

Minutes of the 3rd WBAP Freshwater meeting

Held at the Welsh Assembly Government Building, Technium, Aberystwyth
Date: 21st October 2009, Start Time: 11am

Attendees:

Tristan Hatton Ellis (THE) CCW
Huw Jones (HJ) Environment Agency Wales
Stella Hammond (SH) Environment Agency Wales
Jeremy Biggs (JB) Pond Conservation (by teleconference)
Rhian Thomas (RT) CCW
Emma Durward (ED) Powys Council
Gareth Davies (GD) Dept Rural Affairs Welsh Assembly Government
Rebecca Good (RG) Pond Conservation
Dai Roberts (DR) Riverfly Partnership Wales/SE Wales Rivers Trust
Frank Jones (FJ) Afonydd Cymru

Apologies:

Janet Buckles (JB) Environment Agency Wales
Stuart Moodie (SM) British Waterways
Kate Williamson (KW) Snowdonia National Park Authority
Robin Woodyatt (RW) Welsh Local Government
Geoff Liles (JL) check affiliation
Julian Jones (JJ) Radnor Wildlife Trust

1. Welcome and Introductions

Changes to the Freshwater BAP Group:

Helen Keeble (HK) has left Pond Conservation to do a Ph.D.; Jeremy Biggs (JB) is replacing her on the group until a replacement is found.
Frank Jones (FJ) is welcomed to the Group, he represents the newly founded 5 Rivers Trust (Pembrokeshire, Teifi, Clwyd and Conwy, Dee, Carmarthenshire). The 5 Rivers Trust has a £1.3 million grant, there is money available for Environmental Improvement work, some of which could contribute to Freshwater BAP.

2. Minutes/Actions of 2nd meeting

1. The Riverfly partnership has been granted £18k over 3 years from Natural England (NE). It may be possible to obtain NE's permission to spend some money in Wales (Wye/Dee). RPW may be able to provide resources in the form of staff/volunteer time. DR to follow up. **Ongoing, there is a possibility some money may be available for *Potamanthus luteus*, as it was found to present in some tribs of the Usk. Possibility some money can come from Million Ponds. Grants might be available for surveys on *Potamanthus luteus*.**
2. GD to circulate a resume of the progress of Glastir and a copy of the minister's announcement to be circulated to the group. **Done.**

3. THE to circulate draft prescriptions/response for BAP perspective to be circulated for next meetings agenda. **Done.**
4. JJ to circulate Severn and Wye initiative, Living Landscapes agenda to the group. **Carried Forward**
5. JJ to circulate details of ponds on the Wye Project. **Carried Forward**
6. THE circulate draft report and draft list of sites for survey project. Members to return proposals with maximum of 5 sites per member within 2 weeks of meeting. **Some proposals were received and added to the list of sites. Survey is now complete, report will be circulated when ready.**
7. Action: ALL to contribute to actions for species, drafts to JB by end of June
 - a) KW & THE: Mammals
 - b) THE: Herps (via Liz Howe)
 - c) THE: Vascular plants (via Trevor Dines)
 - d) HJ & THE: Fish
 - e) KW to check minutes of task & Finish group for whom to contact.

Largely done but on-going action

JB to check if there is an Invertebrate group and let DR know.

8. Habitat actions: ALL to contribute. Responses to JB by June 15. Leads:
 - a) HK & RG to work up actions for ponds
 - b) HJ, THE, JJ & DR to deal with rivers
 - c) THE to deal with lakes
 - d) JB to co-ordinate response and produce spreadsheet summary
 - e) HJ to find out how actions are co-ordinated in England.

Deadline slipped. This action will be discussed during the current meeting. WBP have produced a standard template.
9. Flagship ponds List; ALL group members to nominate additional sites to fill in geographical gaps, 2 ponds per LBAP area by end June. KW to contract LBAP officers for their views. THE to collate data and send to RG. **To be discussed and finalised at the meeting.**
10. Survey requirements for 2010. ALL group members to send formal proposals to THE by end of August. **The deadline will be extended, there is scope to add to this. If anyone has ideas for this submit them to EAW now, they need to get in before end of November when another bidding round will start. This could include technical requirements, if anyone has anything in mind there could be scope for more material.**
11. THE to check for relevance of freshwater habitats for bats particularly Barbastelle. **Not done. Reassigned to Rob Strachan.**
12. THE to tidy up responses to WBP questionnaire and re-circulate for additional feedback. **Done.**

3. Update on existing activity and resources in Wales (ALL)

FJ (Rivers Trust)

Funding is available to specifically address EU fishing, with the Main focus looking at migratory fish such as Salmon, Trout and Eels. All work must have wider environmental benefits. The funding will cover 2 officer posts, which will

concentrate on habitat improvements, fencing rivers and removing obstructions from rivers. Some money is available for liming rivers (where there is strong evidence of acidification) problem areas will be targeted. The posts will be funded for 3 years, with the aim of the post becoming self sustainable after that period.

Pembrokeshire, Teifi, Clwyd, Conwy, Dee and Carmarthenshire are all targeted for proposed work. Part of the habitat improvement scheme could be to reduce invasive plant species along the rivers, but the main aim is to improve habitats that are in poor condition.

Walkover surveys will be a major part of the job. Issues identified as local problems will be compared with info EAW have gathered (pinch point parts of the WFD), and where EAW have fish passes.

ACTION RT – Send contact details for each regional officer in CCW to FJ

DR

Not sure which part of the discussion this relates to.

Concerns regarding the impact of Agriculture and Industry on Rivers. There is a mismatch between reports and managements plans? Agriculture and Forestry are inaccurate.

A lot could be done to improve the figures. Which?

GD

New Catchments Sensitive farming Scheme will be available to eligible holdings in NVZ designated areas only.

If anyone has any comments to make or issues to raise let GD know.

There is a new group for Monnow, the main problem is funding.

DR expresses concern that he visits a lot of rivers and the vast majority are in poor quality, devoid of invertebrates.

There is a possibility that bio-monitoring could be passed to water companies. There is not enough monitoring being done at present, this could reduce due to lack of resources (funding and manpower) in the EAW.

A priority of EAW over the next few years is to target poor quality rivers.

DR suggests looking into the reintroduction of *Potamanthus luteus* and *Nigrobaetis niger*. Discussed with EAW for monitoring/survey on ponds.

(RG – Pond Conservation)

Million ponds project ran training over the summer which was successful.

BIFFA have provided funding for 9 sites. The new BAP list includes 47 species, Pond Conservation are aiming to create ponds for species and plants with restricted movement.

(ED – Powys Council)

Powys Council is currently reviewing LBAP powers and is hoping to form links between EAW, CCW and other relevant organisations. There was some

difficulty in accessing actions assigned to EAW on BARS. HJ suggested contacting Alun Jones (FBR Upper Severn) and Mark Potter (South Wales). FJ commented that Rivers Trusts did not have access to or experience of BARS. THE suggested that they make contact with the relevant LBAP officer who could provide additional biodiversity guidance and enter relevant actions carried out by the Rivers Trusts onto BARS.

RT (CCW)

Will be contacting Species Expert Group for outcome of recent meeting. Needs clarification. Some money is available for river BAP surveys next year, contact RT with suggestions.

HJ (EAW)

EAW is amending its boundaries so that these reflect the political map of Wales rather than the current catchment based boundary.

EAW is still working through Outcome 21 and review of consents. Some SAC rivers will be affected, prioritising actions for CCW.

HJ has been involved with higher level species as part of the Glastir Project. How?

Issues with blue-green algae at Llyn Padarn, big concern regarding potential effects it on the Arctic Char population.

Llyn Coron catchment is due to be designated as an NVZ, but this is currently being challenged by local landowners

EAW **welcome** the introduction of a bug to help control Japanese Knotweed. Giant hogweed and Himalayan Balsam remain a concern, spreading along watercourses.

Core Management Plans for designated Rivers are available on CCW website.

ACTION RT – Circulate the Core Management plans to the group.

JB (Pond Conservation)

At a recent pond BAP EAW committed to creating XX ponds in England & Wales.

A Google maps database is up and running for ponds, not all data is on there yet. (Jeremy can we add the link)

The Countryside Survey Ponds Report is nearly ready for publication.

There is a possibility that ponds can be used as landscape quality indicators.

THE (CCW)

Gwyniad translocation project: This summer, the new lake was surveyed and a sub adult Gwyniad was found, suggesting that the new population is establishing. Further monitoring is planned.

A group led by Steve Ormerod at Cardiff University have been contracted to review the literature on freshwater connectivity and produce an outline framework for implementing freshwater connectivity in Wales. BAP could be an important part of this and the views of group members will be sought. A draft report will be available after Christmas.

ACTION: THE to circulate draft report once it is available. All to provide comments.

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4. Ecosystem Group Protocols document - draft for comment

THE invited comments from the group on this WBP document. The link with the species group and ecosystem group is still unsure, there is scope to link these with the policy group.

DR expressed difficulty in joining LBAP Group (which? Clarify), he has tried several times but so far hasn't received a response. Riverfly partnership Wales has a lot of knowledge to offer the group.

ACTION ED – Chase this problem up and assist with enrolling DR to the Group.

5. Glastir

a. Entry level scheme – prescriptions.

Overview of where we are now (GD)

Minister announced Glastir would over-ride 4 previous schemes, so they all fall under the Glastir Project. As well as biodiversity and landscape, Glastir seeks to deliver outcomes for Water quality and quantity issues, climate change (including carbon storage) and any other environmental issues. The entry level scheme for Glastir will commence in 2012, and the higher level in 2013.

Because of the tighter timelines for entry level applications, these prescriptions were drawn up first and have now been finalised. Higher tier prescriptions are still at the draft stage.

EAW have responded and been involved in drafting up schemes.

ACTION HJ chase up whether the EAW have done this.

Creating new ponds has been taken out of the entry level scheme as there is a risk of farmers locating the ponds in wrong areas. THE asked whether this was a problem but JB stated that in view of Countryside Survey results it would be preferable to target pond creation resources in areas where benefit would be greatest. The higher tier scheme will still include ponds.

No additional funding has been offered to police cross compliance. Farmers will be notified no more than 48 hours in advance of a cross compliance inspection. The farms that will be visited are picked randomly. Suggested by FJ that where there are major issues at farms, it would be useful to link up at a local level EAW, CCW, Rivers Trust to all have an influence and provide technical advice.

The policy group should be consulted on how WAG, EAW and Rivers Trust can work together to help problem farms.

FJ expressed concern about notifying farmers in advance as he is aware of “tidy ups” before visits.

Entry into the scheme will be based on a holding achieving a points threshold. Points are gained by an applicant choosing actions from a list of options. Points scored are based on profit foregone rather than environmental benefit. A lot of options will have capital costs attached. A flat rate payment per hectare will be given to farmers.

5 b. Higher tier scheme – biodiversity prescriptions.

EAW (Simon Neill) tasked with drafting proposals for the water management challenges (quality and quantity) within the higher tier. These draft proposals due to be submitted to WAG by mid November. Envisaged that the freshwater group should be consulted on these draft proposals in the context of the wider remit.

Concerns: Different organisations are interested in different aspects of water quality and quantity, which may translate into prescriptions and priority areas that don't protect biodiversity. Water Levels may not be of interest to the group (e.g. Fens being wet enough is of indirect interest)
Agriculture, Pesticides and sedimentation are all key impacts to WFD monitoring.

Once the draft proposals are back from Simon Neil the prescriptions can be looked at in greater detail. Should expect to receive draft by mid November.

ACTION HJ – Review water quality information from Simon Neil and circulate to the group.

EAW suggested putting FWPM forward as part of the Biodiversity prescription as it is very sensitive to water quality.

A shortlist of species needs to be produced, as all the species cannot be targeted.

EAW suggest silt traps on the Eden, Mawddach etc... to help provide FWPM habitat. These are practical as a farmer could install them himself with advice / guidance from a specialist. Other sediment and nutrient control measures are likely to be needed.

ACTION HJ – Circulate the biodiversity prescription among the group.

c. Higher Tier scheme – water quality and quantity prescriptions

One of the biggest biodiversity issues is catching silt in traps, once that's tackled there will be more biodiversity improvements.

There is a big issue with maize, possibility of creating a 2m buffer along the river banks, and look into/investigate slopes and silt entering rivers, and issues with silt spread. Both CCW and EA have proposed measures to reduce the impact of maize growing.

Concern raised on behalf of GL (Otter Group) that some of the farmers would not be trained sufficiently. Experienced project officers (with advice from experts e.g. SEG) are needed to ensure everyone is correctly informed. Different teams have been working independently on the various work areas, leading to possible overlaps and duplication of effort. The group were concerned that little time is available for collating and comparing prescriptions, which may result in some inappropriate wording or specifications.

6. Wales Level Target Setting

THE presented the WBP guidance spreadsheet on producing targets for species and habitats to the group, which had been populated with some draft lake actions and targets. SEG have been tasked with producing species targets, but apart from mammals no freshwater species targets are yet available. It is not absolutely clear what actions will be expected from the freshwater group, or how the actions will be agreed.

For each action the Ecosystem Groups have been asked to identify an “Action Lead”, a member of the group who will be responsible for chasing up and ensuring actions are met.

The main thing that the group needs to agree on is drafting rivers targets. A sensible deadline should be suggested and someone designated to take the lead.

Action THE – Complete the draft lakes actions and targets

Action HJ / RhT – Produce draft rivers actions and targets

Action RhT - Produce draft actions and targets for gwyniad and charr

Action HJ / KW – Obtain any species actions from the SEG and circulate for comment.

Action RG / JB – Produce draft pond actions and targets

7. Flagship Ponds for Wales

Targets to improve ponds. Public, organisations and partners should be engaging more to get a better understanding of whether ponds are being managed. Sites that people can be responsible for need to be identified. Pond Conservation can provide tools, resources and knowledge to help set up ponds.

HJ: Pensychnant Pond has a Great Crested Newt population present, is there any scope to set another pond up?

The group discussed how the list of flagship ponds could be used. THE suggested Pond Conservation write to landowners to inform them that a flagship pond was on their land and encourage an interest in its conservation. JB was reluctant to do this due to a lack of resource and to avoid raising expectations of funding. THE suggested that LBAP coordinators might be able to do some of this.

ACTION JB – look at national BAP and advise the group on how the list of flagship ponds can best be used within Wales.

8. uklakes.net website

A recent Lakes Task Team meeting discussed this website. It holds basic information for every lake in Britain and N. Ireland and is a useful BAP resource.

The website may need to be taken off line for security purposes because it includes locations of reservoirs. THE suggests ways around it such as removing the reservoir or changing reservoir names to 'unknown'.

The group indicated that it strongly supported keeping the website active.

Provisional ACTION THE – circulate an address and contact details so that delegates can write a letter expressing their support to keep the website.

9. Policy Issues requiring discussion

Forestry Commission haven't yet been involved much with Policy making discussions and Issues.

HJ has invited them to meetings but no reply yet received.

Forestry Commission should network and work alongside partners more. More pressure should be put of the Forestry Commission to attend meetings.

Cypermethrin can negatively affect water quality in rivers, although it is the most widespread pesticide used. Cypermethrin was withdrawn from use in sheep dip, but is still allowed to be used for other agricultural and forestry purposes.

There is concern surrounding best practises and follow up issues/checks when using Cypermethrin.

ACTION RT – Feed views of the group back to Water Guidelines and Forestry Review Group.

ACTION HJ – Write to Diana Reynolds and raise concerns regarding lack of Forestry Commission Representation.

10. Species Issues

With regards to the Glastir project, it would be useful to have a standard sentence/paragraph that includes why decisions are made relating to water quality. Any issues the Species Expert Group expects the FEG to tackle need to be raised.

ACTION HJ/THE – contact the SEG and WAG's agri-environment team pointing out this issue.

11. Research and survey requirements for next year

There is still scope to monitor new ponds for Pond Conservation. EAW and CCW will shortly be starting bidding rounds. If anyone has suggestions write/email THE and HJ (CC JB) Even if they are small suggestions (1K).

The proposal must be clear, outlining what needs to be done.

ACTION ALL – email THE and HJ (CC. JB in) with any ideas of projects ASAP (beginning of Nov)

12. Any Other Business

FJ – Access rambling work coming up, this is a good opportunity to work with partners on different projects.

13. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13th January, venue to be confirmed.