

Biodiversity Project Officer Progress Report Dec 2004 – June 2005

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Headings taken from ALSF application:

1. To engage the LBAP partnerships and provide regular feedback and support.

1.1 Annual Forum

An Annual Forum was arranged for 24th March 2005. Fifty-five bookings were received from LBAP partners, including mineral operators, many of whom had not attended previous Annual Forums. However, due to accommodation issues beyond the control of the Project, the Forum had to be postponed until 10th May 2005.

Sixty-two delegates attended the Forum on 10th May, representing 30 organisations. The focus of the morning session of the Forum was “LBAP progress” with presentations from a representative selection of LBAP partners. The focus of the afternoon session was “overcoming barriers to achieving LBAP Progress”. Following two presentations the delegates broke up into five separate workshops. Local mineral operators and contacts made during the life of the Project were invited to the Forum and attended a workshop focussed on mineral issues facilitated by the Project Officer.

Feedback from evaluation forms at the Forum indicate that over 95% of delegates thought the Forum was worthwhile attending. Over 90% of delegates rated the choice of speakers and topics as 4 or 5 (3 was average and 5 was excellent) and over 70% of delegates rated choice of workshops as 4 or 5 (3 was average and 5 was excellent). General comments indicated that people would have liked more time in the workshop sessions and that they felt it was important to follow up the ideas generated to keep the momentum going. Feedback from the workshops it appended to this report.

Two main issues have been followed up from the Forum:

1. The concept of a Derbyshire Biodiversity newsletter to keep partners in contact with progress and what each other are doing. Having spoken to the national Forest and the Peak District LBAP co-ordinators it was agreed that it would be sensible for the newsletter to cover the whole of Derbyshire, to further cement the overlap and relationships between the county LBAPs. It is suggested to have up 5 newsletters a year and for them to be short, up to 4 pages, and could be edited by the Project Officer, sent out by e-mail and also put on the website.
2. Following the Forum the Derbyshire County Council Highway maintenance team contacted the Project Officer to request help in revising the highway maintenance policy following numerous complaints about cutting of species-rich road verges. The Project Officer had a very positive meeting with the team and provided them with maps of all known road verges with biodiversity interest. These will be checked against the inventory of adopted highway to see which sites are under DCC management and thus which sites where the management can be altered.

2. Revise priority Lowland Derbyshire HAPs in line with current standards and ensure partners have commitment to actions.

2.1 Woodland

The Woodland Habitat Action Group met in January 2005 where a record number of organisations attended. A number of presentations were given from different LBAP

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partners and on interesting woodland projects just outside the LBAP area. The project officer gave a presentation on the progress that had been made on the woodland targets, hoping to inspire partners to provide more information on their activities. It was agreed to briefly revise the woodland HAPS, including targets, so they would be in line with the other HAPS.

2.2 Grassland

The semi-natural grassland HAP has now been completed.

2.3 Wetland

The Wetland Habitat Action Group met in January and discussed the drafts of the wetland HAPS that had been produced by LBAP partners. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust had produced since the initial meeting GIS layers showing distribution of swamps, reedbeds, mires, fens, ponds, lakes etc. This has made the setting of SMART targets easier. Since the meeting the Project Officer has completed the HAPs for:

- Rivers and streams,
- lowland swamps fens mires and reedbeds
- Standing open waters including ponds, lakes and canal.

A draft HAP for floodplain grazing marsh has been completed and has been circulated for comment.

2.4 Farmland

An initial meeting of a Farmland Habitat Action Group was held in mid February 2005. The group included representatives from DWT, EN, National Trust, Severn Trent, DEFRA (RDS) and Derbyshire Ornithological Society, with apologies from FWAG. The group decided to have HAPs for ancient/species rich hedgerows and cereal field margins. The group also discussed producing a generic Species Action Plan for farmland birds (including bullfinch, linnet, corn bunting, grey partridge, skylark, reed bunting, tree sparrow, turtle dove and lapwing). It was agreed for the Project Officer to draft HAPs and a SAP, using information provided by the partners. Drafts HAPs and a generic farmland bird SAP was distributed in April 2005.

2.5 Lowland heaths and upland heaths.

Work has begun on a draft HAP for lowland and upland heath. It has yet to be distributed for consultation.

3. Ensure partners understand and implement relevant actions and develop ability to work without support.

3.1 LBAP partners

LBAP partners have been made aware of their relevant actions at the Habitat Action Group meetings. Partners have been asked for progress reports in preparation of the LBAP Progress Report 2001-2004.

3.2 Local Strategic Partnerships

Contact has been made with all relevant local authority planning departments and with local strategic partnerships (LSP). Meetings have taken place with three LSP coordinators including Bolsover, Amber Valley and South Derbyshire discussing how biodiversity can be incorporated and monitored in Community Strategies. The Project Officer attended a day with the Bolsover LSP which set targets for 2006 and ensured the momentum to produce a Greenprint was built upon.

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3.3 Website

A website contractor was officially engaged in late January but progress has been rather slow as the contractor has been delayed by other jobs.

The Project Officer has provided the majority of the text and co-ordinated contributions from the LBAP partners. The Project Officer has also been trained by the contractor to make changes to the site once the site goes live.

The website is registered at www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk and progress so far can be seen at www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk/index.php.

4 Ensure Lowland Derbyshire LBAP includes all species of conservation concern and identifies appropriate action.

4.1 Lower land Plants

A draft SAP for Oak Polypore was produced by English Nature in January and was circulated to LBAP partners as well as members of the County Fungus Group. Comments have been received back and an amended version was produced. It is need of formatting before it is finalised.

4.2 Amphibians

The Project Officer attended a meeting of the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group, encouraging the group to get involved in the production of a SAP for the great crested newt. Since the meeting draft text has been produced by the county amphibian recorder which will be formatted and used in the production of a SAP.

4.3 Birds

The Project Officer has discussed the LBAP process with the Derbyshire Ornithological Society (DOS) and what they can contribute towards it. After attending the Farmland Habitat Action Group they provided information to allow the Project Officer to be able to draft a farmland bird SAP.

The Project Officer has also been working with DOS on a swift roost survey this summer. Although not a UK priority, the swift has been raised by DOS as a bird which has seemingly had a decline locally and may need a SAP to focus action on its recovery. The survey will provide baseline information to produce a SAP if it is deemed necessary by the Steering Group.

4.4 Mammals

After initial discussion with the Derbyshire Bat Group, a draft SAP was produced for all bat species in the LBAP area. Comments have been received from most relevant LBAP partners including the Bat Group. A second draft has been written.

Discussions have taken place with English Nature, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Derbyshire Mammal Group on a SAP for dormouse.

A meeting was held in February to discuss water vole issues in the LBAP area. The meeting was very successful and had 10 organisations present. One of the outcomes was the production of a draft SAP for the water vole. Helen Perkins has written a draft SAP which has been circulated to LBAP partners for comments.

4.5 Invertebrates

Regular contact has been kept with the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society (DaNES). Although there are only five invertebrate UK priority species in the LBAP area, the Society have recommended a number of Local species which would benefit from the production of SAPs. In addition the Project Officer has held discussions with the local Butterfly Conservation Trust representative on the possibility of a Grizzled and Dingy Skipper SAP.

4.6 Contact with County Species Recorders

Regular contact has been kept with the County Recorders and help as been requested with compiling lists of uncommon, rare and declining species for the appendices of the various HAPs. The County Beetle Recorder has now realised the value in the data he has and has turned his attention from identification to assessing the data he currently has with a view to compiling lists of rare and uncommon species and the habitats and locations in which they occur.

5. Enable progress towards targets to be monitored locally and contributions to regional and national targets reported. All to be linked with national and local recording initiatives.

5.1 BAP information

The best source of data on BAP habitats currently available are the GIS layers that Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have compiled. These are still at a provisional stage but are very useful in estimating the current extent of BAP habitats for inclusion in HAPS.

5.2 BARS

After an initial BARS training session the Project Officer has set up the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP on BARS with all the current partners and has inputted the completed woodland and grassland HAPs.

5.3 Annual Progress Report

In preparation for the production of a LBAP Progress report 2001-2004, LBAP partners were asked to inform the Project Officer of LBAP achievements. Due to technical difficulties only black and white copies were distributed at the LBAP Forum. The colour report has now been produced and will be distributed to LBAP partners, local groups etc and a web version will be downloadable from the website in due course.

As part of the collation of information for the 2001-2004 report data was also collected from the three main agri-environmental schemes operating in the LBAP area. These were used to review progress against targets and provided an interesting comparison between the three main schemes as to their contribution towards targets.

6. Ensure that resource needs and work programmes are co-ordinated and recognised by all parties.

6.1 East Derbyshire Woodlands Project

The Project Officer raised the issue of LBAP contribution at the East Derbyshire Woodland Project Steering Group meeting. After discussion it has been agreed to try and refocus the Project on helping to achieve LBAP woodland targets and possibly

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extend the area of the Project in the future to include the area outside the PDNP but inside the Peak District LBAP that is not already covered by the Ravine Woodlife Project.

6.2 HAP revision

As each new HAP has been drafted and revised partners have been asked to flag up projects that they are likely to start and or achieve in the plan period. This then allows the gaps in implementation to be identified and inputted into the overall implementation strategy.

7. Seek funds for action

7.1. Support for LBAP co-ordination

Discussions have taken place about LBAP implementation and co-ordination beyond the life of the ALSF 2002-2005 funded timescale. Contributions, which currently amount to £12,000 (Derby city £4,000, Erewash BC £1,000, South Derbyshire Dc £1,500, Bolsover DC £1,000, Forestry Commission £500 and Derbyshire County Council around £4,000) were used as match funding for a ALSF bid for 2 years worth of funding for LBAP co-ordination and implementation. This level of support locally shows the support for the continuation of this post from the Local Authorities and other LBAP partners.

The bid for £75, 000 was submitted to ALSF in April and in June we heard that the bid has been successful. This means that the project is financially supported until the end of March 2007. Capital items submitted within the application included a GIS license, support for LBAP Forums, productions of some headed stationary and further support and development of the website.

7.2 Support to LBAP partners for funding applications

The Project Officer has continued to support LBAP partners by circulating details about appropriate funding opportunities and writing support letters for LBAP partners funding applications.

8. Ensure that partners actions are recognised and publicised

8.1 Annual Report

A report has been produced detailing the LBAP progress between 2001 and 2004 inclusive. It was decided to choose 2001 as the starting date as this would then compliment the previous annual reports written, the last of which was written to cover LBAP progress in 2000.

Two hundred of the colour 18 page report have been printed and these will be distributed to LBAP partners, local groups and potential partners. A web-friendly version will be downloadable from the website in due course.

8.2 HAP and SAP revisions

The revised HAPs and SAPs have a section reflecting the relevant actions that the LBAP partners are already doing and are committed to do within the life of the plans.

9. Enable partnership and steering groups reps. Make substantive contributions to LBAP development.

The Project Officer has provided secretariat to all Habitat Action Group meetings and Species Action Group meetings. LBAP partners have been partners informed of

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LBAP development and biodiversity issues within the LBAP area, the region and within the UK. Finalised HAPs and SAPs have been circulated to all LBAP partners.

The Project Officer has also attended a number of meetings associated with the Peak District LBAP to ensure that issues that are also relevant to Lowland Derbyshire LBAP are considered for the two LBAP areas. Discussions have taken place with the LBAP co-ordinator for the National Forest LBAP about representation on their Steering Group and Forums.

10. Ensure LBAPs are co-ordinating action with appropriate organisations, & contributing to regional & national action.

10.1 Peak District

The Project Officer has attended meetings of the Peak District woodland and grassland habitat groups to see whether there were any future projects / funding bids that could be rolled out to county-wide initiatives and to ensure LBAP partners are aware of the connections between the two LBAPs.

10.2 Regional

The regional LBAP co-ordinators have not met since November 2004. The Project Officer attended a consultation event of the Regional Biodiversity Strategy. This was then followed up by making comments on the strategy, circulating these to main LBAP partners.

The Project Officer recently attended the UK BAP Partnership conference in Bristol and made some useful contacts outside the region. No other East Midlands LBAP co-ordinator was able to attend the conference so the Project Officer has agreed to feedback significant issues to the co-ordinators. The newsletter will also be used to inform LBAP partners.

11. Ensure LBAPs recognised as a key initiative in sustainable development.

11.1 Local Strategic Partnerships

Contact has been made with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) in the LBAP area with a view to including biodiversity priorities and targets in the Community Strategies. Copies of the publication 'Life support – incorporating biodiversity into community strategies' have been disseminated to all LSP co-ordinators. The project Officer has attended meetings of three different environment LSP groups and has been invited to attend a further one in the next month.

11.2 Planners

Copies of the TCP/EN publication 'Biodiversity by Design – a guide for sustainable communities' and the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE), 'Increasing the momentum – A vision statement for Biodiversity in Local Government 2004-2010' has been disseminated to the planning departments of the Local Authorities.

11.3 Local Communities/Groups

A standard talk entitled 'Derbyshire's Biodiversity Jigsaw – fitting the pieces together' has been developed in partnership with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. This talk discusses what biodiversity is, what habitats and species are important in Lowland Derbyshire and how the various partners are working together to achieve the targets as well as how the various local groups and individuals can help. Since January 2005 talks have been delivered to the South Derbyshire DWT Group, Sorby Natural History Society, and the East Derbyshire DWT Group. It is estimated that 100 people have

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now heard this talk. Further talks for the Bat Group and as part of the Severn Trent events programme were cancelled due to bad weather and lack of bookings. Bookings have been taken for five more talks to local groups during the rest of the year. Articles have also been written for local group newsletters based upon this talk.

12. Other issues

12.1 ALSF

The Project Officer submitted a final report for the project with a final claim in March.

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