



Steering Group for the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership

19th January 10 – 2pm Winster Studio, Cromford Mill, Cromford, Derbyshire

Present:

Annie Cooper (Derbyshire County Council)
Carl Hawke (National Trust)
Charlotte Winnert (Chesterfield Borough Council)
Dan Abrahams (English Nature)
Dave Slinger (Derby City Council)
Debbie Court (Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership)
Emma Dagless (English Nature)
Helen Williams (Rural Development Services – DEFRA)
James Simpson (Environment Agency)

Jo Brown (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Kevin Exley (South Derbyshire District Council)
Marion Horton (Groundwork Erewash Valley)
Martin Rich (Amber Valley Borough Council)
Peter Lowe (Woodland Trust)
Roy Frost (Derbyshire Ornithological Society)
Stephen Wright (BTCV)
Yvonne Wright (Erewash Borough Council)

Apologies received from:

Forestry Commission, Derbyshire Dales District Council, National Farmers Union, National Forest, Country Land Owners Association, FWAG.

Annie Cooper welcomed everyone to the first steering group meeting for a number of years. She explained that since the group met a number of years ago there had been some changes to the BAP process locally. The employment of the Biodiversity Project Officer had led to the formation of an Executive Steering Group which has guided the Project Officer's workload. It was felt important to have a wider number of organisations invited to a Steering Group, especially as a number of the organisations were contributing financially to the LBAP co-ordination.

Annie explained that the Executive Steering Group, comprising of Derbyshire County Council, English Nature and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust met quarterly, this steering group will meet every six months and there will be an Annual Forum which will be open to everyone. The meeting dates for 2006 and up until April 2007 have now been set and the list will be circulated to LBAP partners and put on the website.

Debbie Court, the Biodiversity Project Officer, gave two presentations to the group. The first showed the progress that had been made towards the targets set in the various Habitat Action Plans. It also looked at the number of different posts and specific BAP related projects that are currently supported by external funding and specific BAP related projects that were currently seeking funding. The second presentation was a demonstration of the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) and how it was going to be used to record progress towards the BAP targets and actions. Copies of both of the presentations are attached to these minutes.

In order to achieve all of the actions and targets in the action plans it was considered necessary to draw up an implementation strategy. A draft A3 table was circulated showing the various LBAP partners and their perceived contributions towards the LBAP process. A copy is attached to these minutes. If you have any comments or additions to make please send them to Debbie Court.

The meeting then divided into three separate groups, each discussed a particular aspect of achieving the LBAP targets and actions.

Feedback from the groups:

Awareness Raising

Q1 Should the LBAP partners work together / share information on awareness raising issues?

It was felt that a lot of the partners are undertaking awareness raising activities and they don't necessarily share information on their achievements. There is certainly scope to pool existing resources.

Q2 Should there be a specific focus group for awareness raising, and if so who should be involved in this?

After some discussion it was felt that we could have a focus group for looking at awareness raising issues but its remit would need to be quite specific. Alternatively we could use the Steering Group to direct the Biodiversity Project Officer to awareness raising issues through in the habitat groups.

Q3 How should we tackle fundraising for awareness raising actions?

It was felt important to include a section for awareness raising actions and mini-projects in all funding bids for BAP projects.

Q4 How should we use the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership existing resources (ie not tied specifically to any organisation) such as the website, newsletter and Project Officer?

There could be a section on the website for awareness raising – a 'What's on section'
The newsletter could be used to the same effect.

Q5 How should we involve the Local Groups in the awareness raising actions?

Local Groups need to be involved in the awareness raising process as they have much specialist knowledge to add to the partnership.

Other issues:

- We currently tend to concentrate on physical achievement rather than awareness raising issues.
- We could try and get items on the local radio, especially the local BBC radio
- English Nature has an online image library as part of their website.
- It is currently difficult to know when we have achieved some of the actions.
- It was suggested that we could focus on a habitat every year thus sending out a stronger message.
- There is a role for regional bodies to get involved in awareness raising issues.

Fundraising

Q1: Should LBAP partners be working together / sharing information?

We are often competing for funds, which is generally healthy as it encourages good quality projects. However there is a danger that we waste time and effort, or fail to get LBAP work funded, by duplication. We can strengthen our bids by working in partnership. Therefore we should be working together.

Q2: Do we want a focus group for fundraising?

No. We think the issue is better addressed through the HAP groups and Steering Group and by improving communication between partners.

Q3: How can we use BAP existing resources for fundraising?

Could we use Debbie's role more by letting her know when we are applying for grants so that she can watch out for duplication or partnership opportunities? We want to avoid putting funding bid info onto the website or newsletter as it can be sensitive. HAP groups should discuss potential partnership bids. We should think big – could we get a corporate sponsor for the whole or part of the LBAP?

Q4: How should we involve Local Groups and species recorders in fundraising?

We need to find funding for survey, monitoring and data management, including LRC development. However it is very difficult to do it for this alone. Therefore we need to include it within funding bids for projects. It is also important to talk to local recorders and groups as they may already be doing survey or monitoring work which could be useful, or could contribute expertise or time to help deliver the project. The 'professional' organisations need to support this, possibly by providing equipment or training to allow development of better data recording and management systems, which would make the data more widely accessible. Most local groups do not have fundraising expertise.

Q5: Should we consider habitat specific funding bids involving several partners' land?

Yes! Partnership adds weight to bids, and makes it easier to find match funding. Some partners (E.g. National Trust) have amounts of money for particular types of work which they find difficult to spend themselves, but could through other organisations.

Q6: Should we be thinking regionally and working on bids with other LBAPs?

Yes although regional bids can be very complicated and time consuming so thought needs to be given into whether they are the best option. There are precedents such as the Strategic Partnerships Around River Corridors (SPARC) Interreg project. We see the EMRBF taking the lead role. Some organisations e.g. BTCV have regional fundraisers.

Planning.

Q1. Apart from the obvious 'planning' actions what other actions are appropriate to planners?

It was recognized that a large amount of biodiversity data is collected as part of the planning process. There is a need to 'capture' this data from consultants reports and feed this into the local record centre or appropriate biodiversity databases/GIS layers.

Planning has a role in the control of invasive species on development sites through the use of conditions. It was recognized that there was a need for planning officers to be training in the recognition of invasive species so they would be able to recognize these on site visits.

There is also a role for planners to play in awareness raising of biodiversity issues to developers. This could be achieved through the use of conditions or pre-application discussions to raise the awareness of the need to have a net gain for biodiversity through the planning process.

Q2. Should the local authorities work together on an agreed method of reporting (this will also tie in with the annual monitoring report requirements for the LDF under PPS12)? If so how can this be done?

It is very important for the Local Authorities to work together to capture the same data for monitoring purposes. The Erewash Borough Council draft SPD for Biodiversity was considered to be a very good basis to start from and other local authorities should be encouraged to follow suit. The checklist should also be used for quantifying effects on biodiversity and should be in a spreadsheet format. This would then feed into the annual LDF monitoring report. The future Local Record Centre could also be involved in calculating the annual quantifiable effects on biodiversity.

It was recognised that some local authorities have a dedicated monitoring officer, so do not. The issues of monitoring for biodiversity should be raised at the planning officers monitoring group.

Q3. What role, if any, can the Biodiversity Project Officer play in this process?

The Biodiversity Project Officer should continue to deliver biodiversity awareness raising sessions with local authority planners which could also be rolled out to members.

After feedback from the workshops there was a short discussion on the issues raised.

It was suggested that the LBAP perhaps needed a good strapline which would catch the media and layperson's attention. This would help the BAP gain additional publicity on the back of the BBC's Breathing Spaces campaign.

Annie Cooper asked the Steering Group whether it thought the LBAP partnership needed a chairperson. Following a bit of a discussion with a few suggestions it was agreed that Debbie should write to the LBAP partners asking for suggestions.

Date of next Steering Group Meeting – **22nd June 2006 10-1pm at County Hall, Matlock.**