

Wetlands Biodiversity Delivery Group Meeting
Tuesday 6th November 2007
Oxford Island

Attendees

Bob Davidson (EHS)
Richard Weyl (EHS)
John Early (EHS)
Judith Bankhead (Rivers Agency)
Garry O'Neill (DCAL Inland Fisheries)
Robbie Marshall (Ulster Angling Federation)
Alan Keys (Ballinderry Fish Hatchery)
Robert Rosell (AFBI)
Roisin Stewart (NI Water)
Mary Gallagher (WMU)
Rachel Bain (Freshwater Task Force)
Jeff Kew (RSPB)
Gregory Woulahan (RSPB)
Helen Paul (EHS Minute Taker)

1. Introduction

Bob welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that a few attendees from RSPB would be joining the meeting slightly later and introductions of new members would take place then.

He welcomed the new NI Water representative, Roisin Stewart, to the meeting.

2. Apologies

David Griffiths (University of Ulster), Brian Finn (Fisheries Conservancy Board), Phil Davidson (Freshwater Task Force), James Robinson (RSPB), David Loughlan

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

	Action Points outstanding from meeting held on 15/05/07	Progress
AP 4	Garry O'Neill to clarify wording of the new task, 2.2.3, which was added to the work programme	C/F
AP 5	Bob to advise the group when PPS2 is published for consultation	C/F
AP10	Bob to invite Planning to the workshop	C/F

AP21	Anyone with information on lakes in NI should send Mary the information.	C/F
AP22	Richard to cover Conditioning Monitoring	C/F

4. Matters Arising

Bob informed the group he had contacted NILGA but they had not responded. Bob informed the group the LBO forum had been asked to nominate a representative and this should be in place for the next meeting.

Raising the profile

Bob informed the group that EHS would be producing initially one pop up stand detailing the work of all the various groups. This stand will be made available for anyone in the groups to use.

He also informed the group the EHS webpages are being updated to include a section on the group. He will email out when these pages are live for comments and links.

Action Point 1: Bob to email when website is updated

Action Point 2: All to email Bob with Links and text for individual organisations.

5. Freshwater/Wetland Priority Species

Richard Weyl informed the group that a Species Delivery Group was being set up to revise our Priority Species list and to look at how the UK would be actioning their list. He advised that in the future there would be a sub group set up to look at Freshwater Species.

Action Point 3: Richard to circulate minutes of the Species Delivery Group meeting to this group.

Robbie Marshall asked for clarification on eels, as there are a series of directives from the EU, he wanted to ensure that we would not be working against each other. Richard advised that we would build on the UK actions.

6. Reports from UK Pond and Wetland HAP meetings

Bob reported on two meetings he had attended in England at the end of October. The first was the Wetland HAP meeting. He advised that they do not cover open water habitats.

He had a copy of their draft work programme and mentioned some actions that were relevant to us advising that we would be drawing on the UK approaches, but that further thinking would be required.

He explained about BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting System). A database used across the UK where individuals/organisations can record what they are doing. Bob advised the group that EHS staff would be meeting internally to discuss this system more.

Judith Bankhead requested a demonstration of the system. Rachel Bain advised that it was a web based reporting system and that a training day was being arranged for Biodiversity Officers.

Action Point 4: Bob to ask Rose Muir (EHS) if it would be possible to send out a wider invite to the BARS training to members of the group.

Richard reported that Martin Bradley was establishing a BARS system in NI.

Action Point 5: Richard to ask Martin Bradley to attend the next meeting to give a presentation on the system.

Robbie Marshall asked if Rivers Agency had to report on river enhancement. Bob informed him that Rivers had not been a priority habitat until now, therefore there wouldn't be anything to report against. He informed the group that there is a meeting arranged for later in November to draw up a Habitat Action Plan for Rivers.

Alan Keys enquired if it was possible for Bob to give input to Peterborough. Bob advised that Richard and himself would be going through the draft and reporting back to Peterborough. He informed the group that anyone interested would be welcome to join them.

Action Point 6: Bob to invite the group to comment on the draft River HAP before reporting back to Peterborough.

Bob then reported on the UK Pond Meeting. This was the first meeting of the group. He informed the group they have produced a draft Pond Habitat Action Plan. He supplied the group with the projected figures, to restore and to create new ponds, which they hoped to achieve by 2030. He informed the group that Pond Conservation were aiming to launch the pond HAP on World Wetlands day on 2nd February 2008. He also informed the group that it was hoped a Pond Officer could be employed throughout the UK to promote good management and this would really get things moving.

Action Point 7: Bob to email everyone when the draft Pond HAP is available & invite comments.

Robbie Marshall pointed out that DARD were already funding ponds and that information they hold may be very useful.

Action Point 8: Bob to contact Richard Crowe

7. Wetland Restoration Projects

Gregory Woulahan gave a presentation on 'Rebuilding the Countryside'.

He explained that they had applied to EHS for funding for a 2 Phase Project. Phase 1 - a 6 month scoping study to identify potential areas for restoration. Phase 2 – a 3 year Implementation project to move large scale restoration forward in NI.

Jeff Kew gave a presentation on 'RSPB Wetland Restoration in the UK'

He covered

- Habitat Loss
- RSPB Strategy
- Tidal & Freshwater Restoration
- Large Scale approach & multiple benefits

The group put on record that they support the project by RSPB.

8. Invasive Alien Species

John Early gave an update on the Zebra Mussel Awareness Campaign and also on the progress to date on the Invasive Species in Ireland Project.

He advised that signs had been designed in the same style as that used by Galway County Council and will be produced shortly.

A discussion took place about the lack of awareness and that more should be done. Robbie asked if there was any plans to carry out awareness training. John advised that the code of practice was a means of making people aware. John suggested that he would be happy to talk to any angling club or organisation if requested and he had already given several presentations to date to various organisations.

Bob also informed the group that a leaflet is distributed and a press release issued every year to raise zebra mussel awareness.

John informed the group that the Wildlife Order (NI) 1985 Review is currently with the Environment Committee and will then be passed to the Executive Committee. It will then be put out for public consultation.

John showed a copy of an Invasive Species booklet produced by Joe Caffrey (Central Fisheries Board). He advised the group through the Invasive Species in Ireland Project similar booklets would be produced.

He also gave the group an update on several invasive species eradication projects and the Water Framework Directive invasive species classification lists.

Judith Bankhead gave an update on the work Rivers Agency is carrying out

9. Plans for RBMP/LBAP workshop

Bob explained that due to staff movement within SEPA he had been unable to get the workshop arranged for September. He now has a name of someone from SEPA who has agreed to attend the workshop and it is hoped it will be held in Oxford Island before the end of January. He advised that there was the potential for a series of workshops for ponds, rivers & lakes to be held.

Action Point 9: Bob to send out date & programme

10. AOB

Robbie enquired if the group should be making a collective response to the SWMI consultation.

A discussion took place and it was agreed that the group would not respond collectively.

11. Date of next meeting

The T.O.R to be an agenda item at the next meeting and the work programme is to be issued to everyone to update before the next meeting.

Action Point 10: Bob to send out work programme & add TOR to agenda for next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 6th May 2008 at Oxford Island. The meeting will take place in the morning with an optional tour of Portmore after lunch.