



Biodiversity Data & Monitoring Group

Tuesday 26th Feb 2008

Apologies

Robert Edwards
Claire Edwards
Jane Ellis
Steve Holdsworth
Ali Glaisher
John Smith
Phil Vincent
John Walker

Present

Jeff Edwards
Dan Wrench
Bernadette Micklewright

Minutes of last meeting

Items where there were actions are on the agenda

LRC report

Dan Wrench was standing in for the LRCs, With 2 LRC managers on long term leave it was perceived that the LRCs were struggling to achieve deadlines. The MOAs for funding from NE were all held up with central NE procurement but are expected to be issued shortly. Shropshire has finalised arrangements for NE funding as part of the LRC network with their "Shropshire Ecological Data Network" project. MOA to be signed between Shropshire WT and SCC. The SWT will act as the public face.

Defra Innovation Project

Serious delays with initiation of both aspects of the project had occurred. The demonstration project to focus lowland heath but still awaiting data sets from NE before work can commence. Concerns were raised regarding the definition of lowland heath v upland heath, some of west midlands heathlands are considered as 'transitional heaths' and issues surrounding how sites that support complex mosaics of heathland habitats and the minimum patch size for recording lowland heath. Heathlands are dynamic and will change rapidly so question need for precision in respect of the regional habitat data project. Also problems of validating the local inventory bearing in mind local losses due to development e.g. Telford and Cannock areas. Suggest project uses most up to date aerial photography from Microsoft Maps and Goggle.

Concern also raised around Defra's perceptions of the work required to achieve the final revised inventories. The choice of heathlands was based on the fact that Defra had already funded grasslands however there is still much to do with the grassland inventory to produce an acceptable final end product. Defra must not consider that this pilot project will complete the heathlands inventory for the region.

There is also important that the need for ground truthing and ongoing monitoring is emphasised within the final report.

A Workshop has been planned for March 5th but no further details were available.

Use of species information has not been considered within the project, suggestion that this ought to be considered

Action: JE to seek further clarification of the work programme and details of the Workshop and circulate to group.

HLS Targeting (biodiversity data)

NE consultation exercise initiated through the regional meeting held on the 18th Feb.

Concerns raised regarding the process for consultation which was considered to be unclear.

Regarding the biodiversity data used with the national inventories forming the basis of the habitat data with some key habitats not considered, fens, orchards, pasture woodland. Local data sets should be used but costs/resources required to mobilise the data into a format that is acceptable. Local inventories for some of the habitats exist but no one is charged with pulling all this together. Also the selection of Priority Areas appears to ignore extent of habitat across the border in Wales? Concern also raised at the lack of species considered and the emphasis on birds.

Action: JE to check on responses to NE and to contact LRCs (Dave Lowe) and LBAPs to seek view on regional data sets that may be available and to coordinate response.

Priority habitats (top 10 list)

The criteria used to select these was questioned. The list is required for a number of reasons and the RSS is only one of these. JE's list of habitat priorities for landscape scale working was different to the top 10 list. Priorities will differ according to the state of the habitat and the work required as a priority (e.g. maintain, achieve condition, restore or expand). DW made it clear that the benefits of agreeing regional priorities was difficult to articulate to local partners as there was no clear example of regional assistance in delivering action to achieve biodiversity gains. Currently the LBAP work was opportunity driven and regional priorities did not really matter.

Action: JE to prepare guidance paper for use by LBAPs

Priority Species (TOPCONS spreadsheet)

It was difficult to understand the criteria used in this and how this might be of use within the region. It seems to be more complete for the south of the region. Several species had been omitted. Clarification from David Heaver would be useful. It was also considered that we needed to establish our criteria for selecting 'priority species' perhaps this might be to select those species that require 'special measures' outside what could be achieved as part of the management of habitats.

Action: BM to discuss with DH.

Work Plan for 2008/9

Insufficient time to discuss, the regional habitat data project is seen as a priority area of work. Need to reflect on the remit of the group and ways of working taking account of the recent attendance and that fact that the meeting in January was cancelled.

AOB

None

Date of next meeting

May 22nd 10.30 am