

Minutes of the Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board June 19th 2014

Present

Sue Parkinson (SP)	EPB Coordinator
Dick Cole (DC)	Monmouthshire GreenWeb
Clare Parsons (CP)	Brecon Beacons National Park
George Ashworth (GA)	Monmouthshire County Council (Planning)
Matthew Lewis (ML)	Monmouthshire County Council (Countryside)
Richard Jones (RJ)	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Andrew Blake (AB)	Wye Valley AONB

Apologies

Alison Howard	Monmouthshire County Council (Sustainability)
Hazel Clatworthy (HC)	Monmouthshire County Council (Sustainability Officer)
Gemma Bode (GB)	Gwent Wildlife Trust
Huw Owen	Monmouthshire County Council (Environmental Health)
Des Mansfield	Monmouthshire County Council
Steve Morgan	Natural Resources Wales
Rachel Jowitt	Monmouthshire County Council (Waste Management)
Cllr Phil Hobson	Monmouthshire County Council

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Action</u>
<p><u>1 Apologies</u> Apologies were accepted.</p> <p><u>2 Bioblitz report</u> The event at Castle Meadows Abergavenny on May 16th and 17th had been a success. The aim with these events is to raise awareness of the importance of public open spaces for wildlife, to encourage local people to become interested in nature conservation on their doorstep and introduce the idea of wildlife recording to the general public. A report had previously been circulated to EPB members and partners involved in the event. Around 300 people attended, and 324 species were recorded. There were 5 partner organisations involved in arranging the event which took place over 2 days, and several others involved either on the schools day or the public bioblitz day.</p> <p>The first day was for schools, and was attended by 3 local schools, bringing a total of 52 children to explore the wildlife of the Meadows. Activities were provided by 6 groups or organisations including Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust, Bumblebee Conservation, Keep Wales Tidy and Brecon Beacons National Park, and assistance was provided by Monmouthshire Countryside Service and Friends of Castle Meadows. Two portaloos were provided at the Castle, funded by Abergavenny Town Council. In the evening a bats for beginners and moth trapping session was held in the Castle, attended by 9 people.</p> <p>On the Saturday a public bioblitz was held, with displays from local groups and organisations in the Castle, and activities run by naturalists on the Meadows. Four guided walks were provided through the day to help members of the public to identify a variety of species. The walks were generally poorly attended by members of the public, but resulted in an extensive species list. Groups in the Castle could have managed more visitors, but the activities on the Meadows were very popular with queues of people waiting to take part in pond dipping and river dipping and viewing birds through scopes and binoculars.</p> <p>Friends of Castle Meadows, the voluntary group involved in managing the site for its biodiversity value are keen to build on the success of the event and do something similar next year, in particular to continue to work with local schools. A meeting has taken place to discuss how this can be supported and further information is being gathered together.</p>	<p>SP</p>

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Next year's bioblitz will take place in the Wye Valley AONB, where SDF funding is a possibility.	
<p>3 Finance and Delivery</p> <p>ML reported that funding for this year is in place for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of EPB meetings x4 • Support for ESDGC sub group networking meetings x4 • Delivery of Action Plan • Bioblitz • Input into Single Integrated Plan 	
<p>4. Green volunteering and capacity building</p> <p>This area of work came originally from the need to increase the number of Friends Groups helping to manage County Council sites and the need to support these groups. An issue has been identified around access to advice and support from for example Gwent Wildlife Trust, Monmouthshire Meadows Group and the MCC biodiversity officer, all of whom have limited resources. There is a need to build skills and capacity amongst new and existing friends groups, and provide opportunities for them to share experience. In the first instance there is a need to find out what is available from existing resources and the kind of support that groups need, and this may help to identify areas where training is needed to make Friends groups better equipped for their work. CP reported that Gareth Ellis at The Green Valleys has been doing this for the Brecon Beacons National Park. This initial work could lead to the development of a bid to the RDP. The initial scoping work should include a needs analysis and opportunities for exchange visits between groups to share learning. It should also look at the resources available to local groups in the form of advice and information eg Monmouthshire Meadows Group and Gwent Wildlife Trust. At this stage it is not envisaged that it should include Rights of Way volunteers, but will need to incorporate learning from the support available to other volunteer networks such as Rights of Way, Incredible Edible volunteers and health and social care volunteers.</p> <p>As a first step SP to draft a document defining this piece of work.</p>	SP
<p>5. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</p> <p>5.1 Renewable energy – GA reported that Supplementary Planning Guidance will be published on renewable energy developments soon. The report on currently installed renewable energy capacity in Wales has been published recently by Welsh Government, which provides a useful baseline for the situation in Monmouthshire – report available here http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/renewable/low-carbon-baseline-survey/?lang=en . It was agreed to retain this in the Action Plan and review it again when the next edition of the report is published.</p> <p>5.2 Transport – DC reported that a Local Transport Plan has to be produced this year, and include items from the Regional transport Plan. Guidance has been released by Welsh Government, who will be looking for the inclusion of strategic schemes. However, Mark Youngman is leaving MCC, but has suggested a forum or local forums to consider local transport issues. Next year work will begin on the Active Travel Plan which will be more detailed. The communities that will need to be mapped for the Active Travel Plan in Monmouthshire are limited as it has an urban focus. Several new pieces of legislation are trying to achieve similar aims – Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Active Travel Plan, Local Transport Plan, Creating an Active Monmouthshire, Walking Development Strategy and Cycling Strategy.</p> <p>5.3.1 Landscape Scale Biodiversity Improvements – RJ reported that a new funding scheme has recently been announced, triggered by last year's critical State of Nature Report. The Nature Fund has £6million available, with funding</p>	

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<p>being targeted primarily (but not exclusively) on 7 Nature Action Zones, which include Brecon Beacons and South Wales Valleys. Projects need to be collaborative with other partners and fall within these five priorities – river catchments, marine ecosystems, local environment (improving biodiversity potential of green spaces used by local people), upland areas, stimulating innovation in ecosystem services work. Further information is available here http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/140618nature-fund-how-to-apply-en.pdf</p> <p>5.3.2 AB reported that the Wye Valley Nature Improvement Area is progressing on the English side of the AONB, and a bid is being prepared for Heritage Lottery Funding.</p> <p>5.4 Single Integrated Plan – it was suggested that Nicola Bowen Strategic partnership Officer is invited to attend the next meeting to talk to the EPB about progress on the SIP. Action Matthew</p> <p>5.5 Economic value of volunteering to the Brecon Beacons National Park – CP had circulated the Social Inclusion Plans, and will also now circulate the Volunteering Strategy.</p> <p>5.6 Flytipping – Welsh Government have recently published a draft fly-tipping strategy, and comments on it are invited by August 29th http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/consultation/140604draft-fly-tipping-strategy-en.pdf</p>	<p>ML/SP</p>
<p><u>6. Any other business</u></p> <p>6.1 NRW are recruiting a new Partnerships Manager, and the process should be complete August-September. The NRW Planning Development Team has been strengthened, and RJ reported that he is now covering the Brecon Beacons National park as well as Monmouthshire for the next 9 months. NRW are moving to place-based teams, but the boundaries have not been defined as yet.</p> <p>6.2 CP reported that the Brecon beacons national park apprenticeship schemes attracted 90 applicants. A new Rural Alliances programme has been started under the Interreg EU funding scheme looking to address issues related to conflicts between landowners and visitors.</p>	
<p><u>8. Dates of meetings 2014-15</u> Tuesday 23rd September Wye Valley AONB Monmouth 9.30am Wednesday 14th January Wednesday 25th March</p>	<p>All to note</p>