

## ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday 23 October 2002

**Time:** 9.00 am to 12.00 pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

## REVIEW OF BIODIVERSITY: CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

### Purpose

1. To report on the themes emerging from the consultation and seek agreement of the next steps in the review of local biodiversity action.

### Background

2. The review terms of reference are:

*To review current progress and ensure that Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are in place for all areas of Wales, and identify further action needed at the national and local levels to support LBAP implementation through partnerships.*

3. Twenty-nine individuals and organisations responded to the Committee's request for views, **respondents** are listed at **Annex A**. Copies of **submissions** have been circulated to Committee Members in hard copy as **Annex B** and those received electronically have been published on the National Assembly [website](#).

### Consultation themes

4. **Progress** – fifteen of the twenty-four partnerships in Wales have published LBAPs, a further eight plans are in draft, with one outstanding. Implementation is underway in all but three partnerships. A copy of the Wales Biodiversity Group's (WBG) assessment of progress in implementing LBAPs is reproduced at **Annex C**.

5. **Barriers to progress** - the main barriers to implementation of local biodiversity actions were identified as commitment, information and resources.

- *Partnerships* – whilst recognised as the key to successful LBAP design and delivery, the effectiveness of partnerships was reported to vary according to the commitment, expertise and resources present locally. Many considered the lack of leadership and support from politicians and senior officials in partner organisations to severely constrain effective partnership working.
- *Co-ordination between local and national levels* – at local partnership level co-ordination was reported to be good. However, most considered communication between local and national levels to require improvement. Limited integration of biodiversity into wider objectives was reported, both at national and local level, with a lack of co-ordination between national and local biodiversity targets.
- *Resources* – lack of secure funding was seen as a principal barrier to the effective delivery of

biodiversity actions, and taken to reflect low political priority (both local and national) to conservation. Funding for biodiversity was reported to be limited with a multitude of funds, with different rules, that are bureaucratic and time consuming to access.

- *Guidance* – generally this was not regarded to be a significant barrier, though some felt guidance could be more accessible.
- *Access to information and expertise* – lack of information (see ‘monitoring and reporting’ below) and limited expertise were seen as a major barrier, with a small number of experts and skills base in decline.
- *Monitoring and reporting* – concern was expressed about the lack of reliable local biodiversity data and the absence of centralised data collection, which resulted in difficulty setting quantitative local targets and contributing to national targets.

**6. Action proposed** – there was broad consensus on the main actions needed at national and local level to address the barriers identified above.

- *Partnerships* – the effectiveness of the partnerships can only be achieved by securing the commitment of those responsible for local decision making. Other suggestions are: further collaboration and funding partnerships between national and local government, private and voluntary sectors; the development of information exchange between partnerships; and raising the profile of work locally.
- *Co-ordination between local and national levels* – there is significant demand for political commitment to biodiversity action delivered through co-ordinated local and national strategies. The National Assembly is invited to improve integration of biodiversity into its own policies and priorities, and those of sponsored bodies, in particular agri-environment schemes, economic and planning policies. At a local level, it is recommended that biodiversity become a statutory duty for local authorities. Improved communication between LBAP partnerships and UK BAP lead partners is also recommended, with continued support for the role of the WBG LBAP facilitator in co-ordinating local and national activity.
- *Resources* – to demonstrate its commitment, the National Assembly is asked to increase funding available for biodiversity. Respondents consider it crucial that funding be secure and long term to finance full-time LBAP officers and implementation of local actions. It is recommended that funding sources be streamlined, match-funding requirements clarified, and CCW’s grant-aid funding cycle synchronised with the budget planning cycles of match-funding organisations.
- *Guidance* – there is support for the review of planning Technical Advice Note 5 (Nature Conservation) to properly reflect biodiversity objectives.
- *Access to information and expertise* – there is widespread demand for a nationally funded Local Records Centre network, and support for the continued development of the National Biodiversity Network. Many consider that national institutions should provide more expert support locally, supplemented by a commitment from local authorities to providing good ecological and LBAP expertise. To meet the gaps in the skills base, it is recommended that educational and training institutions be encouraged to provide ecological courses.
- *Monitoring and reporting* – a strategy and guidance on monitoring and reporting is needed to assist with the co-ordination of species and habitat monitoring at national and local level. The Welsh Assembly Government is asked to publish the s74 species list as soon as possible.

## **Next steps**

7. The next meeting on 6 November will be dedicated to following up these issues in more detail. A suggested structure for the meeting is outlined below:

- Item 1 - Discussion with group of LBAP officers and representatives of the WBG Local Issues Advisory Group (includes local authorities, National Parks and WLGA);
- Item 2 - Discussion with voluntary sector LBAP partners (BTCV, Country Land and Business

Association, RSPB, National Trust and Wildlife Partnerships);

- Item 3 - Discussion with Countryside Council for Wales, statutory adviser to the National Assembly on biodiversity.

8. Following the meeting on 6 November the next steps in the review are:

- 4 December – an analysis of the key issues and a policy statement from the Minister for Environment;
- 18 December - consideration of draft recommendations;
- Spring term 2003 - agreement of a report and recommendations;
- 25 February 2003 - plenary debate on the Committee's report.

## **Recommendation**

9. The Committee is invited to agree the arrangements for the meeting on 6 November (para. 7).

## **Committee Secretariat**

**October 2002**

**ANNEX A**

## **RESPONDENTS**

Association of Local Government Ecologists

BTCV Cymru

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Brecknock Wildlife Trust

Bridgend County Borough Council

British Trust for Ornithology

City and County of Cardiff

Ceredigion Biodiversity Partnership

Countryside Council for Wales

Country Land and Business Association

Conwy County Council

Cyngor Gwynedd

Elizabeth Alice May

Flintshire County Council

Innogy plc

Institution of Highways & Transportation

Isle of Anglesey County Council (supplemented by comments from LBAP officer)

Monmouthshire County Council

National Trust Wales

Newport City Council

Pembrokeshire County Council

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

RSPB Cymru

Snowdonia National Park Authority

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Wales Biodiversity Group

Welsh Local Government Association

Wrexham County Borough Council

**ANNEX C**

**PROGRESS OF LBAPs IN WALES**

Authority	Time given to LBAP per week	LBAP Officers Contract Ends	Framework	Draft	Published	Implementing Up to Nov 01	Reporting Up to Nov 01
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Anglesey	*FT	Permanent			ü	ü	
BBNPA	*FT	Permanent			ü	ü	
Carmarthenshire	2 days	N/A			ü	ü	
Ceredigion	4 hours	N/A			ü	ü	
Conwy	*AJ – 2 days *TR – 4 days	*Apr 03		ü		ü	
Denbighshire	1 day	N/A		ü		ü	
Flintshire	*FT	* Jan 04		ü	ü	ü	
Gwynedd	*6 days p/w – job share (currently only 3 days)	*March 02		ü		ü	
Pembrokeshire	20 hours	N/A			ü	ü	ü
Powys	*FT	Permanent		ü	ü	ü	
SNPA	FT	*3 yrs			ü	ü	ü

Wrexham	*PT 2 days	Permanent			ü	ü	
Bridgend	3 days	N/A		ü		ü	
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Time given to LBAP per week</b>	<b>LBAP Officers Contract Ends</b>	<b>Framework</b>	<b>Draft</b>	<b>Published</b>	<b>Implementing Up to Nov 01</b>	<b>Reporting Up to Nov 01</b>
Caerphilly	*PT as LBAP  PT as Ecologist	Permanent			ü	ü	
Merthyr Tydfil	1 day	N/A		ü		ü	
Neath Port Talbot	FT	*Aug 02			ü	ü	
Rhondda Cynon Taff	14 hrs plus	N/A			ü	ü	ü
Swansea	*PT LBAP  PT other env duties			ü		ü	
Torfaen	1 day	N/A		ü			
Vale of Glamorgan	*FT	March 04			ü		
Blaenau Gwent	2 days	N/A		ü	ü	ü	

Cardiff	*FT	*May 03			ü	ü	
Monmouthshire	hours	N/A	ü				
Newport	*FT	31 April 02		ü		ü	

Source: Wales Biodiversity Group, 13 September 2002