

Urban Action group

23 January 2008

Meeting notes

Attendance - Sam Garside (Middlesbrough BC), Andrea Ellsworth (Stockton BC), Francine Marshall (Middlesbrough BC) Rob Lunan, (Redcar & Cleveland BC), Geoff Barber (INCA), Steve Ashton (Tees Valley Wildlife Trust), Sue Antrobus (BAP Co-ordinator).

Apologies - Claire Gallagher (Groundwork) Helen Beaman (Hartlepool BC), Mark Fishpool (Middlesbrough Environment City).

1. Roadside Verge Habitat Action Plan

Andrea and Sue with help from Jo have produced a new draft plan with targets and actions. They met with Keith Matthews from Stockton to discuss bringing into management four verges of biodiversity interest. These sites were surveyed in 2005 by the Wildflower Ark, three are currently SNCI's. The plan is for Keith to arrange cutting through council maintenance contract and for Andrea to arrange raking and removal of arisings with volunteers/and or probation services. Andrea also discussed promoting this work in the council newsletter and through local media and to appealing to local interest groups such as parish councils and cyclists for information on wildflower rich verges in the Tees Valley.

As part of the HAP a simple database on excel of roadside verges of biodiversity interest is being compiled.

2. Parks and Biodiversity

Sam, Francine and Sue met with Jim Moody, Parks and Countryside Manager for Middlesbrough Council, to discuss revamping the Parks and Green Spaces HAP. The meeting mainly concentrated on explaining the BAP process and reviewing the success of the training the biodiversity training that Liz Auty arranged for Parks staff. He was agreeable to the suggestion of having a Tees Valley seminar for Parks managers on integrating biodiversity into parks management, tying into Green Flag work. This meeting could be at Stewart Park using the Park for some good practice examples. Since this meeting funding from Natural England may be available if this was made into a regional meeting and has a NERC slant. It was felt that from this seminar event there should be an opportunity to build in a session to develop a Habitat Action Plan for parks. This would enable the targets and actions to be created in partnership with parks managers by consensus and would make the plan more realistic and hopefully a greater commitment and ownership from local authority urban parks managers.

Action: Sue to organise with input from Middlesbrough Parks staff

3. Brownfield Sites Habitat Action Plan

INCA have been working with a number of local firms to review current site BAPs and start new ones. Robert is working on the Tees Valley Brownfield HAP. Geoff mentioned that the definition of brownfield sites means different things to different people and more clarity is needed on what Natural England means by the new National BAP habitat definition of "open mosaic habitats on previously developed land". What about other habitats on industrial sites? Where does land that is still in industrial use fall?

Action: Geoff to discuss with Donna Radley (Natural England Biodiversity Officer)

Robert Woods of INCA is setting up a moth monitoring project on industrial sites, to look at environmental change and give valuable information on the moth fauna of these habitats.

4. Schools Habitat Action Plan

Steve and Sue have met to discuss. The current plan is unrealistic. They are working on new targets and actions that reflect current activity and enable current work, especially of Eco Schools.

Action: Steve and Sue to produce draft for next meeting.

Other news

Jo is carrying out traditional hedge laying with volunteers on the road verge near Kirkleatham. Anyone interested to pop along and have a look or take part. Contact Jo for more information.

The next meeting will be at 10 am on 15 April at the Hebrew Prayer House, Linthorpe Cemetery Middlesbrough.