



TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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STEERING GROUP MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 17th June 2008

Conference Room 1, 14 City Square, Dundee

Present:	Martin Price: Chair (MP) Syd House (SH) Pam Coutts (PC) Catherine Lloyd (CLL) Mark Simmons (MS) Christine Hall (CH) Esther Rogers-Nicoll (ERN) Carol Littlewood (CLT) Alison Anderson (AA) Rachael Higgins: Minute Taker (RH)	CMS, Perth College Forestry Commission Scotland Angus Council Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Perth Museum Scottish Agricultural College Perth & Kinross Council Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Dundee City Council Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
Apologies:	Carolyn Deasley Martyn Jamieson Bruce Campbell Bruce Anderson Suki Fleming	SNH Scottish Field Studies Association SEPA RSPB RSPB
Circulated to:	Jin Park Tim Barrett Bryan Harris Merrill Smith Richard Lockett Kate Scott Alan Hendry Paul Ramsay Ben Notley Stewart Roberts	Perth College Forestry Commission Scotland Dundee City Council Dundee City Council; Perth FWAG NFUS SGRPID Scottish Rural Property & Business Assoc NTS Angus Council

1. **Apologies**

As above

2. **Scottish Rural Development Programme Briefing - Syd House FCS - General Outline**
(Please also see attachment with full presentation)

SRDP - the start of a journey.....

What's different about the SRDP?

- bringing benefits to the Scottish people
 - strong focus on outcomes
 - wider range of potential beneficiaries
 - tailored to circumstance - regional approach to delivery (i.e tree planting in all areas)
 - introduces Rural Development Contracts - the main mechanism for dispersing funding
 - integrated delivery - SEARS (originally 'On the Ground') - about smart Government (all influential organisations such as FCS, SEPA, SNH promoting together i.e for access of biodiversity) - a joined-up approach.
- Public funding not to go into private enterprise.
- Afforestation - public support in Scotland for 80 years - now the emphasis is on climate change mitigation.
- Rural businesses / constituted community groups - now eligible if projects are to deliver to the public, adding local value.

SRDP Key Outcomes

- business viability and competitiveness
- environmental improvements (climate change, water & landscape & biodiversity)
- thriving communities

SRDP Funding Mechanisms

- LFASS - processing and marketing
- Leader - crofting counties grant schemes
- RDC - LMOs - Forestry Challenge Fund (Woodlands In & Around Towns / Forests for People) LMOs depend on size of holding.
- RDC - RPs - Training Scheme (small groups)

SRDP Funding - around £1.6 billion between 2007-13. The bulk of this going to RDC.

RPAC Regions

Scotland has been divided into 11 regions (relating to geographical regional boundaries) - to help agencies collaborate and coincide. Some large distinctive regions such as Tayside, Highlands & Grampian.

RPAC Membership

About KEY organisations = best value. Regional Priorities have already been decided - applications to be judged under SRDP are still ongoing.

Tayside RPAC Members

See Syd for detailed list of contacts.

32 National Priorities (Regionalised)

- contribute to improving the competitiveness of rural land based businesses
- biodiversity
- landscape
- built & cultural heritage
- water & soils
- adaptations to climate change
- public access
- diversification of rural enterprise
- thriving rural communities

The aim is to have integrated policy throughout the regions.

Progress to date in Tayside

- Tayside RPAC in place
- Tayside Regional Priorities agreed & publicised
- RPAC staff roles in place
- Case officers identified & trained on Statement of Intent & subsequent proposals
- SRDP RDC Rural Priorities launched on 7th April and Statements of Intent accepted
- 25 Statements of Intent received for Tayside
- Forestry Stakeholders workshop took place in April 2008
- SCVO supporting rural communities
- Applications for 2nd part of application process has begun - to be online soon
- I.T support behind schedule
- Next RPACs in August for Tayside.

N.B Statement of Intent - to be similar to an outline planning application - short and sharp. Who? Why? Where? When? This will be easier for staff to analyse - before amber light stage - then a full application can be sent in. This idea reduces the amount of money spent / wasted on applications with no outcomes. Some examples of recent applications: Wig Wam self catering site, Sawmills project, Wind Turbines, Biofuels.

Next Steps

- continue monitoring of Statements of Intent and proposals
- consider ways of engaging with future applicants
- confirm expert advisers and how they fit into process of assessing RP applications
- scrutinise details of options and ensure case officers and applicants understand
- (slight worry of things becoming a centralised decision)

The key should be the freedom of those who have the knowledge of the SRDP to be able to influence applicants. It has to be a pro-active grant scheme that is light on its feet with no bureaucracy.

Useful websites: www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/RuralPriorities

Questions & Answers

CH - queried the red squirrel / grey squirrel option - would there be flexibility from FCS? Will staff be supportive in Tayside as there are proven populations of red squirrel here. **SH** - yes there would be flexibility. SEARS may be good for this. There however does seem to be some confusion between selection of areas of reds versus grey control. Some areas of importance do seem to have been forgotten about. **AA** - is a shame especially after all the work that has been done. Will be putting together a Tayside Red Squirrel Strategy with the Tayside Red Squirrel Forum and Ken Neil soon. Hoping to pinpoint all areas of importance and populations on a map in due course. **SH** - agreed. Perhaps a Strategic Guidance plan should be drawn up for Tayside - what do we need for this. Before giving up too easily lets find a strategy, then look at the resources. **CLT** - hopefully the survey will help. There are populations of red at Montreathmont and Gannochy Gorge.

MP - how can we align / realign TBAP with SRDP action plans with TBP sub-groups? Is there prospect for RP to be improved or changed to coincide better? **SH** - agreed - the TBAP is key to informing proposals for biodiversity. Actions that support TBAP will get extra points and more so for those targeting priority species / habitats in their applications. There are no dates as yet for applications for 2009.

CH - expressed concern over species getting equal ratings - it would be a good idea to be able to choose. Will Phil Gaskell of SNH be looking at applications for biodiversity? **SH** - yes he will. Hopefully all applications will have carried through by the end of summer in time for review for next year. Will be attending an RPAC meeting next week and will raise this issue. Meantime will be better to speak to Phil direct on issues specifically related to biodiversity.

CLL - a rough timeline would be useful as a guide. **CH** - seems the problem is that we all rushed in at first, the guidance wasn't there, and now waiting for the feedback which is slow due to IT problems etc.. **SH** - recommended using Argyll as a template, meantime feel free to draft up an application. Sources of web links are also very useful to include in the application. **CLT** - sometimes hard to know if specific areas should be dealt with individually or should be

tied in with other priority areas. In the agri-environment world there is less discussion and less leeway compared to FCS projects. Noted the Scottish farmer who put in 11 applications and got 11 red lights.

CH - noted that once a Statement of Intent is submitted the whole thing freezes - is there any way IT can sort it to allow edit of the Statement of Intent before it goes through? **SH** - this has been highlighted. The trick is to keep the S.O.I extremely simple and straight to the point, then it can move to at least the amber light. **CLT** - doesn't make sense that farmers get no funding for putting in a S.O.I. **SH** - agreed. This is partly due to land management plans being ditched. This had a strategic overview of a holding and the context was seen clearly. Unfortunately this is no longer. **AA** - mentioned the Lottery which has a similar procedure for applications, similar to a basic project plan.

MP - asked the group if it was a good idea to think about how our priorities can match up with the SRDP priorities before our next Steering Group meeting (15th September 2008). **SH** - agreed this would be a good idea - it would be sensible to think early in time for 2009/10. It would also be logical to have groups looking at individual themes of local priorities and smartening them up.

ACTION: Farmland sub-group to meet in August to draw up farmland/upland priorities list

ACTION: Water and Wetland sub-group to discuss priorities list via e-mail

ACTION: Woodland sub-group to discuss priorities list via e-mail

CH - enquired about proposals for planting new woodlands (whether on improved / unimproved land) and the bearing this has on other habitats. Hopes this won't impact on special areas of grassland / wetland; would these areas be targeted? On the idea of joined up thinking, these plans may go ahead without inspection of areas and against other priority areas. **SH** - agreed there may be a risk involved, but things should be subject to audit. To qualify one needs £2500 per hectare; the bigger the land the less likely it will be to plant new trees. Everything must make reference to Forestry Standards and Archaeological sites - all constraints really should be checked. **CLT** - noted there are not many guidelines on protected buildings either. **MS** - enquired if geodiversity would fit into the scheme. **SH** - informed that geodiversity is included - regional sites of geological priorities should be enhanced or protected.

MP expressed his thanks to Syd House for his presentation and the questions and answers session.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting 4th March 2008.**

This is covered under 4. Matters Arising below.

4. **Matters Arising**

MP - highlighted the statement under Section 4 (SRDP) of the minutes of the last meeting - "The first year should be the main focus - which can ultimately be changed. There can be an assessment made for choosing species for next year." There can be some rethinking here to make the most of it. We should go back to this idea and each sub-group leader should go through with their sub-groups their list of priorities and discuss them. Tayside priorities together with the SRDP priorities should be looked at and linked into where possible - this will allow for a better chance to get in for 2009/10. **CLT** - noted it is good to include UKBAP priorities, but it would be appropriate to include other Local habitat and species priorities too. **CH** - agreed. There is a grey area between priorities given to certain species for example Barn Owls. The hierarchy of species is vague, it is difficult with different views. **MP** - TBP should be given more advice on this by principle. There seems to be an overlap of habitats and priorities, perhaps it is a case of looking at it more as a 'landscape'. **CH** - for example some areas don't really need new trees planted, although of course there are vital tree planting projects being done elsewhere. **CLT** - there is a big budget for new planting on the forestry side. What about work on old buildings, there is no mention of the possibility of species living in them?

MP - summarised by saying each sub-group should check their priority list and decide what should be on it exactly - including Tayside 'local' priorities. We need to see where SRDP can be used to support biodiversity. Lets come up with a few ideas before the next Steering group meeting in September, even if it is highlighting gaps in the advice - this could go through a

formal process. **CH** - suggested to the group that we look at Argyll as a good example and how they have approached it - see how they have used their priorities without being too broad brushed. **CLL** - noted the new UKBAP list and Scottish list now on the website. **CLT** - suggested we focus more on the Scottish list. **CLL** – agreed, but said the UK list has new habitats we need to look at. **CH** - reminded that each sub-group leader should access the UK BAP Review list, Tayside Priorities and Species lists.

ACTION – ALL sub-group leaders (before next Steering Group meeting)

MP - noted an Agenda item for the next meeting - written information / questions to bring to the meeting, which would be useful to send to the RPAC. **CLT** - suggested **MP** could attend the next Farmland subgroup meeting - it would be an idea to combine Farmland with the Upland subgroup in order to get things going. **MP** - agreed he would try and manage that.

ACTION - MP/CLT/CH
(Farmland sub-group meeting subsequently confirmed: 27th August)

MP - issue of long term future of TBP, together with the annual budgets from the Local Authorities. **CLL** - noted that SNH would be holding a meeting soon regarding this. **MP** - also noted the possibility of Perth Quality of Life Trust taking TBP under its wing.

5. Subgroup Leaders' Project Pro-forma Reports & Future Actions - brief updates

Sub-group leaders had reported on their Project Proforma via the Progress Report circulated before the meeting. Please see attached updated Progress Report with additional comments made at the meeting.

Other points made:

CLT - mentioned the issue of 'actions' noted on the action plans - more weight should be given here. Also reminded others about using weblinks in applications which should work in favour. Reminder **RH** to alter the Progress Report where some actions need to be moved to the correct subgroup. **ACTION - ALL + RH**

MP - Reminded **RH** to have the Progress Reports updated after each subgroup meeting and send this out with the minutes (saving some time and text). **ACTION - RH**

Lunch break - thanks given for the good spread.

6. Funding SITA TBAF

MP - seems like we are spending what we are getting, but it is worth continuing to send in new ideas. This would also depend on any projects that fit under TBAP criteria to continue.

7. Finance - Sub Group Budget Needs

a) Budget 2007-08 and 2008-09

AA - end of June to have final budget sourcing done. **CLL** - we need more feedback on what has been paid and what hasn't been paid. There have been a few hiccups with the Finance Dept. and little feedback. **MP** - take this to Management Team meeting. **ACTION - CLL**

b) Sub group Budget Needs

MP - Seems we can't really deal with this issue without the overall budget calculations. However it looks like the case that each sub-group will have £200 on top of last year's funding. Suggested that in future sub-group meetings members discuss how to spend the small amount of money left over.

ACTION – sub-group leaders to discuss their budget at their next sub-group meeting

8. Website / Publications

CLT - noted there was a small print run of the second BOOLS Newsletter and that a reprint would be welcomed, funding permitting. **CLL** - noted total sessions for the website dropped dramatically for one month, but have gone up again. She circulated the analysis of the months January to May 2008. The number of ZOOM Bumblebee hits has been great. The

website still needs a revamp as there is so much information on it, but this is being discussed at sub-group level. Noted that there is now an updated Swift Survey form with the Freepost address.

9. **AOB**

MP - we need an updated list of species and habitat priorities, both the Scottish and UK. **MS** - mentioned that he did this for the TBAP; it was a lot of work and quite time consuming - it needs to be accurate with time spent on looking at published and online resources. **ERN** - noted that a member of staff at PKC is now compiling an indicative mapping data base for planning etc for biodiversity and other environmental issues. All agreed this would be very useful. **MP** - suggested a student placement might be possible to update the Tayside Species list – and proposed discussing the potential for this before next meeting. **MS** - volunteered he would do the Invertebrates List in time for the next meeting. **MP** - suggested the Scottish Environment Link may be able to help with a student placement.

ACTION: MP to look into potential student placement

ACTION: MS to undertake Invertebrate List update

MP - noted the Planning Manual was very good and that it would be good to have on the website with interlinks. Would it be possible to have it as a word-accessible version? **CLL** - will look into this.

ACTION - CLL

CLL – updated the group on the BARS system and pointed out that information has to put into the database before September this year so that we can join in the UK Reporting Round. It will be about smart targets and concise input. **RH** will be doing this over the summer – she will be attending a training session on 9th July. **MP** - reminded all to make sure project proforma are updated as soon as possible and verified by the sub-group (by e-mail). Thanked all for coming and RH for taking minutes.

ACTION: Project Proforma updates to be sent to CLL by 21st July (earlier if possible)

10. **Date of Next Meetings**

Steering Group - 10:00am / lunch, Mon, **15th September**, Angus (PC)

Management Team Meeting - Tue, 11th November

Steering Group Meeting - Tues, 9th December