

Title: Review of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) and the Wales Biodiversity Framework (WBF)

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Background/Progress

The Future of the Biodiversity Action Plan (Future of BAP) group was established in response to the UK Standing Committee report 'Conserving Biodiversity the UK Approach' (Oct 2007). This report led to the devolution of the responsibility for biodiversity targets including those set by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the European Union (EU) 2010 targets. The Future of BAP group was tasked with developing a structure with clear roles and responsibilities that would be able to address the complex issues and challenges at a Wales and a local level required to reverse the decline, and eventually halt the loss of biodiversity. This was set out in the reviewed Wales Biodiversity Framework (WBF) early in 2010.

Since then new 2020 international and EU targets have been agreed and Wales as part of the UK has obligations to contribute to these. Evidence demonstrating the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems to human well-being is growing and was consolidated and reinforced by the publication of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment in 2011. In addition the Natural Environment Framework sets out a new environmental policy direction in Wales adopting the Ecosystem Approach (Annex 1). The CBD has advocated this approach for 20 years and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnerships, NGOs and others have for many years developed projects based on these principles and so have a wealth of knowledge and experience to support WG policy.

A number of recommendations were made by the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) Environment and Sustainability Committee review of Biodiversity Loss in October 2010. The then Minister Jane Davidson (AM) accepted the recommendation **“Given that the WBP is the main mechanism for co-ordinating biodiversity action on the ground, the Committee calls for the Welsh Government to ensure that the WBP is appropriately resourced and fit for purpose to lead the Welsh action on delivering the 2020 biodiversity targets”**. The Background paper for the Natural Environment Framework published alongside the Living Wales consultation in Sept 2010 noted that WBP was one of the main successes in recent years (Annex 2). The paper set out a challenge to WBP to adopt a business model that sets out clear 'courses of action', responsibilities and support mechanisms that deliver the ecosystem approach on the ground. The Future of BAP group has been re-established to meet these challenges through a review of the WBP and the WBF. This review also includes making recommendations to Government and others on what is needed to improve the legitimacy of WBP as key to the success of NEF.

Plan/Proposals

Various workshops and discussions have taken place looking at local delivery, the Ecosystem Groups, the WBP Steering Group and other aspects of the WBP (annex 1). At a Future of BAP workshop in November 2011 it was agreed that due to the size of the task it should be divided up into workstream areas led by different members of the group. The workstreams are: Local delivery, the Ecosystem and Outcome 21

groups, the Species Expert group and Lead Partners, the Invasive Non Native Species group, and the WBP Steering Group. Additional workstreams will look at monitoring WBP progress (and the development of WBP indicators), and Communications. Discussions will also be held with key individuals involved in the Wales Environment Information Steering Group and the Wildlife Crime Enforcement groups to ensure strong links with the wider WBP. A final task will be to look at the role of the WBP Support Team in relation to the revised roles and responsibilities. The Wales Biodiversity Framework will then be updated to include high level information on roles and responsibilities and also 'ways of working including protocols. An update on progress is provided in the Annex 3.

Action Requested

A current pressing concern is that this work is largely falling to the WBP Support Team, a few staff from CCW and some NGOs. Wider commitment from organisations represented on the WBP Steering Group (WBP SG) is requested not just to ensure completion of the work area, but also to ensure full commitment to delivery of the revised Wales Biodiversity Framework through WBP in the future.

The WBP SG workstream is working on key recommendations for the Steering Group which will be circulated soon for comment. In response to the Biodiversity Inquiry recommendation and the NEF the WBP SG must take on a more strategic role. Achieving its potential will mean consideration of the current membership and Chair.

The WBP Future of BAP group has been asked to report progress to the NEF/SEB Programme Board in May, and present a full paper to WBP Steering Group in July. Work is progressing on many of the workstreams (annex 3) and the content of the NEF/SEB report will be agreed at a Future of BAP meeting on March 22nd and with the new Ecosystem Project Manager working on the SEB Programme.

The Future of BAP group also requests clarification from WG on the role the WBP in the future delivery of the NEF, and reassurance that the review remains the role of the WBP now and in the future.

Actions

- WG confirm that this review is the responsibility of WBP (now and in the future) and that the WBP groups will have a key role in the delivery of NEF
- WBP SG members to agree to continue to commit staff from their organisations to actively contribute to/lead on the work of the review.
- WG to confirm the date the Future of BAP will report to the NEF/SEB programme Board and clarification on what will be required at that meeting
- WBP Steering Group to consider the membership/Chair to reinforce its strategic role.