



Steering Group for the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership

20th June 2-4.30pm Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire

Present:

Adele Rhodes (Bolsover District Council)
Annie Cooper (Derbyshire County Council)
Dan Abrahams (Natural England) **Chair**
Dave Slinger (Derby City Council)
David Arnold (Derbyshire Dales)
Debbie Court (Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership)

Jo Brown (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Kevin Exley (South Derbyshire District Council)
Leon Hayward (BTCV)
Suzanne Dempsey (Amber Valley Borough Council)
Tristan Galletly (Forestry Commission)

1. Apologies received from:

Carl Hawke (National Trust), Peter Lowe (Woodland Trust), Rachael Coates (Amber Valley Borough Council), Yvonne Wright (Erewash Borough Council), Beverley Rhodes (Derby City Council), and Nichola Baker (Chesterfield Borough Council)

2. Partnership Chair

Dan Abrahams was welcomed as the Chair for the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership.

3. Project Officer's verbal report

Debbie gave a quick update on progress since Jan 2007:

- Final report and claim for the ALSF grant submitted in March
- Derbyshire Biodiversity website has been updated with some new pages on volunteering, habitats, species, and funding
- April issue of Derbyshire Biodiversity News
- Completion of the Severn Trent Water BAP Audit for Carsington Water
- Preparatory work for the Annual Report and Forum
- Work on the Field Margins HAP
- Helping partners with, and writing support letters for, funding bids
- Work on the Delivery Plan
- Representation of the Partnership on various Fora

4. Implementation strategy

Prior to the meeting Debbie distributed a draft version of the Delivery Plan. Discussion at the meeting suggested combining sections 2 and 3, having an executive summary and including a regional perspective. Further comments should be sent to Debbie by the end of July.

Action: All

5. Feedback from East Midlands Regional Biodiversity Forum

Annie gave a quick update from the Regional Forum:

- Annie now attends as a representative from the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE)
- The papers from meetings will go onto the Regional Assembly website from now onwards (<http://www.emra.gov.uk>). In the future there will be a stand alone website.
- The Forum is producing a regional paper on climate change and biodiversity
- The Forum is producing a Funding Strategy which will include the funding of the Forum and BAP delivery

- The Regional Spatial Strategy is currently going through an Examination In Public. The RSS includes some Biodiversity Enhancement Areas (BEAs) and Biodiversity Conservation Areas (BCAs). There are some anomalies within these broad brush areas such as the Moss Valley area which includes many Local Wildlife Sites and some SSSIs but falls within the Coalfield BEA.

There was some discussion on the part biodiversity plays in Green Infrastructure. The Three Cities growth point is looking to build 800,000 homes. DCLG requested bids for environmental projects. Derby City Council and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust responded with potential projects.

There was some concern over the link between the BEAs and BCAs, Green Infrastructure and BAP Opportunity Mapping. Some of the Local Authorities will need information soon to be fed into the Local Development Framework process.

Dan agreed to host a meeting for local authorities on opportunity mapping in early autumn. **Action: Dan**

6. Report from HAP groups

Woodland

The Great Trees of Derbyshire Project has achieved some fantastic results so far and over 50 volunteers have now been trained to survey veteran trees. A seminar on veteran tree management will be held in South Derbyshire on 17th November 2007. Reviewing progress against the woodland targets there may be a shortfall on the achieving positive management in Ancient Woodlands. There will be some discussion on a potential Ancient Woodland Project at the next meeting in July.

Wetland

The wetland group were still without a formal chair and progress on actions has been slow. Debbie had a received a letter from the Environment Agency saying that due to staffing shortages there were unable to attend LBAP meetings. It was agreed that Dan, as Chair, should respond to the letter.

Grassland

Good progress was being made under both the Value in Meadows project and the Wild About Grassland projects. Natural England will talk to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust about potential sites suitable for HLS agreements. Debbie reported that progress had been made with the Road Verge Reserve Scheme, posts were being put up to identify sites and some publicity will be sent out to papers etc.

Farmland

The farmland group had not met since January.

7. Species update

The revised UK habitats and species list had finally been produced. Debbie circulated a paper identifying species on the list which have been recorded in the LBAP area. In addition she will send the invertebrate lists to the county recorders to check.

The white-clawed crayfish Species Action Plan has now been finalised and can be downloaded from the Derbyshire Biodiversity website.

8. Promotion of the Biodiversity Duty.

The written guidance to accompany the Biodiversity Duty on Local Authorities and Public Bodies has now been released. At a regional level Natural England will be organising a series of seminars per county. The Wildlife Trusts will be producing a leaflet. Jo said that the last draft version she saw included all public bodies.

9. Local Wildlife Sites

Following the issue of the DEFRA guidance on Local Wildlife Sites Systems the Wildlife Sites Panel reviewed the Derbyshire Wildlife Sites system. It has revealed that the system is compliant and some minor changes have now been carried out.

The membership of the Local Wildlife Sites Panel did not include representation from landowning bodies. The National Farmers Union has now agreed to become a member and fill this role.

The name has now changed from Wildlife Sites to 'Local Wildlife Sites'. Candidate Wildlife Sites are now referred to as 'potential Local Wildlife Sites'. These will be those sites deemed valuable but which have yet to be formally assessed.

Jo had organised a regional Local Wildlife Sites meeting to discuss common standards between the systems within the East Midlands.

The Local Wildlife Sites system provides a valuable monitoring indicator and site condition will be assessed following each site survey.

10. Greenprints

Bolsover

The Bolsover Biodiversity Network meet quarterly and are looking at a number of small scale projects which the local wildlife groups can take part in.

Chesterfield

Hedgerows were being surveyed by DWT. Money had been secured from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Chesterfield BC to carry out an investigation looking at the Holmebrook Valley Park as a potential white-clawed crayfish ark site. Derbyshire Ornithological Society is carrying out a skylark survey this spring and summer.

North East Derbyshire

The Greenprint is almost finished and is awaiting Council approval and adoption.

Erewash

DWT working with Erewash Borough Council has identified a number of priority habitats and species. Work is starting on a draft document and support within Erewash Borough Council is being gained.

11. Local Record Centre

Jo explained that three years ago a feasibility study looked at the options for setting up a Local Records centre for Derbyshire and the Peak District. The preferred option was to have a series of 'hubs' with the core based with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Funding from Natural England has allowed the engagement of a consultant to have discussions with key data holders and set up a framework for a partnership. They are currently seeking further funding to take this further.

12. Funding

Annie highlighted the current funding situation for Debbie's post. As a result of partner contributions Debbie's post has been made 'indefinite' by Derbyshire County Council and they have agreed to continue hosting the post. Funding was OK for this current financial year and currently looks good for next year too but partner contributions will still be needed. Nationally Natural England has been very supportive of the LBAPs. An announcement is expected in September regarding their future contributions towards LBAP co-ordinator posts. Annie will be sending her 'begging letter' around to partners in time for the 2008/9 budget bidding rounds.

Debbie had secured £12,500 from a Natural England 2006/7 underspend. This will support the production of the Annual Report, the Annual Forum in October, maintenance of the website, additional work on BAP habitat GIS layers.

Derbyshire County Council has submitted a £21k bid to SITA landfill tax for heathland restoration within the Ashover area. If successful this will achieve 60% of the heathland restoration target.

BTCV has secured £10k from Tarmac to carry out action towards quarry BAPs. They also submitted an Aggregates Levy Bid.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust was currently trying to find funding to continue the Water for Wildlife and Water Vole Recovery Projects.

13. Awareness raising

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has secured lottery money for their Grounds for Change project working on school grounds.

Derby City Council was currently very busy preparing for the BBC Springwatch festival at Osmaston Park on 24th June. This will kick start a 'year of action'.

The Cathedral peregrines have been very successful and have gained lots of publicity including a few seconds of fame on BBC Springwatch. The BBC has also been filming the peregrines and the Sanctuary in Derby for their autumn Nature of Britain programme.

BTCV has continued to support Friends of Groups in Derby.

14. Planning

Debbie reported that under the 1App process Local Authorities are required to produce Validation Checklists to accompany the Standard Planning Application Form. Authorities could if they wished produce checklists for biodiversity. The Association of Local Government Ecologists had produced a pilot biodiversity checklist which was available as a download from their website. Debbie will send an electronic copy around to all Local Authorities in the LBAP area. **Action: Debbie**

David Arnold reported that developers and planning application applicants had been using the checklist within their Farm Building Supplementary Planning Document.

Dave Slinger reported that there had been very positive progress on large scale development adjacent to the River Derwent. This will hopefully include about 20ha of wetland safeguarding/creation which DWT could manage.

Kevin Exley reported that a planning application for a marina at Willington has a potential biodiversity gain to accompany it.

Debbie reported that the Planning for Protected Species training course ran on 22nd March 2007 at Poolsbrook Country Park, Chesterfield had been very successful and a planner from each local authority in the LBAP area had either attended or received a copy of the handouts.

15. AOB

Debbie circulated the draft programme for the 2007 Annual Forum. Finalised programmes and booking forms will be circulated in July with the next newsletter.

16. Date of Next meeting

10am 24th January 2008 Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock.