



Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership

Coastal and Wetland Action Group

Tuesday 12 October 2010

Attendance; Anne Gladwin (MBC), Deborah Jefferson (HBC), Toby Collett (RSPB), Neil Docherty (SBC), Allan Snape (Northumbria Water), David Laing, Rachel Jackson (TVWT), Robert Woods (INCA), Ben Lamb (Tees Rivers Trust), Martin Allen (Wildflower Ark), Sue Antrobus (BAP Co-ordinator).

Apology; Katy Dickson (Environment Agency).

It was noted that Katy was on at a site meeting with a developer, providing ecological advice on a tributary of the River Skerne.

1. Coordinated Mink control in the Tees Valley

Update and actions from last meeting-

Position statement on mink control

The draft statement was supported and agreed by the TVBP steering group. It was agreed at that meeting that this Wetland and Coastal Action Group will take an coordinating role in the monitoring of both mink sightings and recording of dispatched mink

Monitoring of mink

Our survey form has been posted on the Teesmouth Bird Club website and distributed via email to everyone on this group. Kenny has only had two sightings returned as a result. We don't know if this is because there have been no recent sightings or that people are not reporting them. Kenny has reported that there have been no mink south of the Tees in the past three months. Neil reported that they had dispatched mink at Cowpen Bewley but we haven't captured this on the form.

For coordinated control to be successful we need to do two things; Ensure widespread use of monitoring form to get a better idea of numbers, distribution and movements and record any dispatches we make.

Sue has produced paper copies of monitoring form for people to take away from the meeting

Action: Sue: Promote mink monitoring by conservation professional, volunteers and wider community by communicating need to conservation professionals through BAP partnership Website posts and providing additional publicity.

Action All: Promote use of forms with your organisation, community groups and volunteers that you work with.

Dispatching of mink

Stockton BC's pest control section is able to provide a limited dispatch serve (charged) in Stockton for other organisations. They have many demands on their pest control service especially in summer. Sue has discussed potential of having targeted control on specific weeks which are planned in advance. This has been progressed with them by Toby for work at Saltholme. So far there has not been mink in that area this autumn. Ian Bond has discussed dispatching mink with

HBC pest control officers, they have no capacity for dispatching mink, whether on local authority or private land.

All agreed to keep an ear open for people with the capability of dispatching minks such as private land owners and gamekeepers that are local to North Tees.

2. Tees Rivers Trust- potential projects in the Tees Valley? Ben Lamb

Ben was welcomed to the meeting and he gave a brief introduction to the Tees Rivers Trust. It is a new organisation, covering the whole of the river from source to estuary and its tributaries. Its objectives are: :

- To protect, conserve, rehabilitate and improve the river and its catchment area, its feeder streams, water courses, estuary and adjacent coastal areas;
- To develop the ecosystem approach to catchment management;
- To advance the understanding of the river, the river corridor and its catchment area including fauna, flora and economic or social activity and river catchment management;
- To stimulate broader socio-economic benefits derived from an improved river, particularly activities which generate employment.

They will be working in partnership to improve, conserve and rehabilitate the River Tees catchment through research, education, habitat improvement. In April 2010 private donations matched by funding from the EA enabled the Trust to employ their first full time officer – Ben. He discussed a research project on American signal crayfish which moved on to a general discussion on invasive aquatic species including *crassula*.

A suggestion made for a Tees catchment wide workshop on invasive alien species. Ben will investigate this as a possibility.

Questions- Is there anyone in the Tees Valley collating records for invasive plant species? or is this being done nationally- if anyone knows please let Sue know.

3. Opportunities for marine workshops in Tees Valley with the Big Sea Survey

Sue has been contacted by Heather Sugden who is new in post at the Dove Marine laboratory. Their Big Sea Survey started 6 months ago with funding from HLF, covering the coasts of Northumberland, Durham and the Tees Valley to Saltburn. The project is about involving volunteers to collect baseline coastal data, focusing on rocky shores. Heather was unable to attend today's meeting but is planning to come to future ones. Sue is meeting with her tomorrow to find out more about the project and where we as a group and organisations can fit in. There was very little knowledge about the project around the group and no one had seen any promotion or volunteer recruitment apart from on Countryfile programme last weekend. There was widespread interest in the group about hosting one of their volunteer coastal workshops in the Tees Valley and possibly some joint events as well as the TVBP and countryside centres promoting their activities.

Action: Sue to report back to group via email after meeting

Action: Sue to pass Deborah's email details to Heather re the possibility of an event in the Hartlepool Countryside events programme 2011

4. Plans to create new ponds and tackle *crassula* in Middlesbrough

Anne reported that a number of ponds in Middlesbrough have *crassula* and outlined their plans to tackle two, Whinney Banks Pond, and Berwick Hills LNR Pond. Following advice from Katy Dickson at the Environment Agency, they will be digging a new pond at each site using the spoil to bury *crassula* at the existing ponds. It is not known if this will work but it was felt worth a try. It was noted that considerable care would need to be taken to ensure that the new ponds were not contaminated by the old ones in their creation. It was suggested that heavy duty fabric (the sort

used as weed control in tree planting) be used in addition, under the spoil. Middlesbrough Council will be carefully monitoring the process for two years to see if it works and will share the results with the rest of the partnership.

5. Introducing the Boro Becks project

Anne reported on this new three year project, employing a three person team. It is a partnership between Middlesbrough Council, the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency. It will focus on community engagement and involvement and small scale beck enhancements in Middlesbrough.

Action: Anne to supply contact details of the team and summary of project to go out with meeting notes

6. Summary of ponds to be created and restored in final winter of the Pondscape Project

Rachel gave an illustrated presentation of the 30 ponds that will be created /restored during this winter, 2010/11, which is the final year of the project. These are:

Site name	Rough Grid reference	Ponds
Pickards meadow	NZ4004327446	create 1
Pinchinthorpe	NZ5902414987	restore 3/4 and replace sluice
Bowesfield	NZ4476816200	create 5
Guisborough Sewage Treatment Works	NZ46001633	create 5
Westworth Woods	NZ636134	create 5
Carlin Howe Dunsdale	NZ6110817918	restore 1
Hart to Haswell	NZ4763336657	restore 2
Family Wood	NZ494 319	create 2
Seaton Carew Golf course	NZ5264429168	restore 1
Tioxide site		Restore wetland

7. Seal monitoring in 2010

Robert gave an illustrated presentation on the seal monitoring project that INCA coordinates focusing on the 2010 results. Systematic monitoring has taken place for 20 years so a good data set. Graphs were shown of harbour seal pupping rate (1989-2010) and maximum daily seal counts for both species of seal. These both show an upward trend. For harbour seals this year, 11 pups, all survived. He discussed changes in haul out locations including the increased use of Greatham Creek observed over the last couple of years. Note: PowerPoint slides to accompany meeting notes.

A discussion followed on concerns about disturbance of seals at Greatham Creek and safety of pedestrians stopping there to see seals. Interpretation discussed and road safety features, including speed limits and footpaths. These issues were raised at an Access workshop organised by the North Tees Nature Network that took place on 15th October 2010.

8. Tees Valley NVC fen habitat survey- findings update

The TVBP have received a small grant from Natural England earlier this year to carry out NVC surveys of fen habitat in the Tees Valley for the BAP national habitat surveys. The Wildflower Ark where commissioned to carry out these surveys. For each site the survey records the extent, vegetation type (according to the national vegetation classification) of the marshes/wet flushes/fens in the area, and to give a list of each species of plant and the amount of that plant within the marsh or fen area. The work is being undertaken to increase our knowledge about

Biodiversity Action Plan habitats within the Tees Valley and obtain an idea of the character of our local herb-rich marshes.

Martin presented some photographs of the sites he'd surveyed so far; Beacon Hill Marsh (Hartlepool), Hardwick Dene Pasture (Stockton), Capon Hall Marsh (Redcar & Cleveland), Black Wood Marsh (Hartlepool), Moordale Bog and Eston Mire (Redcar & Cleveland), East and West Gill (Stockton). He is also hoping to survey a couple of sites in the Darlington area too.

There was some interesting variation amongst the sites from rush dominated wet flushes amongst herb-rich grassland, to acid bogs on lowland moor. There was sadly no sign of the Bird's-eye Primrose at the Hartlepool site where it was found 15 years ago although many of the other plants found with it were still present. Other marshes have increased in size from previous surveys and one was found recently as part of the Wildflower Ark Hunt for Lost Meadows project and is not yet a LWS. Most seem in reasonably good condition.

As well as recording the marshes, some useful management points should come from the survey that we can follow up in the future.

9. Update of the Visit North Tees brochure

Sue has been working on this with Ben Calvert (RSPB Salholme) and they now have a draft text which is being "designed up" before further consultation. The main a change in focus has been the inclusion of very detailed travel information that has been prepared by transport planners' from Tees Valley Unlimited.

The date of the next meeting will be on Wednesday 26th January 2011, at 10am at Billingham Beck Visitor Centre