

## Summary Report 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009

### **Sussex Biodiversity Partnership Conference**

Adastra Hall, Hassocks, West Sussex

This conference brought together many different organisations that are all responsible for improving, extending and volunteering at our Sussex habitats. The aim of the conference was to explain current work of the partnership and the next stages of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The conference was very well attended by both local authority members, volunteer organisations and other agencies responsible for BAP delivery.

Although Sussex related, this conference should give some idea of the scale of projects for the rest of the South East region.

### **Introduction to Sussex Biodiversity Partnership – presented by Henri Brocklebank, Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre**

The Sussex Biodiversity Partnership was set up in 1996. It contains representatives from a range of organisations working together to conserve and enhance the habitats and species of Sussex. The partnership is developing a vision to deliver BAP targets through a focus on Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). The list of BOAs has been developed through mapping of existing sites and potential for new or expanded areas, plus further consultation with local experts, over 100 people in total. Boundaries of BOAs remain flexible to take into account new information. The 75 BOAs identified cover 30% of Sussex. Detailed information about these can be found at <http://www.biodiversitysussex.org/landscapes>.

### **The South East Biodiversity Strategy – presented by Tom Butterworth, Natural England (NE)**

Firstly some statistics (great for the stats lovers amongst us), the South East has:

- 70 internationally important designated wildlife sites
- 696 Sites of Special Scientific Importance
- 33% of England's ancient woodland
- 40% of the UK's lowland heathland
- 30% of the UK's flower rich chalk grassland and
- 1500 km of England's chalk streams
- Populations of 30% of the UKBAP species

With good amounts of data now collected targeting resources to improve biodiversity across the South East can get started. Of particular concern is still the fragmentation of habitats. Defra and NE published 'Securing Biodiversity' in 2008 – a strategy for UK biodiversity.

We need **WORKING ECOSYSTEMS**; Land and sea-scape scale, integration of the priority species and habitats and targeted species recovery work.

We need **WORKING PARTNERSHIPS**; Agreed accountabilities, integration of national, regional and local priorities, links to policy-makers and the clarification of partners roles.

Examples of this approach were given around the South Downs and Coastal Communities. HLS agreements target the largest area of BAP included partnership working between Environment

Agency (valley and floodplain) and RSPB (agriculture work re: birds). Other work included business partners, B&Q and BioRegional delivering local charcoal production.

### **Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping in Sussex – presented by Laurie Jackson, Biodiversity Officer, Sussex Biodiversity Partnership**

BOAs are a new approach to improvements that will help ecosystems and habitats adapt to climate change. The BOAs which have been mapped are variable in the quality of existing habitat but if resources are targeted to these sites, they have the potential to deliver 90% of BAP targets.

### **Case Studies**

#### **Landscape-scale Wetland Restoration – presented by Charlie Smith, Environment Agency**

Rivers in the UK are suffering with 85% highly modified, for example realigned or culverted, and only 20% in the South East meeting good ecological standards. The aims of the Environment Agency (EA) are to enhance and protect, design and innovate, manage, monitor and promote good practice regarding river improvements. Landscape-scale projects will provide multi-functional river and wetland networks that are adaptive to climate change, flood risk and recreation or habitat. Project ideas are based upon data and time, funding, enthusiasm and strong partnership working.

Current projects include:

River Adur: restoration of 2.2km of river and adjoining floodplain to tackle high modification and fragmentation of habitat.

River Ouse (middle section): bringing together flood risk and biodiversity opportunities. At Sheffield Park work includes reinstating meanders, re-grading the banks and floodplain scrapes and creating buffers. At Ardingly Weir works include reinstating meanders and removal of embankments.

Medmerry Managed Realignment: Mainly this project will provide a sustainable floodrisk management approach by removal of a shingle bank to allow the development of new salt-marsh.

#### **Urban Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping – presented by Matthew Thomas, Ecology Officer, Brighton and Hove City Council**

A significant project to map urban areas of public open space and promote connectivity was carried out between Brighton and Hove City Council and Geospec consultants. Baseline data was analysed to define the existing functions of the network, identify new areas and audit biodiversity in the City. The benefit of ecosystem services was included in the initial project but this part of the review had to be dropped due to insufficient data available. The mapping project delivers on both PPG17 and BAP targets.

#### **Using Biodiversity Opportunity Areas within an Organisation – presented by James Power, Sussex Biodiversity Partnership**

Another approach to improvements of the Green Infrastructure network in Sussex concentrates on acquisition of sites. The acquisitions are targeted to gain the biggest impact from limited resources, ie. sites near clusters of key habitats. The approach requires liaison between landowners. Some major successes have already been achieved near Lewes with one BOA now 40% owned. This also contributes to 'Living Landscapes'. An important part of the process also involves education regarding the sites and link to the rivers project.

Further information regarding Sussex Biodiversity Partnership can be found at:

<http://www.biodiversitiesussex.org>

Information regarding our other counties across the region can be found:

Kent - <http://www.kentbap.org.uk>

Surrey - <http://www.surreybiodiversitypartnership.org>

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes - <http://www.bucksinfo.net/wildlife>

Berkshire - <http://berksbap.org>

Oxfordshire - <http://www.oncf.org.uk>

Hampshire - <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk>

South East Region - <http://www.sebiodiversity.org.uk>

Strategic information for the whole of the South East can be found at:

<http://www.sebiodiversity.org.uk>

If anyone would like to discuss the information in this conference report please contact me on the details below.

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