

Peatlands & Uplands Biodiversity Delivery Group Meeting
Loughry College – CAFRE Campus
9.30am Tuesday 29th June 2010

Attendees

Laverne Bell	(QPA)
Seamus Burns	(RSPB)
Billy McCabe	(Planning)
Roy Tomlinson	(Consultant)
Melanie Flexen	(AFBI)
Julie Corry	(LBAP Officer, Omagh)
Stephen McCartney	(Forest Service)
Godfrey McRoberts	(DARD CMB)
Richard Weyl	(NIEA – NH - Chair)
Martin Bradley	(NIEA – NH)
Larry Toal	(NIEA – NH)

1. Introduction

Richard welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies

John Hetherington	(Forest & Timber Association)
Richard Schaible	(Forest Service)
Ken Bradley	(PEPG)
Mike Meharg	(NIEA-NH)
Jim McAdam	(AFBI)
Andrew Upton	(UWT)
Demot Hughes	(Consultant)
Judith Annett	(NIBG chair)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to a few minor changes/edits.

Action 1: GMcR & SB to provide comments on the minutes to LT as soon as possible

It was agreed that future 'minutes' should be issued within a few weeks of the meeting.

Action Points:-

1. NIAF contact details: Completed.
2. Information on Mineral Development: Completed.
3. Information on ROMPS: Completed.
4. Agri-environment monitoring programme:

a) MF gave an update on the Irish hare pilot study at Glenwherry including the feasibility of radio tracking hares. To date, five adult hares have been caught and radio tagged and their movements recorded.

Action 2: MF to circulate a summary monitoring paper to the Group

- b) A discussion ensued on reporting on upland habitats in 2012.
5. Workshop - Peat use in Government: **Carried forward.**
 6. Comments on the Work Programme from Demot Hughes: Completed.
 7. ToR to be updated: **Carried forward.**
 8. Group membership: RW listed the following proposed new members/organisations of the PUBDG:
 - a) NI Water.
 - b) Jim Bradley – Belfast Hills.
 - c) Keith Stanfield – NIEA, Peatlands Park.
 9. Update on DEFRA Soils Project: **Carried Forward.**
 10. Internet link to RT's peat cutting survey: Completed.
 11. Minutes of meeting of the Red Grouse SAP Meeting: Completed.

3. Matters Arising

i) Peatland Restoration

Action 3: MB to circulate Peatland Restoration Guidelines document to the group for comment.

ii) Rebuilding the Countryside

SB outlined the Antrim Hills/Garron Plateau restoration plan which should be in place in 2011.

iii) PPS 18

BMcC reported that PPS 18 was in use and was serving to check on compliance in relation to wind farm development. He made the point that impact surveys were not synchronised with application dates.

A discussion followed on the trend to site wind farms on active peat bogs.

As active peat bog was not mapped by the NIEA, RW said that site information was gathered following each wind farm application on a site by site basis.

iv) Red Grouse SAP Delivery Group

MB said that following the recent resignation of Roger Pollen from BASC NI, efforts were being made to arrange a date for Tim Russell to come over from BASC HQ and chair the next meeting of the red grouse group.

v) PeatlandsNI web site review

LT reported that due to constraints in the current BDU budget this review has been put on hold for the foreseeable future.

4. Work Programme

MB circulated a new Work Programme incorporating some edits suggested by DH.

Key Tasks 5 Raising Awareness – JC reported that The An Creggan Centre have an education officer on site.

Key Tasks 4 Peat Use and Alternatives – there was agreement that peat use by Government Estates should be monitored.

Action 4: GMcR to assess peat use within DARD

Action 5: MB to assess peat use within the NIEA

Key Tasks 3.8 Monitoring

Action 6: RW to invite Alan Cooper to report to the Group on Countryside Survey 2007

Key Task 6.4 Implementation

RW reported that the new NI Peatland Policy was with the 'core' (Planning and Natural Resources Division – PNRD). It is their role to carry out the public consultation and that it should be useful guidance for peatland restoration projects.

Key task 2.1 Management of Designated Sites

SB suggested that this section could be populated with an update on the Slieve Beagh restoration programme.

Action 7: SB to provide detail to be added to the work programme by MB

Key task 3.2 Agri-environment schemes

GMcR provided the following update:-

- For 2010 there were 4800 applications for NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS).
- To date there has been no decision on progressing these applications

Following EU audits of the Single Farm Payment Scheme there is an EU initial disallowance of £30M based on the accuracy of the mapping system and land eligibility. The disallowance represents 5% of the total

fund. A decision on a further EU disallowance is pending and could also be in the region of an additional £30 million.

- DARD has set up the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) to remap all farm fields and eligible land in conjunction with the Land and Property Service. A pilot project is underway.

RT considered that the issue of 'eligibility' of land for the single farm payment was one of the most important issues to be raised during the meeting.

A discussion followed on the implications of this for upland habitats RW suggested that the group should put out a statement emphasising the threat this poses to the various peatland & upland habitats.

Action 8: RW to contact JA and request that she highlights these threats to Dr Sam Kennedy (DARD Countryside Management Unit) on behalf of the Group.

6. UK Habitat Action Plans

In relation to Northern Ireland RW informed the group that targets and definitions for the new HAPs need to be agreed by July 2010.

He said that the Mountain Heaths and Willow Scrub HAP was covered by our own Montane Heath HAP but the extent of Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps has not been assessed in NI.

Rather than spend resources on measuring the extent of the other habitats in the new UK HAPs in NI, the group thought it would be better to look at the implications for site management.

Action 9: RW to produce an A4 page for each 'new' habitat to put it into a Northern Ireland context.

7. Target Setting

RW said that there was a need to set targets for established NI HAPs which are uniform with UK targets. He said that more precise target setting could be made in the autumn following publication of the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey.

GMcR said that DARD agri-environment scheme data and monitoring reports could be used.

RW said that for most habitats it would only be 'condition' (rather than extent) which would change and priority species could be integrated into the HAPs.

RT outlined the implications of the National Ecosystem Assessment for NI in relation to habitat value to the community, water supply etc.

8. Signposting

RW reported that the outline spreadsheet would also be sent to members of the Species Delivery Group.

MB suggested that members of the PUBDG could volunteer to provide information to populate the NI species groups on the table.

Action 10: MB to circulate the Signposting Spreadsheet to the Species Delivery Group

Action 11: All PUBDG members to provide information for species signposting

RW said that the next phase would be to select species that will require special attention beyond HAPs.

9. Website Proposals

RW said there was a need to make sure that all information relevant to the PUBDG was posted on the NIEA web site.

10. AOB

There was no further business discussed.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday the 3rd November 2010 at the Discovery Centre, Oxford Island.

Summary of Actions:	
Carried Forward	Workshop - Peat use in Government: (RW/KB)
Carried forward.	ToR to be updated: (TW/MB)
Carried Forward.	Update on DEFRA Soils Project: (RW/KB)
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Action 2:	MF to circulate a summary monitoring paper to the Group
Action 3:	MB to circulate Peatland Restoration Guidelines document to the Group
Action 4:	GMcR to assess peat use within DARD
Action 5:	MB to assess peat use within the NIEA
Action 6:	RW to invite Alan Cooper to report to the Group on Countryside Survey 2007
Action 7:	SB to provide detail to be added to the work programme by MB
Action 8:	RW to contact JA and request that she highlights these threats to Dr Sam Kennedy (DARD Countryside Management Unit) on behalf of the Group.
Action 9:	RW to produce an A4 page for each 'new' habitat to put it

	into a Northern Ireland context.
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