for both documents is 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010.

Malcolm Steele is to prepare a joint response on behalf of the 5 Tees Valley local planning authorities, and considers that a response from the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership would also be appropriate. Comments on the biodiversity aspects would be welcome. **Graham Megson & Ian Bond agreed to consider and provide comments. Malcolm Steele to prepare appropriate response.**

#### **11. ERIC update**

Katherine Pinnock provided an update:

- A stakeholder workshop was held on 5<sup>th</sup> March; this was useful in obtaining a wide range of views on the role of ERIC, and in particular its relationship with the Durham Biodiversity Data Service
- A separate sub-group has been established to look in detail at funding arrangements
- The ERIC website is now live – [www.twmuseums.org.uk/eric/](http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/eric/)
- The EYE project website has also been re-vamped
- A recoding workshop is to be arranged for September 2010 – this will cover issues such as what ERIC can offer, the National Biodiversity Network; the need for local and regional data; and sessions on current recording activity

**12. Any other business/updates**

- i) SITA Enriching Nature – the Fund is likely to be over-subscribed. Potential projects should clearly focus on contributing to BAP targets.
- ii) Annual Event – it was agreed that this has proved popular in the past and the next event should be arranged for September
- iii) Annual Report – it was agreed that the next annual report should be prepared; perhaps less elaborate than the last with a focus on LWS and NI 197.

**13. Next meeting**

10.00 a.m. on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at Billingham Beck Valley Visitor Centre.