



REVIEW OF PROGRESS WITH TAKING ACTION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES' ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REVIEW OF LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION FEBRUARY 2003

As at November 2004.

Political commitment to biodiversity at national and local levels:

1 The Welsh Assembly Government demonstrates its leadership in the field by mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into its policies and priorities, and those of sponsored bodies.

ü The National Assembly has adopted a Biodiversity Indicator, as one of the suite of indicators developed to measure the progress of the Wales Sustainable Development Scheme.

ü Work has recently begun on developing an Environment Strategy for Wales.

It will explain what action the Assembly Government, the Assembly institutions, other public bodies, other partners and the public need to take to deliver environmental objectives.

2 The Welsh Assembly Government considers means of strengthening local government commitment to local biodiversity action, and presses all Local Authorities in Wales to adopt Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) as supplementary planning guidance, in line with planning policy guidance, and use them to underpin Community Strategies.

ü It is the policy of the Assembly through Planning Policy Wales that Local BAPs should be used as supplementary planning guidance. This is re-iterated in 'Go Wild in Wales'

ü The Local BAP survey 2003 found that 3 LBAPs had been adopted as SPG and that all except 2 partnerships intend recommending adoption in the next couple of years.

3 The Wales Biodiversity Partnership take steps to increase co-ordination between local and national strategies and partnerships, and place a greater emphasis on local target setting.

ü At the Local Issues Advisory Group Seminar in July 2003, Cawyn Jones AM announced the production of 2 important documents, which will improve coordination

1. 'Priority Habitats in Wales' published by CCW and;

1. A 'Species Audit for Wales' (Phase 2) compiled by RSPB on behalf of WBP.

Both data sets provide information on distribution, status and conservation mechanisms for priority species and habitats locally; both assist with setting Action Plan targets.

ü In November 2003 CCW published and distributed their 'Marine Guidance' document; a comprehensive guide to the production of local marine habitats and species action plans in Wales; this identifies actions, gives help with setting targets and practical advice on taking action.

4 The Wales Biodiversity Partnership take the lead in developing a strategy and accompanying guidance on monitoring and reporting of local biodiversity actions.

ü The Wales Biodiversity Partnership and CCW are investing in the development of a national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).

ü The WBP is supporting the adoption and use of BARS by LBAP Partnerships in Wales, through practical help and training initiatives and by the provision of a Welsh version.

Matching political commitment with resources:

5 The Welsh Assembly Government establish a review of financing arrangements to clarify, streamline, and synchronise funding sources available to support local biodiversity action.

ü The WBP Secretariat was commissioned to carry out the review; its findings were circulated to members of WBP and LBAG in Sept 2004 and views collated at the Wales Biodiversity Partnership meeting on November 16th 2004

6 The Welsh Assembly Government ensure that dedicated funding is made available to finance the WBP LBAP Facilitator and a permanent full-time LBAP officer for each partnership, and consider mechanisms for the specific funding of local biodiversity actions, possibly by the direct funding of partnerships.

- The WBP LBAP Facilitator post is secured within the CCW structure until

1st April 2007.

- No action to date on LBAP officers.

Accessibility of information and expertise:

7 The Welsh Assembly Government take steps to establish the development of a national Local Records Centre network, building on the Powys pilot project.

ü Local partnerships have taken the initiative to develop Local Record Centres (LRCs), in South Wales, West Wales and North Wales which, when operational will cover the whole country.

ü The Wales Biodiversity Partnership has contracted expertise to support the early stages of the development process in three regions of Wales.

ü The Welsh Assembly Government has actively promoted the benefits of using LRCs to provide data for planning and other decision making purposes. E.g. Carwyn Jones AM attended the launch of the development plan for the second Welsh LRC, SEWBreC on 11 February 2004.

8 All-Wales bodies such as the Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Agency look at ways of increasing the accessibility of expert support locally, and to increase the capacity of local authorities in their ecological and LBAP expertise.

ü The publications mentioned in 3 above provide information from experts for Local BAP Partnerships and the marine document directs Local BAP Partnerships to other sources of marine expertise.

ü CCW science staff continue to comment on individual species and habitat plans.

- In February 2002 the EAW stated:

The Environment Agency Wales is committed to supporting the development and delivery of Local Biodiversity Action Plans within Wales. The Agency has limited resources dedicated to biodiversity issues and these are used to ensure that our own actions and activities support biodiversity within Wales.

However, where our resource constraints allow, we have used this expertise to support Local Biodiversity Action Plans including, for example, providing advice on Local Plans as well as providing representation on LBAP steering groups.

Although the main priority for our biodiversity resources are to ensure the Agency's own activities support biodiversity within Wales, where our resources allow, we will continue to provide expert advice and support to the development of Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

EAW added in June 2004, *'although we cannot directly fund LBAP development, we're keen to encourage LBAP groups to approach us with ideas for any relevant projects they have.'*

- No increase in capacity of local authorities in their ecological and LBAP expertise since Feb 2003

9 The Welsh Assembly Government and ELWa consider ways of a) increasing the availability and take-up of courses in conservation science, taxonomy, and practical land management skills by Welsh educational and training institutions, and b) encouraging the alignment of academic research to UK Biodiversity Action Plan research priorities.

ü The Welsh Assembly Government provided funds for training local biodiversity action staff on the identification of Section 74 species. The training was co-ordinated and delivered by the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. The training was very well received but demand outstripped supply and many requiring the training were unable to attend

ü The WBP held a morning seminar at its meeting on 3 February 2004 on the subject of Identification Skills and Expertise for Biodiversity Action; this was led by Dr Graham Oliver of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. Five presentations by guest speakers addressed aspects of the subject and informed a 'round table' debate on actions, which might be taken in Wales to address the recommendations.

The following actions and executors were identified:

1. The NGMW and NHM London (Graham Oliver and Alistair Taylor) to work together to audit the users of Welsh biodiversity information and their needs.
2. The NGMW and NHM London (Graham Oliver and Alistair Taylor) to work together to audit the expertise of those with identification skills and expertise.
3. The voluntary sector to continue to engage the public in monitoring activities.

Delivering local actions through partnerships

10 The Wales Biodiversity Partnership establish 'biodiversity awards' to highlight good conservation practice and encourage partnership working.

Ü A Biodiversity Award scheme with the purpose of 'celebrating significant contributions to local biodiversity action', was developed and implemented by the WBP during 2004. Fourteen projects were nominated by Local BAP Partnerships in Wales, and each project was judged by members of the WBP against 6 criteria including community involvement, working with partners and value for money. The joint winners, the Marloes Coastal project in Pembrokeshire, and the Ruperra Conservation Trust, received their awards from Carwyn Jones AM at the LBAG seminar on September 14th. WBP decided to extend the Award Scheme at it's meeting in November 2004.

WBP SECRETARIAT

NOVEMBER 2004