

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003

### 1. ATTENDANCE

Martin Anthoney	(MA)	BC/GWT (GRF Chairman)
Melanie Sutherland	(MS)	Caerphilly CBC (GRF Secretary)
Jan Kinchington	(JK)	GWT
Gemma Bodé	(GB)	GWT
Colin Cheesman	(CC)	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Rebecca Davies	(RD)	Newport CC
Melissa Moore	(MM)	Cardiff CC
Sam Bosanquet	(SB)	BBS Bryophyte Recorder
Richard Clarke	(RC)	GOS/GRG
Heather Colls	(HC)	BLS/BSBI
Trevor Evans	(TE)	BSBI
Shelley Evans	(SE)	BMS
Graham Harris	(GH)	UCEG
Andrea Rowe	(AR)	BBNPA
Adam Rowe	(AdR)	BIS (Powys/Brecon Beacons National Park Local Record Centre)
Dick Cole	(DC)	
Elsa Wood	(EW)	
Adrian Wood	(AW)	
Matthew Harris	(MH)	CCW/GARG
Colin Titcombe	(CT)	
Geri Thomas	(GT)	GBC/GMRG
Jerry Lewis	(JL)	Monmouthshire CC
Roger James	(RJ)	GWT/WING
Julian Branscombe	(JB)	GWT
Kris Roberts	(KR)	Torfaen CBC
David Slade	(DS)	NMGW/SW LRC
Steven Rogers	(SR)	GWT

### Apologies

David Gladwin  
Shirley Gladwin  
Brian Gregory  
John Hines  
Bill Purvis  
Chris Hatch  
Ian Rabjohns  
Alan Williams  
Steve Williams  
Mike Cullen (South Wales Peregrine Watch)  
Alison Jones (Caerphilly CBC)

### 2. UPDATES

- 2.1 Forum Chairman and Secretary:** Agreed MA as Chairman and MS as secretary.
- 2.2 Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting (19/01/02):** Minutes were agreed. TE's comments regarding carboniferous limestone were in terms of their rarity rather than size.
- 2.3 Gwent Recorders' Newsletter:** MS has found it difficult to obtain articles and produce 4 issues of the newsletter a year. Agreed to produce 2 issues a year, one in winter (just before forum meetings) and one in summer (July). Articles for the next issue should be sent to MS by the end of June 2003. JB said that the Wildlife Trust were keen to publish the newsletter on their website to enhance distribution. This was agreed - the wider the circulation the better, but need to ensure sensitive information is handled properly and contact details are correct.

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003

- 2.4 National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Launch in Wales:** (Feb. 2002) As Chairman, MA has been invited to several meetings, including the launch of the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) at the National Assembly offices in Cardiff Bay. MA also attended the Greater Gwent Biodiversity Action Group (GGBAG) meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2002.
- 2.5 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and LBAP Officers**
- 2.5.1 Caerphilly:** MS made permanent as Biodiversity Assistant in April 2002 as LBAP Officer and Assistant Ecologist. LBAP launched at Go Wild! May 2002 and now implementing Species Action Plans. Another Go Wild! will be held in June as part of Wales Biodiversity Week 2003.
- 2.5.2 Blaenau Gwent:** (CC) LBAP was launched in August 2002 (as part of Wales Biodiversity Week). No progress for replacing Nicola Sharpe as LBAP Officer.
- 2.5.3 Newport:** RB now on a 3-month contract. Comments on the draft consultation LBAP have been coming in and hope to publish soon.
- 2.5.4 Cardiff:** MM on a 1-year contract as Biodiversity Assistant. Only small part of Gwent in area.
- 2.5.5 Monmouthshire:** (JL) No replacement for Georgina Holdsworth since February 2002. Draft framework LBAP in production and some copies available at meeting, but out for consultation soon.
- 2.5.6 Torfaen:** KR in a 3 year ecologist post – draft LBAP comments received and hope to publish soon.
- 2.5.7 TE asked if there was any way the Forum could assist. MA to draft a letter on behalf of the Forum to local authority chief executives and Cabinet members, to congratulate Caerphilly and Torfaen and "name and shame" the others where there is still no support for permanent LBAP officers.
- 2.5.8 The National Assembly for Wales' Environment, Planning and Transport Committee review of local biodiversity action consultation process highlighted the need for more emphasis within local authorities and the need for a permanent officer. MS attended the evidence session in November 2002 and their list of recommendations is due out soon.
- 3. WILDLIFE SITES PROJECT**
- 3.1 CC introduced the Forum to the project from a local authority's point of view (see attached presentation notes). GB then updated the group with progress and success to date, future plans and the involvement of Gwent recorders (see presentation notes). A list was passed round so recorders could sign up to assist with species criteria amendments.
- 3.2 JL would like to see the Wildlife Sites Guidelines document adopted by local authorities (universal document across the whole of South Wales). Hoping to launch document in March.
- 3.3 Section on Post-Industrial/Brownfield sites to be included (at the moment covered by Grassland and/or Mosaic criteria), with a species list. Need an appropriate methodology for surveying brownfield sites, to include important/scarce invertebrate species.
- 3.4 The document will hopefully be adopted as planning guidance. Wildlife Sites are non-statutory, but the aim is to highlight areas of importance for nature conservation to be taken into account within the planning process. Some sites may be lost, but the cumulative effect will be a consideration.
- 3.5 3 local authorities are currently involved in testing the criteria – Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. Eventually, all local authorities will need to test the criteria to refine them. Data from other sources (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessment reports) could also be tested against the guidelines. By working together in partnership (GGBAG and GlamBAG) it can be done.

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003

### 4. GWENT SPECIES AUDIT AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS

- 4.1 **Gwent Species Audit:** CC hopes to publish and distribute the audit soon. It will be a working document, which will need amending as and when, in consultation with recorders (will always be draft). Very grateful to Georgina Holdsworth and all those that have written and made comments. However, it is now time to publish and distribution will be as wide as possible.
- 4.2 **Species Subgroups (GGBAG):** Once the audit has been published, the regional species subgroups, initially set up at the last recorders meeting, need to meet to start selecting species for regional action plans. The subgroups and coordinators are:
- JL - Birds
  - AJ - Invertebrates
  - MS - Mammals, Fish and Herpetofauna
  - CC - Plants, Lower Plants and Fungi
- 4.3 JL gave a brief presentation on progress with the birds' subgroup to demonstrate what needs to be done. Subgroup co-ordinators should arrange at least one meeting before the next GGBAG in May to start the process of preparing SAPs. The current subgroup list was circulated for those present to add their name to a subgroup.
- 4.4 **Training:** GGBAG is interested in organising training workshops for members of GGBAG, recorders, museum staff, wildlife trust staff/volunteers, LBAP partners, etc. Propose that the Forum register their interest in getting involved in leading training days relating to their area of expertise.
- 4.5 GWT are also interested in promoting the need for training in basic identification skills for their members, but could be promoted to a wider audience, with the ultimate aim of training up new recorders for Gwent. Recorders should contact SR at the GWT if they are willing to lead events. A GWT programme of training (tiered from starter to refresher and advanced) will then be distributed with their newsletter and on their website in March. There may be a small cost towards some courses to cover expenses.
- 4.6 AR said that it is also within the remit of an LRC to provide training as needed and can justify paying for certain courses in order to cover expenses/additional costs.
- 4.7 Mark Pavett at the National Museum, Cardiff is already organising ID workshops. There is one for bees on March 1<sup>st</sup> and he is willing to host others if there is a need (see latest issue of newsletter).
- 4.8 **Co-ordination of future survey work:** JB raised the possibility of updating the Phase 1 survey. Discussion about cost, need, demand, standard methodology and data capture. Most of the LBAPs require species survey work, so regional co-ordination through GGBAG would help to co-ordinate action. To be discussed at GGBAG further. General agreement that more survey work and co-ordination is required for LBAP species across Gwent.

### 5. SOUTH WALES LOCAL RECORD CENTRE (LRC)

- 5.1 SR introduced the afternoon discussion. SR sits on the LRC steering group and gave a brief background to the project. Introduced DS, the LRC Development Officer. DS/MA said that all individual recorders who would like to be more involved would be most welcome.
- 5.2 GT asked how the LRC would manage groups such as the Glamorgan Moth Recording Group, who charge a fee for carrying out desktop studies, etc. DS said that production of annual reports could be taken on by the LRC and it could act as a mid-point, to pass on data requests to the group. However, there are no set ways of solving these problems. Solutions need to be worked out for individual situations. Financial contributors need to know what they are funding or there needs to be a system where recorders/recording groups can bid for money from the LRC, e.g. in Hampshire they funded

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003

the production of atlases for certain taxonomic groups, but ensure that they help several groups, especially those that have less money.

**5.3 Discussion** on particular points of concern (as below). AR highlighted methods used at the Powys and Brecon Beacons LRC ("BIS").

### 5.3.1 Confidentiality

- LRCs should discuss all the options with data holders, to encourage them to think about why they think their data is confidential. All the records they would like to be confidential should be respected, but try to limit as much as possible. Need to operate sensitively, to improve the reputation of the LRC and increase the number of recorders.
- In BIS, they only put a "confidential" tag on breeding raptor records. If more information is required then they have to contact the LRC again.
- Records from private land should be taken with landowner permission, where this is not the case, it is up to the recorder to allow the LRC to hold and publish them. LRC is not liable. Confidentiality can be applied to the recorder's name. Landowners should be involved wherever possible, as some may be interested. Can be used to positive effect, e.g. link with Tir Gofal, etc. CCW can't use "trespass" records – if scheduled/rare species discovered, then would have to ask for landowner's permission to survey.
- There are NBN protocols, which will be published using case studies.

### 5.3.2 Verification

- Existing system amongst taxon groups whereby the recorder does not submit a record if not 100% sure and will always get a second opinion.
- If the LRC receives "casual" records from unknown recorders or the general public, then would pass on to the local recording group/recorder. This needs to be included in LRC policy and service level agreements. There is an element of good judgement/common sense most of the time, but LRC staff/volunteers receive training and random checks are carried out.
- Contact between the individual recorder, the county recorder and/or the recording group is important, especially where needed to act as a verifier for records.
- LRC can produce annual reports for recorders to check – a good working relationship with the recording community is invaluable – giving them an opportunity to probe the all the data held by the LRC. If there are any major doubts, then records can be deleted. Copyright is given to the individual observer/recorder – but if not verified, then the record should be deleted.
- Training for the 'recorders of the future' should make them aware of how the recording process works from the start (EW)

### 5.3.3 Charging

- No charge to landowners on their own land, students and research projects (educational sector), where providing the records is not onerous (may incur a charge for staff time if a large amount of data requested).
- All other groups/bodies are charged for the amount of time it takes to collate the request (not for the amount of data): £50 - £75 per hour staff time
- Generally free to members of the public, BUT anyone who uses data has to sign a declaration form to say what they are using it for. If the declaration is broken, by finding out they have re-used the data for another purpose, then you can prosecute.
- Have to be careful who "members of the general public" are, as they could be members of a consultancy or a development company.
- Service Level Agreements, e.g. with the Local Authority – members of the public get service for free, as a public service, but written into SLA with the LA. Sometimes, if large costs involved, then may transfer them to the LA (AR – Powys BIS don't).
- With some SLAs between the LRC and recorder, there could be a "tag" on certain sites, where the requester should be put in touch with the original recorder.
- **A clear policy on access to data in the LRC Development Plan is required.**
- Link with Wildlife Liaison Officer in the local police force is a good contact.

## Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25<sup>th</sup> January 2003

- Interpretation of data – the LRC can produce a species list for a site, which may include details of status, but no site specific information relating to its importance locally. This information would have to be gained from the original recorder – the LRC relies on others for interpretation of data supplied.

### 5.3.4 Information Gaps

- BIS has been entering data for 18 months, but it is still nowhere near a full representation of the area. When they supply data, a note is attached which states that it is only the data currently held and the local recorder/group should be contacted for more information.
- The LRC can highlight geographical and taxonomic areas which are lacking, and are up-front and honest about it when supplying (incomplete) data.
- GT asked whether there is any funding available for the inputting of data – certainly, for birds, there is a huge dataset which needs to be computerised. AR said that it is being done – CCW have employed staff to input their records and the LRC would be able to supply the necessary software.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 6.1 Summary of Meeting

- 6.1.1 MA to continue as Chair, and MS as secretary and newsletter editor for the Forum.
- 6.1.2 Two issues of the Gwent Recorders' Newsletter to be produced a year, with GWT publishing on their website.
- 6.1.3 MA to draft a letter on behalf of the Forum to local authority chief executives and Cabinet members, to congratulate Caerphilly and Torfaen CBC for employing permanent staff to take forward the LBAP process, and "name and shame" the others where there is still no support for permanent LBAP Officers.
- 6.1.4 Species criteria for Wildlife Sites Guidelines document – please send comments to GB.
- 6.1.5 Recorders to register their interest in getting involved in informing/leading training days relating to their area of expertise (GWT/GGBAG) with MA.
- 6.1.6 Contact SR at the GWT if willing to hold/lead events as part of GWT ID programme.
- 6.1.7 JB to raise issue of Phase 1 survey at the next GGBAG meeting.
- 6.1.8 Future co-ordination of species survey work seen as a way forward for implementation of LBAPs across Gwent. Needs more discussion among recording groups and at GGBAG.
- 6.1.9 South Wales LRC update and discussion of main concerns. AR present to use the Powys/BBNP BIS as an example of the workings of an LRC.

### 6.2 GlamBAG Recorders' Day

MS informed the group of the Glamorgan Recorders' Day to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> March – initiating the involvement of recorders in biodiversity and in the development of a South Wales LRC.

## 7. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.