



# TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

c/o Dundee City Council, 13th Floor, Tayside House, Dundee DD1 3RA

Telephone: 01382 433042 email: [tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net](mailto:tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net)

Website: [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk)

## STEERING GROUP MEETING

### Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Room 410, Perth Council Buildings, High Street, Perth

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

No.		Action
1	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies noted.	
2	<b>Minutes of previous meeting - 11 Dec 2007</b> MP welcomed all to the meeting and reminded everyone that it was a big day with the SITA TBAF Reception later in the day: all were invited.	
	Minutes under section 6 (SRDP) of the last meeting - CD noted that first paragraph should read " Phil Gaskell (PG), SNH, had asked for this item to be added to the Agenda and he would give the Steering Group an update on the Regional Rural Priorities for the SRDP."	
	Also CD noted that under 8(a) of the previous minutes, the word "re-launch" should be removed.	
3	<b>Matters Arising</b>	

MP - Raised the issue of Terms of Reference and the future of TBP. Is there a possibility that PQLT could host the TBP? This would aid the transfer of offices and other problematic issues for CL. SNH funding is going to change. It may be good to have TBP as a stand alone organisation: CD - unsure yet. Paul McLennan, Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust (PKCT) Manager could take the request to his Trustees' board meeting. This may lead to a constitution and TBP becoming a legal entity. MS confirmed that he would be attending the next PKCT board meeting and offered to put in a good word about the issue of host organisation for TBP.

MS

ERN - if TBP is under the umbrella of PKCT does that mean it covers all of Dundee and Angus - we would need to safeguard the 'Tayside aspect' if TBP is going to be hosted. Are there any other similar Trusts in the same situation? CL pointed out that there would be little difference to what has happened in the past 7.5 years with the three local authorities hosting the Partnership at different addresses. CLT said that anything avoiding moving around would help the organisation.

TB - if TBP was based in Perth this may be good as it is so central and one of the biggest areas for this network - as long as there is reasonable spreading of funds and resources. PC added that we would retain the name but just change address. MS thought the change might benefit the ability to apply for grant aid as well as providing security.

MP - The government is rationalising funding for local authorities. CD understands that SNH funding won't be stopped entirely but transferred to local authorities (i.e. not ring fenced for biodiversity or the ranger services). The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership is split between three local authorities.

MP – This will be a national issue, but we need to look at it from a local level first, especially if there is a chance that SNH funding is stopped midway in the current three years - it is important CL has a stable environment.

BH – let's look at opportunities for stability. It comes down to local priorities. It is going to take time to input work into getting money in after 2010 - and find the commitment for funding.

### **Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)**

It was agreed to discuss the SRDP issue before section 4 (Sub Group Leaders Project Pro-forma Reports).

CD gave a brief update about the SRDP Regional Priorities. There are 11 regions (RPACs) in Scotland. The TLBAP concerns the Tayside Area which is overseen by Syd House and Alan Hendry. There are 32 Regional Priorities, including Landscape and Biodiversity priorities.

There are 5 Priorities on the Regional Priority List which include -

- General LBAP
- designated sites (SSSIs, SSCs, SPAs and RAMSAR sites)
- Species Action Framework – 14 priority species
- Non-native /invasive species, i.e. Japanese knotweed, rhododendrons and grey squirrel
- Habitat networks - management plans

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Phil Gaskill (PG) had suggested the Partnership takes time to see what we feel are priority species. Priorities have been drawn up for all RPACs but there is some inconsistency. This need not be a huge task but thought does need to be given to Tayside.

MP - perhaps this should be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting with Syd House as he is chair of the Tayside RPAC? Let's discuss with Syd House exactly what is required with a more forward thinking approach towards biodiversity.

MS - noted it may have been left loose deliberately to allow for variations. CH - if it is completely open-ended there is going to be a huge list as all species are currently at the same level of priority. The first year should be the main focus - which can ultimately be changed. It is not up to SNH to choose. There can be an assessment made for choosing species for next year.

CLT – In the past, the LBAPs each chose a local “30 List” for the old Rural Stewardship Scheme with 15 habitat priorities and 15 species priorities. This gave a higher rating to some.

TB - the list is significantly bigger than it was - its needs to be pragmatic for the short term.

CD - we need to figure out what is eligible - what should be on / off the list. This should be done with a straight-forward methodology.

CH - Corn buntings have stayed ‘generic’. BA - There needs to be a clear hierarchy of priorities and to telescope this down to individual species. There needs to be a lot of refinement in the process.

CD - The list for the RPAC should not be too big - this will add value to the LBAP and complement the work we do. MS suggested we focus on the next 12 months to see if it works first. MP - LPAC process: need to decide on ranking.

MS - this is also a public thing - an element of the public should respond to include top priorities. MS - Case Officers would help in doing this. CLT pointed out that at the last steering group meeting we still hadn't finalised this. CH added that a lot of big, medium and low priorities were fast-tracked. Some biodiversity priorities were classed as priorities by SNH and Syd Houses' priorities were generally forestry related. MS - Case Officer training days will be starting on April 10th.

CD - PG suggested that the Partnership could make the priorities more meaningful. It should be the TLBAP that comes up with priorities, not SNH. MP - asked if PG was in charge of the biodiversity component of work in Tayside, but CD said that a lot of people were involved. CH - PG is an important contact.

MP - Syd House has confirmed that he is available to attend the next Steering Group meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June to give a briefing on the process. MP offered to amalgamate ideas sent to him before the end of March to pass to Syd well before the next meeting in June. Sub-Group Leaders were asked to liaise with their members. CL to circulate Version 6 of the SRDP Priorities.

MP

CL

#### **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. Additional comments included:

##### Urban - AA & CL

**USG2 - Acoustic Ecology 2006-07.** Project complete and evolving into USG4 Urban Grassland Management whereby a Meadow Management and Creation Project is in progress.

**USG3 - Community Gardens / Orchards & Allotments HAP 2006-10,** The Community Gardens, Orchards and Allotments A5 booklet is complete. Published copies are to be delivered to TBP office next week. Everyone noted that it looks very good.

**USG4 and USG5 - Urban Grassland Management 2006-10 & Invasive Species Project 2007-12,** The Dichty Burn Week will be incorporated into these projects. Hosted by SNH and SEPA, an event will be held on 23rd May, starting at 9:30 am at St. Saviours School.

**USG11 - Green Kirk & Graveyard Initiative 2006-10** (The Gardens, Greenspace and Graveyards Community Workshop is fully booked for 8th March at St. Matthews Church,

Perth. Update since is that 36 people attended and it was a successful day.

**USG7 - ZOOM Bumblebee Project 2008-09**, AA has prepared a freepost biodiversity postcard and survey information with the help of the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust. There will be publicity throughout the newspapers; 1,000 ZOOM packs are in the middle of being made up. They will be distributed from mid-April. CD - noted the project aims to reach people who do not normally get to hear of these things. There will be free gifts including lip balm. SNH is providing leaflets and a bumble bee book. The Scottish Biodiversity Forum is providing bee seed packs. It is hoped this will be an annual event with different species each year depending on local patch. MP asked how this was funded - AA – confirmed funding from SNH and the Partnership's Urban Sub-group. AA noted the project will connect with parks, gardens and open spaces.

*Woodland - MS*

Tim Barrett (TB) of Forestry Commission Scotland will be replacing MS as Woodland Sub-group leader as MS is now moving into policy and development work at FCS. MS was thanked for his past help as sub-group leader. The next meeting of the sub-group will be on 11<sup>th</sup> March.

**WSG1 - Green Tourism Initiative 2006-10**, additionally it was noted that there is a path network improvement project underway in the Crieff area.

**WSG2 - Woodland Management Awareness 2007-11**, it was noted that a Forestry Scotland Festival is to be held in September / October.

**WSG4 - Red Squirrel Conservation 2006-10** - please note that £5k has been allocated to Tayside not just Dundee.

**WSG9 - Carse of Gowrie Orchard Project**, this project is progressing extremely well, involving local produce and local people. It ties in well with the up and coming autumn Enchanted Forest Festival to be held in September in Pitlochry.

CL - noted that there is a proposed Apple Day Festival in the Carse and the first Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March. The Community & School Orchard Workshop held on 23rd February was very successful (35 people attended) and there was excellent press coverage.

MS - keen to get connections made for orchards - there are possible funding opportunities. MP - mentioned the Cittaslow initiative is taking off as well and that there will be connections with this project.

MS - noted the Iconic Project which includes Interesting Conifers in Care, held in Edinburgh Botanical Gardens whereby the initiative has set up havens for these special trees (including the traditional natural Lawson cypress). Noted the Hilton Day event to be held soon and the Virgin Greenfield project.

*Coast & Estuaries - CL*

CL - noted that she was still Acting Chair, but that there is possibility that David Lampard of McManus Galleries, Dundee could take over. The next sub-group meeting will be 12<sup>th</sup> March.

**CESG1 - Tayside Golf Course Initiative 2006-10**, CLT - mentioned Carnoustie Golf Course and their initiative to create four ponds. A joint initiative between FWAG and the Scottish Golf Environment Group, surveys will be undertaken and a monitoring form produced to be used by the staff themselves; there will also be an element of staff training. Hard landscaping will be removed to encourage reeds. Similar golf course pond projects are planned as part of the Tayside Ponds Project. MP enquired as to funding for this project; CLT said Carnoustie Golf Club will fund it.

**CESG4 - Tayside Terns 2006-10**, CD - funding has been received from the Crown Estate, the SITA TBAF and Glaxo to expand the project. Karen Philip (SNH) has undertaken a lot of work on this. Part of the new project will be a Tern raft at Montrose. SF - announced that rafts had been very successful with the terns elsewhere; unfortunately they are expensive. The rafts have been popular with Common and Arctic terns. The Little Terns have been breeding on the public beach; SITA TBAF will fund the wardening here again this year – this, however, is not viable in the long term.

BC - asked if there were projects within the Coast & Estuaries sub-group that the Water & Wetland subgroup could tie in with. CLT said there were many connections between the two. The golf course ponds initiative will not necessarily be coastal and will widen into the Tayside Ponds Project in time.

Water & Wetland - BC

**WWSG1 – Tayside Ponds Project** - No progress to report since last meeting. However ties in with CLTs CESG1 project.

**WWGS2 – Perth Lade** - BC had a meeting with a developer who was proposing a biodiversity project in conjunction with building a new café over the lade. Building on top of the lade presents serious challenges not least modifying a flood prevention scheme design. The Perth & Kinross Council's Lade Management Group has become more active in the last six months and biodiversity projects are now being considered.

**WWSG3 – Mammal Road Death Survey** - No response received from Network Rail regarding security fence issue at Walnut Grove (otter deaths).

**WWSG4 - River Earn Japanese Eradication and Habitat Improvement** – the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board have had their funding for half this project approved (£20K) so there should be progress this spring. At the last sub-group meeting we had a presentation from ADAS Scotland who had been asked to investigate how best to tackle the issues of non-native species. All sub-group members were invited to complete a questionnaire which asked what they thought were the highest priority species in Tayside. The sub-group's opinion was sought on the best forum to deal with these type of problems. ADAS will submit a report to SEPA and SNH summarising the conclusions.

**WWSG5 – River Tay Tributary Improvement Initiative** - The sub-group had planned to make a joint response to the Scottish Native Woodlands consultative report; however, no comments were submitted in the end. The report covers tributaries in the upper Tay.

**WWSG6 - Salmon in the Classroom** - SNH confirmed they will be the sole funders for this project, following the end of EU LIFE funding. The fishery board is still committed to assisting with the project.

**WWSG7 – Water Voles and Mink Project** - MS noted there were sightings of water vole and otter at Linlochie, Killin. CD mentioned the Water Vole re-survey at Loch Leven.

**WWSG8 – Freshwater Pearl Mussel Awareness-Raising** - SNH confirmed that planned translocation experiments are on hold because two candidate rivers were shown to support juveniles.

**WWSG9 – Tayside Lochs Project** - SEPA has had its internal action plan for this project approved by senior managers which will allocate time and resources to provide regulatory support, chemical and biological monitoring. Unexpected difficulties have been encountered regarding the design for the awareness-raising tea towels. CL is investigating.

Other Reporting - The sub-group met in January to discuss the organisation of another best practice riparian engineering seminar in January 2009. The main topics to be covered will be an update from SEPA on the Controlled Activity Regulations (CAR), flood directive implications and green engineering alternatives.

*Upland - MJ*

The sub-group has been inactive for some time, although there has been a link with the Farmland sub-group owing to the Water vole project in Strathardle. MJ is looking into the potential for an Upland Discussion Day based on the Atholl Estate. This would involve both the TLBAP and the Cairngorms Biodiversity Partnership. CL - noted that Polly Freeman of the Atholl Ranger Service is interested in helping with this later (May onwards). MP suggested that plans for such a Day be in hand before 17th June.

CD – MJ had approached her regarding funding for a Climate Awareness leaflet. There was unfortunately no funding for this, but it is such a good idea. It was suggested MJ contact the Mountaineering Council with a proposal for a Scotland-wide leaflet incorporating biodiversity issues. SF - there is a lot of information on the mountaineering website. MS - issue of access. MP - there is a lot of information in England: a lot of organisations that specify on cliff access etc.

*Farmland - CH / CL*

CLT - noted this year's International Biodiversity theme is "Agriculture" so the ZOOM project and Farmland projects could tie in well together.

**FSG1 - Tayside Barn Owls Projects 2006-10,** CH / CLT noted that the BOOLS Project has now officially finished, but funding for individual projects will continue to be sought in Tayside. CLT noted that the survey input into MapMate is nearly finished (5km circles of sightings). There will be a map made soon for Barn Owl sightings. MP - asked how many Barn Owl survey cards had been returned. CLT noted that c45 received have been received, plus all the rest from Clackmannanshire and Fife. MP - suggested that all those who have sent postcards could be kept in touch via email.

CLT - pointed out that there were 250 sightings in the last couple of years - which is great since the Barn Owl is not really known in Tayside. CLT also noted that the BOOLS nest boxes attracted 10% occupancy in one year which is exceptional.

CD - suggested the need to survey buildings including new build surveys. Asked SF about development and management. SF advised that the biodiversity discussion with Perth & Kinross Planning was very useful but unfortunately to date there has only been some follow up correspondence via email. Discussions are needed on how to build in biodiversity with the planning process - hopefully this will go through before the next meeting.

CD - mentioned the Biodiversity Tool Kit - this is web based to aid developers and planners and is used to trigger biodiversity issues relating to certain types of development. e.g., steadings (owls/bats). It is quite refined and was set up by SNH and the Biodiversity Implementation Team. ERN confirmed that she and CL were organising another training day for developers and planners in April to raise awareness.

CLT asked if we should be targeting architects as well to ensure biodiversity issues are considered pre-planning stage. This would cost little in relation to the overall result.

**FSG3 - Farmland Bird Project 2007-10,** CH / CLT - after consultation regarding SRDP issues there will be opportunities to talk with RSPB to discuss Corn Bunting projects.

**FSG4 - Angus Glens Treelines Project 2006-07,** CLT – this project has now be widened to encompass Perthshire.

*Education – CL*

The last meeting was held in January with another one planned in April.

Scottish Biodiversity Week "Top Ten Event" - CL announced funding of £2,000 had been secured for the Perth Street Theatre to be held on both 17th and 24th May 2008 (by Perth

Youth Theatre). A lot of work to achieve this was put in by Sandra Penman of SNH. The Tayside event will be publicised nationally by the Scottish Implementation Team.

CD – asked if the events list has been circulated? Has PR been co-ordinated? CL confirmed that RH was finalising the events list to go on the biodiversity website and that PR would be co-ordinated as soon as possible.

**ESG2 - Tayside Wildlife Festival 2009**, CL noted that the event is now planned to take place between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 9<sup>th</sup> May 9th 2009. MP - this is going to be a big series of events - are all steering group members involved? CL - we are still at brainstorming stage at the moment and will draw up a brief for the event in April.

MS – warned that as there was no obvious lead partner there may be administration difficulties. The ambition would be to grow bigger - we have not yet realised the potential for something really big here.

MP - suggested talking to Perth Countryside Trust. MS - agreed in that PCT work a lot with rangers; perhaps Paul McLennan could attend the next meeting? Or Syd House as he works closely with the Big Tree Country Project. MP - Suggested that Angus, Dundee and Dundee Voluntary Action (AA) should link up and spin out the idea to more people. Let's link biodiversity with other issues.

MS - asked MSI if there was going to be funding for the Homecoming at the Perth Museum and Art Gallery. MSI - noted that would be linkage here.

**ESG8 - Practitioner training** – CL noted that the first' Building Better Biodiversity' lunch-time seminar on the proposed Scottish Children's Orchard had been held in January (with 20 attendees). There was interest to pursue this community/school orchard idea, especially in Dundee.

Two further lunch time seminars were being arranged, courtesy of Perth & Kinross Council who would host 'amphibian/reptile management on verges' and 'badger mitigation measures' in May / June (i.e. directed at planners, developers and roads).

**ESG3 – Mammal Atlas** - the Tayside Local Recorders Day will be held in Perth on 15th March; currently 40 delegates have booked a place. MP to act as Chair for the event. All three Museum Services will be involved.

### **Funding**

#### a) Local Biodiversity Funding

MP - asked about the SNH promotions budget. CD - £13, 000 had been put aside for big biodiversity projects next year. The budget is really squeezed - unfortunately none got approved – these were appealed, but still got knocked back. Unfortunately SNH can't help with small scale projects.

#### b) SITA TBAF

MP reminded all about the launch later in the day - another £300,000 has been granted for the next 3 years.

CL - noted that she had compiled an 8-page "From Summit to Sand" Newsletter which highlighted a number of the key SITA TBAF projects that had been achieved. This had been published in time for the Launch.

### **Finance - Sub Group Budget Needs**

BH - will check figures. There will be a new financial budget for the new year soon. CD - still waiting for the breakdown on expenditure from Christine Campbell (DCC); BH to liaise with Christine Campbell.

CL – circulated an updated Sub-Group micro-budget and agreed that funding should be split into past expenditure and forward plans. She will update and circulate to sub-group leaders for comment.

#### **Website**

CL – Circulated the updated report and confirmed the number of hits on the website are still high. She is not getting sufficient information from the website designer as to which sections are being searched. She will look into improving the feedback. CL - We need to re-arrange the actions on the website. The orchard meeting minutes, biodiversity newsletter and workshop programmes have been uploaded. AA - suggested that we include the ZOOM information on the website in time for the project's launch (mid-April). CL asked AA to send pdfs for her to forward to the website designer. MP - noted there was not much information at present on SRDP links.

CL – listed recent TBP publications: the Community Gardens, Orchards and Allotments – 3,000 booklets expected to be delivered soon; the Planning Manual - CL working with ERN on this to get published by Scottish Biodiversity Week; 'Summit to Sand' Newsletter published; BOOLS Newsletter (edited by CLT) published.

MP - suggested newsletters be distributed to libraries? CD - suggested keeping some newsletters aside for the Street Theatre and Biodiversity Week. CL – confirmed that all the publications will be put on the website too.

#### **AOB**

Query regarding CL's personal mobile phone number being circulated - should she have a work mobile as well as a personal one, perhaps 'Pay as You Go' which would keep costs down. It was suggested this issue remain at Management Team level.

CD - announced the SNH Open Event on 13th March at the Perth Concert Hall. The Chairman and Local advisors will be there and members of staff. It will be at a local level.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

Steering Group - 17th June, Dundee - 10:00 am with lunch (to invite Syd House)

Management Team Meeting - 22nd August

Steering Group Meeting - 15th September, Angus - 10:00 am with lunch