

Sand Martin Interest Group - CL's notes (31 July 2008)

Clacks wall - got through planning; IF attended opening ceremony. Awaiting first resident. Tape being played. Interpretation panels planned.

TBP website - propose we add the different wall designs and short case studies of as many projects as possible. Need to add a proviso that we're all in the experimental stage and that feedback is essential. Possibly link with Rutland, Barnes Wetland Centre and Renfrewshire sites to show good examples elsewhere in the country? IF/CL to collate a list of all projects and to approach each contact to ask for a 2 or 3 paragraph report on the project (plus photos if possible). Website designer can arrange all this; we just need to provide the short case studies (with sketches/photos attached).

Ian - could we put a deadline on this, end October perhaps? It would be really good to get a "working" page about sand martins on the website....

Need a survey map on the website showing known colonies. Also need to publicise our need for survey input; perhaps a public walk at Murton during Tayside Biodiversity Festival (1st to 10th May 2009) and something similar at Broughty Ferry at the same time?

Al Borland/Murton team willing to input sand martin survey data on to map (MapMate?) on behalf of the Interest Group. The TBP could purchase MapMate for this use (c£25). Carol Littlewood of Angus FWAG uses it to add all the Tayside Barn Owl Survey data. We should make data information available to NBN, BTO, SOC.

Should we add breeding records from each site to go on the website? [Late broods noted - extra numbers in July. Possibly 2nd broods.]

Jim Laird's quarry has 8 different colonies. He is very protective of them. We should follow this up to feature in the Planning Manual's Best Practice case studies booklet (which will be prepared this winter). The quarry is considering putting in a wall; has a pond as part of the overall restoration project. Could AB provide Jim Laird's address/e-mail details or would he be willing to approach him direct?

If we collated information this autumn/winter, the outcome could be:

- A designated Sand Martin website page featured on the home page (i.e. easy access).
- A more proactive online survey with map and possible "blog" page (AL to look into).
- A Biodiversity Advice Note for planners and developers - max 2 x pages A4. This will be part of a suite of BANs to go in with the Planning Manual circulated to planners, developers and architects throughout Tayside. All information will go on website too.
- A sand martin/working quarry best practice case study to go in the Best Practice booklet (to add to the Planning Manual).
- The potential for a 4 x page Sand Martin Newsletter to be published in time for the birds' return in 2009 (along the same lines as the Swift Newsletter): a general publication with a variety of news items: request for survey help; update on two Tayside walls (and the Clacks one!), highlight of a quarry working to safeguard sand martins, case study of working with the Roads Dept. of a local authority; general advice regarding legislation, photos, etc. Funding would be available (hopefully) from the TBP, but perhaps Jim Laird may like to contribute £500?

Awareness-raising needed for planners/developers - the Newsletter mentioned above could be circulated very widely before the next season. Al Borland already runs familiarisation visits for planners and their families, i.e. informal site visits.

CL to circulate 'Building Better Biodiversity' training programme to everyone, including the draft AC one. Plus Green Roofs website info. Consider arranging a site visit for planners/developers to Murton next summer and highlight this in the programme (AB may not think this is a good idea!). Should we focus on a couple of school trips instead and get links with African schools so that they can find out about their "shared" birds?

Consider a sand martin project for children? AL to ask Kirsty at BFEP for advice on the success of the BFEP blog - similar one for SMIG, perhaps?

Murton - 450 pairs using walls. Even at the end of March they were in use. Lots of maintenance required; new sand. Forfar Loch wall not being cleaned out; failing.

Updated reports needed from Montrose, Forfar Loch and Crombie.

Perth Lade - project proposals taking a very long time to come together, but after a site visit in May with the Perth Lade Management Committee (PKC) and the author of the Lade Management Report (David Bell of Ecos) the project is now being discussed properly. A Perth Bat Project will focus on the Lade in 2009. SMIG could proactively look into costings/design for the wall, plus potential for funding - PQLT, TBAF, Breathing Places so that the information can be presented to the next Lade Committee meeting (CL attends). It would be good to get something built in time for 2009.

Friarton - potential for sand martin wall. IF to approach David Clarke. Possibility of the adjacent West Oaks Orchard (owned by Network Rail) to be linked to a public footpath from Bridgend, Perth and the orchard to become a "community orchard". This will not happen until 2010 at least, but the sand martin wall could perhaps be matched with a small bird hide on David Clarke's land to cater for walkers? [if appropriate!]

Sand Martin booklet - widely distributed. When the print run is depleted, would it be worth considering putting the booklet on the website? [CL also wonders if similar Swift booklet could be researched and printed?]