

South West Biodiversity Implementation Plan sector working group for

Water and Wetlands

Tuesday 17 May, 10.30am

Environment Agency, Manley House, Exeter

Minutes

Present: Lyn Jenkins (EA), Ruth Barden (Wessex Water), Nick Harrison (Defra), Phil Brewin (IDB), Loveday Jenkin (Cornwall CC), Heather Sohl (SWRBP)

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from James Millet (RSPB), Phil Collins (EN), Purgle Linham (WSBRC)

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Amendments -

Objective 4 - For 'restoration projects' do we mean enhancement or recreation, as it is normally a matter of enhancement.

Action 2 - Change to 'Concern expressed over the need to meet PSA targets on Somerset Levels and Moors'

Indicators - **Action - LynJ to speak to Phil Collins about the indicators that English Nature would be asked to supply.**

3. Moving forward the programme of actions in the SWBIP

For particular projects someone will be identified to lead action or the project will be dropped.

Objective 1			
Manage water and wetlands using an integrated and sustainable approach to increase biodiversity.			
	Actions	Delivered by who	Timescale
1	Promote the concept of sustainable abstraction and continue a programme of restoration measures to alleviate low flows.	EA, Water companies.	Ongoing
2	Promote the wise use of water by businesses and in the home.	Lead: EA, Water companies Partners: NGOs, Industry and small / medium businesses	Ongoing
3	Develop integrated land management plans for reducing flood risk and providing sustainable water supplies on a catchment basis for people and wildlife.	EA	Medium

Action 1 - happening

Action 2 - Sustainability SW and water companies are working towards this. Water Voice are also promoting awareness. SWBIP group do not need to do more.

Action 3 - CFMP of the River Parrett (draft 2003) was deemed inappropriate. It was one of the first ones and biodiversity was not taken on board. EA lead on this, but local authority needs to be involved in the process also. Needs to be in the LDF.

WFD delivery does not have budgets to take forward action for public engagement and planning.

There are mixed messages as to what constitutes a 'catchment', which needs to be made clear.

'Integrated Flood Risk Management' is the new name for 'flood defence' in the EA. Alan Rafelt is the new head on CFMP in the SW with 5 staff under him.

WLMP - land management is important too, but this is covered under objective 4.

Action - LynJ to arrange meeting between Alan Rafelt, his 5 staff and SWBIP reps in the autumn to discuss the inclusion of biodiversity in CFMPs and for them to explain the process to us.

Action - NH to look at CFMP for the River Teign, who was responsible and what had been produced. Can we see it externally?

Indicators -

Wessex Water has information on macroinvertebrates as well as the EA.

Action - LynJ and RB to discuss what data is available and to discuss with PB on what it is telling us about biodiversity.

Objective 2			
Continue improvements in water quality, including minimising diffuse pollution by reducing run off of water and soil from farmland.			
	Actions	Delivered by who	Timescale
1	Continue to protect rivers, lakes, wetlands and coastal waters through the monitoring and control of point source pollution.	EA	Ongoing
2	Continue the improvement works carried out on sewage treatment works to reduce nutrient inputs to rivers.	Lead: Water companies Partners: EA	Medium
3	Raise awareness among landowners and managers about the problems of soil compaction in the region and promote best practice for soil husbandry.	Lead: RDS, agricultural advisors Partners: NFU, CLA, FWAG, Landowners, contractors, EA	Medium

Action 1 - Ongoing, so no extra action required from SWBIP group.

Action 2 - Ongoing, so no extra action required from SWBIP group.

Action 3 - ELS has strong drive to provide this awareness. Richard Smith from RDS is writing guidance on soil compaction for RDS advisors on ELS.

Jenny Bashford, EA, is looking at including soil compaction in training institutions. Can Water for Wildlife officers be trained on this too? Need biodiversity advisors to be informed on this as well as RDS advisors.

Action - HS to discuss this action with the Farming and Food group to ask them to take responsibility for it.

LoJ commented that it is not just soil husbandry that is important, but also management of hedges and buffers strips. All agreed that whilst soil husbandry is the primary focus, these other factors need to be considered. We need to identify people in the biodiversity sector who would benefit from training. Would the PCP for Parrett host a day? The Axe-Char project is providing demonstration projects.

Action - PB to talk to FWAG about whether they are happy to host a training event in autumn/early spring. LynJ can ask Richard Smith to attend. All to pass names of people that should attend to HS.

Indicator - Using salmon populations excludes Somerset, but EA have the data available. LynJ can obtain data on spawning targets which is useful.

Objective 3			
Ensure regional policies and strategies promote the conservation and enhancement of rivers, wetlands and coasts.			

	Actions	Delivered by who	Timescale
1	Provide timely advice and input to regional strategies and initiatives.	SWRBP	Ongoing
2	Protect floodplains from unsuitable development through the planning system.	LAs, EA	Ongoing
3	Provide financial incentives to landowners for flood management and target the new Environmental Stewardship scheme to support floodplain restoration.	RDS	Short
4	Provide advice on wetland restoration for flood risk management to inform future Catchment Flood Management Plans and Flood Management Strategies.	SWRBP, EA	Short-Medium
5	Encourage riparian landowners/managers to adopt best practice for the sustainable management of rivers and riparian land.	Lead: Landowners, FWAG, Rivers Trusts, Anglers Partners: RDS, NFU, CLA, NT EN, RSPB, SWWT, LAs	Medium
6	Develop conservation initiatives to reconnect rivers and wetlands at a landscape scale and restore key wetland areas to increase wildlife, help to alleviate flooding and provide other benefits to the water cycle.	Lead: LAs, EA, IDBs, NGOs Partners: GOSW, NFU, CLA, RDS, FWAG, NT, AONB Partnerships, Landowners, developers, EN	Medium-Long
7	Promote the recognition of floodplains as a key component of sustainable flood risk management.	EA, LAs, IDBs	Medium-Long
8	Initiate and/or support targeted recovery projects for key species and assemblages of plants and animals for example, water vole, breeding waders, native crayfish, great crested newts, southern damselfly, floodplain invertebrates, reedbeds and floodplain forests, linked to UK BAP targets.	EN, LBAPs, NGOs, EA, FWAG, NT, landowners	Medium- Long

Action 1 - Nature Map is identifying Strategic Nature Areas in the SW. This will include Rivers. The Nature Map will be included in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Action - HS to send NH and PB a copy of the Nature Map.

Action 2 - Happening and the SWBIP group do not need to do more. EA advice provided to local authority planners may not be taken on board, but just viewed as only their usual response. We need to think about how we can educate planners more.

Action 3 - PSA targets are focused on target areas, e.g. SSSI wetlands.

Action - LynJ to talk to Phil Tolerton about what the targets areas are.

Action 4 - Need to do regionally and develop through the meeting discussed under Objective 1, action 3. If the Nature Map, including rivers, is included in RSS then these areas should be in CFMPs.

Action 5 - Cycleau Conference is to be held on 22/23 Sept 2005 in Falmouth. Parallel sessions are being held and there may be the opportunity for one to be based on best practice for riparian

management. Such projects could possibly provide either speakers or just a display. This conference is free.

Action - LovedayJ to see if other regional stakeholders can be invited and whether it is feasible to include another session on appropriate management for biodiversity.

All to send Loveday ideas of potential speakers from projects (with a brief details) by this Friday.

If the Cycleau Conference was a success a similar event could be organised by the SWRBP in 18 - 24 months time.

Action 7 - The meeting to be organised from Objective 1, Action 3 will be key.

Objective 4			
Restore degraded rivers and wetlands to provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits, and open up opportunities for tourism and recreation linked to the water environment.			
	Actions	Delivered by who	Timescale
1	Promote best practice for the long-term management of rivers, streams and wetlands.	Lead: EA ,NGO's, FWAG, NT Partners: IDBs, AONB Partnerships, Landowners, Angling Clubs	Short
2	Improve the implementation of Water Level Management Plans to reverse the impact of past drainage schemes.	Lead: Defra Partners: EA, EN	Short
3	Establish at least three large scale and high-profile river/wetland restoration projects in the South West.	Lead: NGOs, FWAG, LAs, EA, NT Partners: businesses	Medium
4	Produce a Regional Rivers and Wetlands Map of target areas for collaborative restoration projects linked to UK BAP targets, using the Nature Map. This should include wetlands of cultural interest for example water meadows.	SWRBP	Medium
5	Encourage new targeted woodland creation schemes and riverside planting to assist in stabilising riverbanks.	Lead: FC Partners: FWAG, Landowners	Medium
6	Seek opportunities for coastal and fluvial managed retreat as part of flood defence schemes.	Lead: EA Partners: EN, LAs, NT	Medium
7	Encourage local partnerships bringing together farming, drainage authorities and biodiversity interests to improve management of existing wetland sites through management agreements (EN) and Water Level Management Plans (EA, EN, IDBs, Landowners).	Lead: EN Partners: EA, Landowners, IDBs, AONB Partnerships, NFU, CLA, FWAG	Medium-long

Action 4 - Nature Map will identify these target areas, but also EA, RSPB and EN are working on an initiative to produce a wetlands visionary map. Carrie Howard is the project officer at the RSPB (The Lodge).

Action - PB, with James Millett, RSPB, to update the SWBIP Water and Wetlands group on what is happening with wetlands visionary map.

Action 6 - See AOB

All other actions, including under Objective 5, dealt with in projects.

4. Identification of regionally significant projects:

SITA Environmental Trust through the landfill tax credits scheme are likely to provide £500,000 pa to biodiversity projects in the region, see www.sitatrust.org.uk for details. A project assessment panel of regional biodiversity experts will be set up to assess applications in the first year. After this the SWRBP will be asked to provide a regional programme of projects for funding for 3 years. It has been proposed that projects are put forward from organisations for consideration by the SWRBP. Further discussion and agreement by the SWRBP will be needed before the development of this programme.

Action: LynJ to look at the SWBIP objectives and actions and identify which will require specific projects that can be included in the programme. All to consider the process/priorities for developing this programme of projects and provide ideas to LynJ/HS.

5. Monitoring and Biodiversity Indicators for the Water and Wetlands sector

See discussion points under the objectives in item 3.
Objective 4 - Change 'Large scale' to 'regionally significant'.

Action LynJ to think about defining what projects would constitute regional significance.

All agreed water vole populations are not a good indicator to use, as they reflect presence/absence of mink populations and are not found in Devon or Cornwall.

Action - All to discuss indicators at next meeting.

6. AOB

English Nature report on identifying biodiversity opportunities (87 sites identified) in the South West is available on the SW Biodiversity website. EA are looking at managed realignment sites they are responsible for and developing feasibility of action.

EA and local authorities have commissioned monitoring of coastal areas to feed into Shoreline Management Plans. This will include an element of biodiversity monitoring at the habitat not species level.

Better representation is needed on the Water and Wetlands Group, including more local authorities.

Action - LynJ to ask Pat Lehain, RDS, to join Water and Wetlands Group. Also consider someone from the West Rivers Trust. RB to pursue someone from South West Water. PB to provide names of Avon local authority representatives to LynJ/HS.

7. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 18 October, 10.30, Manley House, Exeter