

1. ATTENDANCE

Martin Anthony	(MA)	BC/GWT (Chair)
Deborah Beeson	(DB)	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Sam Bosanquet	(SB)	BBS Bryophyte Recorder
Julian Branscombe	(JB)	GWT
Colin Cheesman	(CC)	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Heather Colls	(HC)	BLS/BSBI
Rebecca Davies	(RD)	Newport CC
Trevor Evans	(TE)	BSBI
Matthew Harris	(MH)	CCW/GARG
Chris Hatch	(CH)	GOS
Adrian Hickman	(AH)	
Roger James	(RJ)	GWT
Alison Jones	(AJ)	Caerphilly CBC
John Kennet	(JK)	
Jerry Lewis	(JL)	Monmouthshire CC
Sue Mabberley	(SM)	Countryside Council for Wales
Christian Owen	(CO)	
Steven Rogers	(SR)	GWT
Keith Rogers	(KR)	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Melanie Sutherland	(MS)	Caerphilly CBC (Secretary)
Colin Titcombe	(CT)	
David Slade	(DS)	SEWBREC (LRC)
Mike Wilson	(MW)	NMGW

Apologies

Gemma Bode	GWT
Richard Clarke	GOS
Mike Cullen	South Wales Peregrine Watch
Hugh Horrex	
Adam Rowe	BIS, Powys and BBNP
Andrea Rowe	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Adrian Wood	
Elsa Wood	

[No reply: 17 people]

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 25/01/03

Minutes were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (not covered elsewhere on agenda)

(2.5) Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and LBAP Officers

Introduced Deborah Beeson as the new LBAP Officer for Blaenau Gwent. RB will be leaving at the end of February to travel for 6 months. Melissa Moore has left and is working for the Environment Agency. Interviews for a 6 month post were held in January. MA apologised for not drafting a letter of support for LBAP officers, as per the last minutes, which were sent out much later than expected, so he had forgotten to do so. Agreed that now too late to act.

(3) Wildlife Sites Project

GB unable to attend the meeting so had included an article about the current status of the project in the Newsletter.

(4) GWENT SPECIES AUDIT (AND SPECIES ACTION PLANS)

MA reported that this was almost ready to be distributed. CC hopes to get it out to everyone by the end of Feb. A copy will be sent to GRF members, but others who would like a copy should contact CC direct.

ACTION: Recorders not at the meeting to contact CC for a copy of the Gwent Species Audit.

(2.1) Forum Chairman and Secretary: MA and MS agreed to continue - no other offers.

4. GWENT RECORDERS NEWSLETTER

MS has been the newsletter editor for the past 2 years and had to step down due to other work commitments. There was a lengthy discussion about the future of the newsletter: whether there is the need for one, who would take on the editorial role and whether it could be combined with other LBAP newsletters.

JB wanted to see the newsletter continue, but should retain its recording focus, rather than LBAPs. It needed to be about Active Biological Recording, with recorders submitting articles to say what they've seen and what people should be looking out for - e.g. that summer, etc. There needs to be a commitment for articles, as MS struggles to chase people all the time. CC agreed and said that the LBAP and Recording are really 2 different communities, although there is some overlap. Not all LBAPs produce newsletters - only Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent at the moment.

It was agreed that the newsletter should continue, however, there were no volunteers to take on the editorship. SM said that it may be something CCW could look into funding for a post, SR suggested that perhaps GWT hosted a part time post or got one of their volunteers to take it on. However, as there would only be another 2 issues until the LRC was up and running, which would then publish a recording newsletter, MS volunteered to continue in the role to avoid funding and staffing problems elsewhere.

ACTION: MS to continue as Newsletter Editor (with help) in June/July 2004 (e.g. what to look out for) and then Jan/Feb 2005 (e.g. summarise records for the previous year)

ACTION: Recorders to send in articles for a summer issue (e.g. what to look out for) ASAP and then for Jan/Feb 2005 (e.g. summary of records for 2004)

5. SOUTH EAST WALES BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE (SEWBRcC)

DS reviewed progress. Registered company name, incorporated company with a bank account and drawing £ promised by CCW and FC. Commitment from WDA and 2 LAs (out of 12), which have set aside £ for the establishment phase. Now going to the other LAs to encourage them to put in some £ to see the benefits. Hoping to get a manager in place by the end of April. The launch of the Development Plan is on Weds 11th Feb at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. This is a political event with a few key recorders. Carwyn Jones, Minister for the Environment, Planning and Countryside, is the keynote speaker, Adam Rowe and the Chair of CCW are all giving speeches - to convince people that £ is now needed and why it is a good time to do so.

TE commented on the need for records to be genuine and accurate. DS described how policies and procedures will be set up; the validation/verification of records from unknown sources will be carried out with the county recorder network.

Discussion about political support at the LA level; MW recognised that it is a slow process, but at least things are happening now – remembers talking about it 30 years ago. Case studies of other LRCs, such as the one in Sussex, where the call for records has been increasing exponentially, so much so that they are now looking for new premises.

SR mentioned that individuals who do not work for LAs or statutory agencies could help by becoming involved in the Community Strategy process as a positive step to influence future policies. SM stressed that the Community Strategy process is different in each LA. Check with CCW (SM) or GWT (SR) if would like to know more.

DS said that encouragement for financial support will be an ongoing process. £175,000 is required to establish the LRC over the next 18 months, so only need an additional £40,000 to make it a viable prospect – only 3 more LAs need to come on board and the LRC will go ahead. LAs should come on board now, otherwise they will be charged the full commercial rate for the services provided when its up and running.

MA reported that although Adam Rowe couldn't make it to the meeting, he sent an email to inform the group that BIS were going to be making special effort this year to get more records for the BBNP area within Gwent. They will be writing letters to recorders to see what the situation is. There won't be a problem in having to deal with the 2 LRCs, as they will consult each other on records. The recorder will then be kept informed on where their data is held.

6. SPECIES IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOPS (CROW ACT S74 LIST)

MW representing the National Museum and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff extended an invitation to visit the museum. Under section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the Welsh Assembly Government had to produce a list of species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity. There are 179 species on this list, published as *Going Wild in Wales* last year, which will be reviewed every 5 years. The NMGW received funding from WAG to hold ID training workshops for groups of the less well-known species – concentrating on Bryophytes, Vascular Plants and Invertebrates – to increase the capacity of ecologists, LBAP officers, etc. and to stimulate additional interest in recording. There will be a 1 day session for each of the 3 groups at 3 different venues throughout Wales; Cardiff, West Wales and Plas Tan y Bwlch in the north. Datasheets for each of the species will be produced, including all information required, covering biology, status, legislation, distribution, basic identification, photos, etc. Future training may be made available for those who couldn't get onto the training days this time.

Training is a big topic for discussion at the moment, and will be included at the next Wales Biodiversity Partnership meeting.

7. CCW SPECIES CHALLENGE FUND (SCF)

See attached guidance notes and application form. SM reported the re-organisation of CCW to the group and then talked about the Species Challenge Fund by going through the guidance notes, which were handed out to everyone present. CCW produced a list of potential projects at the outset of the fund, many of which have yet to be taken up, so these are still valid.

SM also went through a successful application to highlight the types of outputs CCW would be looking for – under 4 headings:

- 1) **Research and Monitoring** – e.g. survey report, LBAP, person days/hours in the field (predicted minimum amount);
- 2) **Communications and Publicity** – e.g. summary reports and bulletins, press releases, public awareness events, Wildlife Trust bulletin, relevant species club/group reports;
- 3) **Links with Other Plans** – e.g. LBAP meetings and other relevant projects
- 4) **Economics** – e.g. surveyors employed (part/full time), volunteers involved, experience gained, etc.

CROW S74 species have also been included on the list of species which are eligible, i.e. as well as UK BAP priorities.

3 people present who had applied in the last round of applications (December 2003).

Discussed the likelihood of Gwent priorities, identified via this Forum and included in the Species Audit, would qualify for funding – SM suggested contacting the lead officers in Bangor. MA said that we could lobby for this as got 9 months to the next round of applications.

Projects which cover more than 1 species are encouraged as well as partnership working and the dissemination of information gathered. “Landscape” scale projects are also being considered as a review of CCW corporate policies – to look at wider, landscape scale conservation projects as the new “buzzword”. Species workshops in the afternoon should consider this aspect.

8. SPECIES SUBGROUP WORKSHOPS - PROJECTS FOR SCF

8.1 Species subgroup reports

See attached notes for each workshop session: Birds, Invertebrates, Mammals, Fish and Herpetofauna, and Plants

8.2 CCW response

SM was impressed with the organised way we are looking at opportunities for funding by splitting into the species subgroups to discuss what species to put forward. It is good to see how we work together with other species groups and include habitats as well. Also important that we were thinking about how to include the wider public – is there scope for the general public to take part, e.g. in the Breeding Bird Survey, could businesses / schools get involved as part of staff training or team building days? Need to see the benefits of a project in the broadest sense – how it links with other things. The approach we have taken today is excellent, and there have been lots of good ideas. SM will speak to the SCF team in Bangor and let them know that should give our applications a lot of thought due to the way we are working together across the board. SM would be happy to write a letter of support for future applications.

8.3 General Discussion

There is a need to ensure we are not overlapping with other organisation who may already be carrying out or developing a project for a particular species. AJ said that subgroups should liaise with the relevant group to involved. Initial ideas need to be refined through more subgroup meetings and reporting back to others who couldn't attend the meeting to get their point of view.

ACTION: Subgroups co-ordinators to report back to GGBAG and relevant organisations.

JB reported that GWT were going to undertake a public participation survey for the red wood ant, which the Invertebrates subgroup had included on their list, through local press. AJ agreed that the public involvement side of things needed to be developed.

Bank Account/Project Leader

JB said that the GWT could act as the 'bank' for someone else's project, which would not impinge on their staff, in order to get struggling projects off the ground. SR suggested that under the CCW partnership programme, it might be possible to apply for funding to get an LA or GWT member of staff to write the application/coordinate the project. SM suggested the Alliance & Leicester community group bank account, but this would require a constitution and 2 signatories. Species subgroups need to look into this in more detail, to identify at least 1 person to act as the lead on a project to make sure work gets done. If it is just a bank account which is required, the GWT will weigh up the scale of the job and see if feasible to take it on. This will also be discussed at the next GGBAG meeting - JL to include on the agenda - how going to handle money for any SCF bids. This should be agreed before we start the application process.

ACTION: GGBAG agenda item to discuss and agree way forward for the handling of £ for SCF projects before species subgroups start the application process.

9. CONCLUSION AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 No AOB by prior notification.

9.3 Chairman's Summary

- MS to continue to produce 2 more issues of the Newsletter and then pass onto the LRC
- LRC is definitely coming - launch of Development Plan in February
- NMGW training for CROW Act species - oversubscribed, but datasheets available to all
- SCF projects - species subgroups need to consider which species are best put forward for funding later this year to start in April 2005
- CCW reorganisation - South and East Wales region covers most of South Wales apart from Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, but includes Powys. Maggie Hill is the regional manager.
- Species Subgroup lists for SCF applications need to be considered further by the subgroups and GGBAG.
- GGBAG also to discuss subject of bank accounts and the handling of money for SCF projects to agree a way forward, before species subgroups start the application process.
- General agreement that this is an important way of getting projects off the ground, with involvement of all relevant people, recorders and organisations. Species subgroup co-ordinators to act as project leaders, where possible.

9.4 Conclusion

MA thanked the LAs for their contributions to these meetings. CCW thinks that it is important and recorders appreciation noted.

Minutes of the Gwent Recorders Forum 25th January 2003

MA asked whether annual meetings should continue - JB supports continuation, but perhaps there could be an annual summer site visit to survey in May/June. MA suggested RAF Caerwent and will approach them to confirm. This was agreed.

Suggestions for topics for next year's meeting - PC Kevin Gullick (Gwent Police) was going to attend today, but MA asked whether it would be worth inviting him and Sgt Ian Guildford (CCW/South Wales Police) along to talk about how Police Wildlife Liaison works. Erica Colkett could also be invited to talk about species protection in CCW, which would fit in with the wildlife crime aspect. This was agreed.

10. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed - January 2005.