

WBP Species Expert Group Meeting 17

Gilfach Nature Reserve Radnorshire Wildlife Trust 25th May 2016

Attendees: Liz Howe, co-Chair (NRW); Stephen Bladwell, co-Chair (RSPB Cymru); Sean McHugh, Secretariat (WBP); Clare Dinham (Buglife); Ray Woods (BSBI/British Lichen Society); Tracey Lovering (Plantlife Cymru -Wales Lower Plants and Fungi Officer); Mark Barber (Amphibian & Reptile Conservation); Hannah Shaw (Freshwater Habitats Trust); Jenny MacPherson (Vincent Wildlife Trust); Rachel Taylor (BTO); Bill Somerfield (WG); Steve Chambers (WG) Juliet Hynes (Cardiff University Otter Project)

Apologies: Liz Halliwell (NRW); Jean Matthews (NRW); Sam Bosanquet (NRW/BBS); Sian Whitehead (NRW); Geoff Hobbs (Bridgend CBC); Sinead Lynch (Bumblebee Conservation); Sara Bird (Chester Zoo); Steve Lucas (BCT); Lizzie Wilberforce (WTW/WTSWW); Russel Hobson (Butterfly Conservation Wales); Genevieve Dalley (British Dragonfly Society)

No.	Update/Action	Who by/when	Additional comments
1	<p>State of Nature Report and SoNaRR</p> <p>State of Nature Report is due to be published 14th September. There will be a main UK report and reports from Wales & all the countries. The draft of the Welsh report will be out in the next few weeks. The Report is being compiled by UK Environmental NGO's.</p> <p>A species assessment is ongoing in Wales based on evidence from Red Lists, national surveys etc together with expert opinion. The invertebrate assessment is robust, but the Vascular Plant list needs updating from the 2008 version. The Welsh bryophyte, rust fungus and lichen lists also need reviewing for the assessment. In some instances there will be insufficient data to report species trends and the report will recommend adopting the 'precautionary approach' in these instances. This information can be fed into the S7 review process.</p>	<p>Stephen to send species assessment to SEG for immediate comment - Done</p>	<p>Background In 2013, the State of Nature Report found that 60 per cent of UK species studied had declined in recent decades.</p> <p>In 2015 'The Response for Nature project' was published which outlined a set of actions the project team identified to arrest the declines. You can read the Response for Nature Wales report here The reports for all the devolved nations can be accessed here</p> <p>There are many sources of grey literature which could be used in SoNaRR- a structured approach would be needed to incorporate the data but worth noting its existence. LERC data (incl. Citizen Science data & LBAP data) & Atlas of Living Wales data (derived from & building on the NBN gateway) will all be key inputs. Biological Record Centre data, Local Government archives,</p>

	<p>Stephen will send out the species assessment lists.</p> <p>SoNaRR – the SoNaRR report is being compiled by NRW and covers air, water, fisheries & biodiversity. This will be the first national report & will act as a baseline. The launch is planned by the end of September & will be a soft launch with the main launch probably taking place in October. This first report will draw on published works and for the biodiversity section this will include Red List Data, species Atlas’ & SSSI information (state, trend, conditions, and pressures). The report will also highlight gaps. The Report will be structured as a summary with the detailed information contained in the annexes. The next report will then be due in 5 years. Parallel work with the WG Terrestrial Monitoring Framework is ongoing which will include the GMEP work. WG, NRW & NGO’s are involved with the Terrestrial Monitoring Group. Steve Lucas & Liz Howe recently attended a workshop led by CEH to look at future options for environmental monitoring in Wales.</p>		<p>NRW license returns were also identified as data sources.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>WBP Chairs Meeting</p> <p>The group chairs last met in October 2015 and a meeting is planned in July. Stephen B asked for items to take to the next Chairs meeting - a long-term strategy for data management/interpretation was mentioned; also NGO’s facing a financial shortfall when the current funding round end in 2018 so financial pressures will come to bear down on many organisations</p>	<p>All: send any issues for the chairs meeting to Stephen & Sean</p>	<p>Chairs meeting actions are available on the WBP website: http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Ecosystem-Group-Chairs</p>

<p>Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) update</p> <p>The next WBSB meeting is the 14th June. The meeting will focus on Developing Part 3 of the Nature Recovery Plan: The Nature Recovery Framework through a series of workshops.</p> <p><i>NGO representatives at WBSB meetings (BCT; BC; WT; RSPB)- influencing role & advisory role to WG on biodiversity issues.</i></p> <p>Section 7 lists</p> <p>The section 7 lists (priority species & habitats) have been published- they are both exactly the same as the previous lists under Section 42 of the NERC Act, and are currently under review in consultation with NRW. NGO's are also involved with the review and a formal consultation will take place. The review will be based on criteria which are being worked up</p> <p>Note: Under the provisions of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the new biodiversity and resilience of ecosystem duty replaces the NERC Duty (2006). The new duty came into effect on the 21st May 2016.</p> <p>To recap, there are two pieces of work that affect species in Wales i) species assessment for the State of Nature Report ii) S7 list review for the Environment Act</p> <p>Both pieces of work should enable trends to be identified in species distribution & abundance since the S42 NERC list came into</p>		<p>NRP</p> <p>Parts i) and ii) were published on 23rd December 2015. The NRP consists of 3 sections: i) strategy outline; ii) action plan iii) governance framework. Parts ii) and iii) are work in progress and there is an opportunity to influence the actions and governance Working Groups will take forward each objective of the NRP</p> <p>You can access the NRP Part 1 here: http://gov.wales/topics/environment/countryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/?lang=en</p>
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	force following the review in 2006/7.		
3	<p>Evidence Gaps</p> <p>NRW have signed an accord with Welsh Universities to build closer linkages and ways of working and the Evidence Gaps Project will be signposted as part of this collaboration. The work will also be extended to UK and Irish Universities.</p> <p>The Project has good opportunities to link in with the S7 species. BES has recently showed interest in the project. A register of progress is being worked on.</p> <p>SEG are encouraged to add in/review evidence gaps and in particular add in project proposals (send to Alys Morris) including literature review projects (template on the website). Partnership projects and collaborations are strongly encouraged.</p>	All to continue to send in species gaps and project proposals	<p>Evidence Gaps Project http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/WBP-Evidence-Gaps-Project</p> <p>WBP Evidence Gaps Project on Linked-in https://www.linkedin.com</p> <p>Alys Morris is the contact for evidence gaps: MorrisA18@cardiff.ac.uk</p>
4	<p>AOB</p> <p>Species champions Launch (WEL initiative) which takes place in Cardiff on 15th June. The project matches up AM's with species in their constituencies/regions and is way of raising the importance of Welsh species and their habitat requirements. The majority of the species are on the S7 list.</p> <p>Hannah asked whether FHT could be involved with the project & suggest species where there are gaps, Sean will check.</p>	Update: Clarified that only WEL members at this stage can put forward species for AM's to adopt	

Standing Items		
	<p>Date of next Meeting SEG will meet in the week in November 8, 9 15, 16 are the dates suggested. Sean to send out meeting poll.</p>	

Field Visit to Gilfach Farm Nature Reserve

Ray Woods introduced the site. Gilfach consist of a farm and a restored farmhouse. The site is one of the best in wales for lichens and hosts 423 species which is a 1/4 of the Welsh total. Over its history, the management of the farm has changed with extensive sheep grazing introduced in its latter years as a working farm which led to a loss of biodiversity. Under the ownership of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, many species are now returning. Cattle grazing is very important on the site but there is an issue with making this pay and TB implications are a major factor. Ultimately, as is the case with all sites, what are the management issues for this site? The short answer is we need a vision of what we want to achieve- this will dictate the sometimes opposing habitat/species management actions.

Ray then conducted the site visit. The site was formerly probably rich in *Lobarion* lichens which favour 'basic; bark conditions for their pH requirements but are becoming increasingly scarce due to acidic atmospheric pollutants. Most lichens are long-lived organisms and a few have been shown to have 'prion busting' enzymes and further research is ongoing to investigate medicinal benefits. The hazel management on the site is under review. Traditional coppicing kills off the main stem of hazel and the lichens die off; experimenting with the hazel management techniques are ongoing to encourage main stem development. Ash dieback has major implications for lichens as ash bark is 'basic' which favours many of the scarcer lichen species. However some lichens prefer more acid bark such as *Usnea florida*, and we were lucky enough to see this in 'flower' on an old hawthorn. The group then observed a meadow with numerous ant hills. Later in the year, the area is very good for waxcaps grassland fungi, some of which are S7 species. There is considerable genetic variability in waxcaps and there may be more species than previously thought which has implications for measuring species thresholds. It has recently been discovered that some waxcaps are endophytic and may be spread through the seeds and roots of vascular plants. The group saw Wood bitter-vetch on a disused railway embankment specially managed for the species. Tree removal and scrub clearance are required to open out the habitat and provide enough light for the plant. Volunteers are active on the site underlying their importance for habitat management.

S7 species seen on the field visit		
Lichens		
<i>Usnea florida</i>		
<i>Bacidia circumspecta</i>		

<i>Lobarion</i> community	<i>Parmeliella triptophylla</i>	
Vascular plants		
Wood bitter-vetch (<i>Vicia orobus</i>)		
Invertebrates		
Welsh clearwing (<i>Synanthedon scoliaeformis</i>)	Holes in birch noted where moth emerges from the pupal cocoon	
Birds		
Common cuckoo (<i>Cuculus canorus</i>)		
Tree pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>)		

Other species of note; *Homalothecium sericeum* (Silky Wall Feather moss) pignut, native bluebell, chiffchaff, dipper, willow warbler; meadow ant



Species Expert Group Field Meeting, Gilfach 25th May 2016. Images courtesy of Clare Dinham