

Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership

Coastal and wetland Action Group

Wednesday 21 October 2009

Draft meeting notes

Attendance – Allan Snape (Northumbrian Water), Toby Collet (RSPB), Anne-Louise Orange (Groundwork) Neil Docherty (SBC), David Laing, Deborah Jefferson (HBC), Robert Woods (INCA) Katy Dickson (Environment Agency), Carl Watts (Natural England), Rachel Jackson (TVWT), Richard Buckley (MBC), Ian Bond (HBC), Sue Antrobus (BAP Co-ordinator).

Apologies – Helen Herring (Wildflower Ark).

1. Mudflats and saltmarsh plan

- Carl reported on progress. Decision made to do a single plan for both habitats as they are so interlinked. He has been working up a draft plan with Mike Leaky based on a rough draft started by Sue. The draft was circulated.
- Agreed that it would be useful to have a map of location and area of current saltmarsh habitat, including details of land ownership.
- Current trend is that saltmarsh is expanding at the expense of mudflats.
- The inland saltmarsh at Teesside Park was discussed.
- Rob and Alan summed up the issues of *Enteromorpha* algal growth was discussed and its affect on wading birds.
- Most of the issues affecting these habitats, are either natural or beyond the influence of Natural England or members of the TVBP, e.g. coastal squeeze, nutrient increase, so specific actions for the HAP are difficult.
- John Jenkins carried out some detailed surveys on Saltmarsh; need to track down this data.
- Action 4 “Proactively identify sites for possible coastal realignment, allowing for further intertidal habitat creation” questioned as felt there were no localities that we don’t know about.
- Action 5 “Raise awareness amongst decision makers, industry, schools and the wider community, about the importance and management of Teesmouth’s intertidal habitats and their associated species through publicity material, events and training” was considered to be very important as grey mud doesn’t have a good image with the wider public. Natural England and Teesmouth field centre doing a lot of education work and seal monitoring work by INCA attracting interest. Saltholme is also bringing people into the area.
- Action 6 “Monitor and minimize disturbance to feeding and roosting birds through bait collection” is carried out on a weekly basis on the NNR by Natural England North of Tees but as far as we no one is doing south of the Tees.

Action: All - Any comments, suggestions or Information to Carl by end of Dec, aiming to get the plan at a suitable draft stage for TVBP steering group meeting in Jan 2010.

2. Wildlife sites north of Tees

The need for a leaflet providing visitor information for all wildlife sites north of the Tees was discussed. Deborah raised this at the last meeting and everyone thought that there was a need, especially as more people are coming to the area to visit Saltholme and are often wishing to know where else they can visit when they come. Although there are leaflets produced by individual organisations, it would be useful to have a single publication that could be used. Sue reported the same feedback from Beth Andrews, who recently delivered a workshop for bed and breakfast providers. Between members of the group we have the material, so it could be a Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership publication. We simply need money for design and printing costs but need to ensure we are not duplicating anything that tourist providers may be planning.

Action: Sue to write a brief proposal and research with tourist people and seek out potential funding opportunities.

3. Potential wetland invasive alien plants project

Anne-Louise Orange raised the idea of a possible Stockton project or/and a wider approach in Tees Valley. She mentioned a project that Yorkshire Wildlife Trust is carrying out with funding from the SITA Enriching Nature Fund. Sue questioned how much of that project is funded by SITA as they don't fund educational/interpretation work and are not keen on projects that cover multiple sites unless there are management agreements with the site landowners.

Anne Louise said that a 10 year plan is needed.

Katy discussed some of the issues involved in controlling alien plants and the need to have realistic goals. Control rather than eradication is more realistic and the better term to use in communications. Participants in an "eradication" programme get disillusioned when a year or two of their efforts don't meet with outstanding success. She described a best practice example as The Tweed Forum approach is considered the best one to follow, involving a partnership approach in a whole river catchment context working with landowners, land managers and communities and employing dedicated staff on the project.

There was a consensus that Lustrum Beck would be a good tributary to base a project on.

The Tees Rivers Trust mentioned as possible partner, however at moment they have no staff or funding.

Sue mentioned the Norfolk invasive species project; however this was mainly about communication and survey.

Rachel mentioned a new leaflet produced by Plantlife aimed at people with garden ponds, it is available as a down load from their website.

Action: All - Any further ideas for a project at Lustrum Beck to Anne-Louise Orange.

4. Criteria for water bodies and ponds for Local Wildlife Site selection

Ian Bond raised, as he is currently finalising the Local Sites review for Hartlepool using the criteria that the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership (which acts as the Local Sites Partnership) has developed. However there is no criteria for Ponds, Rachel circulated some ideas for criteria based on the national priority pond criteria that Pond Conservation have produced for the National Pond habitat action plan that could be adapted.

Action: Ian to develop further with input from Rachel.

5. International year of Biodiversity

Sue reported that 2010 is officially the International year of Biodiversity; Details can be found on the UK website for the year <http://www.biodiversityislife.net>. There is a real push for national, regional and local organisations to take part. There are no funds to support events although

promotion and branding through a Communications Officer for Biodiversity 2010 based at the Natural History museum.

Ideas for possible events/projects for the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership were discussed at the recent steering group meeting. One idea was branding a series of events throughout the year at Countryside Centres and doing mass survey with people at these sites and entering the data onto the EYE wiki. We discussed more ambitious ideas, including an expansion of the Put Tees Valley on the Map workshops and the Visitors leaflets for wildlife sites north of the Tees-which could possibly be rolled together for a grant bid, Awards for all or Your Heritage.

Action: Sue to draw up a draft project bid and research HLF possibilities to take back to the TVBP steering group.

6. Sand dunes action plan

Deborah circulated a copy of the draft plan. The main issues in the Tees Valley appear to be coastal squeeze and encroachment of habitat by golf courses. There are still some gaps in land ownership data. The text of plan is quite long, longer than any of the other plans so far however this was felt to be a positive as very informative local information is included.

The issue of nutrient enrichment by dog fouling was discussed.

There is still some work to be done tying down specific actions.

Action: All - Any comments, suggestions or Information to Deborah by end of Dec, aiming to get the plan at a suitable draft stage for TVBP steering group meeting in Jan 2010.

Action: Sue: Write to relevant sections in Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council about enforcing dog fouling measures on and dunes.

Date of next meeting: 10am Wednesday 17 February 2010, Billingham Beck Visitor Centre