

## **Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership Coastal and Wetland Action Group Wednesday 17 February 2010**

**Attendance** Deborah Jefferson (HBC), Anne-Louise Orange (Groundwork), Rachel Jackson (TVWT), Robert Woods (INCA), Richard Buckley (MBC), Toby Collett (RSPB), David Neal (Stockton Council), Claire Hewitt (TVWT), Sue Antrobus (BAP Co-ordinator),

**Apologies** – Katy Dickson (Environment Agency), Allan Snape (Northumbria Water)

David Neal was welcomed to the meeting, he is standing in for Neil.

### **Matters arising from last meeting**

- Both our saltmarsh and mudflats HAP and sand dunes HAP action were well received by the steering group with feedback given especially by Environment Agency on the Saltmarsh and mudflats plan. Thank you to Mike Leaky, Carl Watts and Deborah for their hard work on these plans. Deborah mentioned her meeting with the golf course at Seaton regarding management of sand dunes.
- Action 4 "Criteria for water bodies and ponds for Local Wildlife Site selection" Rachel and Ian have had discussions and put forward ideas.
- Sue updates on Redcar and Cleveland budget issues – Three countryside staff posts have been cut.
- Action 5 "International Year of Biodiversity" Sue has secured funding for the wildlife workshops
- **Action 1: Sue to write the relevant sections in Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland about enforcing dog fouling measures on sand dunes**

### **1. Tees Valley North of the Tees Visitor Guide**

- Sue worked up a project brief from our discussions at our last meeting which was circulated around TVBP members and wider. Very positive input from Natural England, RSPB, INCA, Stockton Council, TVWT and JSU. Sue has met with *Visit Tees Valley* to look at partnership working and sources of funding. There is a regional nature tourism group and a regional nature based tourism strategy. A consultant has also produced a web based directory of sites for accommodation providers. However *Visit Tees Valley* has raised the questions of if the publication is required and if facilities on countryside sites are of a high enough standard to reach the expectations of visitors. A discussion followed with a firm consensus that the publication is needed and that this group should do this year.
- Visit Tees Valley has offered help with graphic design if required.
- Sue has gathered together printing prices for various formats of publication from EPW. RSPB have allocated £1,000 from this years budget, additional funding is required.
- **Action 2: Sue to write to TVWT corporate members to seek additional funding.**
- **Action 3: Form a working group - Deborah, Emily Smith to carry project forward, with input as required from wider group.**

### **2. Wildlife Workshops 2010**

- Sue obtained a budget to deliver this from a underspend from a TVBP project. The workshops have all been planned and a booking brochure produced, Copies were circulated.
- A £10 deposit to workshops to deter people from signing up and then not coming or dropping out. Word of mouth to be used to promote it, leaflets handed out to promote.
- On a tangent on to hedges and field margins. Toby brought up the need for them to encourage wintering birds and farm birds. Toby will speak to Mike about Seaton Common, adding more "seedy" species will encourage such species as kale and rake.
- **Action 4: Toby to discuss with Mike Leakey provision of additional feeding at Seaton Common**

### **3. Saltholme**

- Toby gave an update on conservation work and visitors. He reported that there is now a 97k visitor target, which has been increased from previous targets of 36k and 60k.
- Numbers for lapwing, redshank and snipe are up. The grazing regime was tweaked regarding cattle grazing. This will continue to encourage breeding birds.
- The water increase from the wet winter and habitat creation rainfall has encouraged bird numbers.
- The RSPB are looking to acquire a large area of land for reed beds – a good environment for many birds. Purchased Dormans Pools for £1.
- The discussion moved to regarding an area near the Transporter Bridge for a reserve. Deborah asked if there will be a public access this area. Toby reported that they may extend the cycle path, but that land for parking and roads is limited.

- Robert reported that there is an open hide and a public path at the northern side of Saltholme marsh. Concern was expressed about the speed limit on the road where people have to cross to see the seals, very dangerous. Deborah has approached councillors about the speed limit.
- **Action 5: Toby will forward the information about what percentage of Saltholme visitors were from within the Tees Valley to Sue to help inform the Visit North Tees wildlife sites publication.**

#### **4. Regional Landscape areas for Biodiversity**

Sue, Jeremy Garside and Geoff Barber attended a workshop organised by Natural England to look at a delivery plan for the North East Biodiversity Regional targets and the selection of areas that are suitable for landscape scale approach delivery of biodiversity. Sue reported that at the meeting a several sites where agreed on which included two in the Tees Valley which are Teesmouth Estuary area and the East Cleveland landscape. Nick Brodin from Natural England is currently finalising these areas. Group requested that Sue forward these maps as available to them. The BIG group (Biodiversity Integration Group) from the England Biodiversity Action Plan are also selected landscape areas to focus their work. It was recognised that the Tees Valley areas are likely to be selected for this.

#### **5. Pondscape update**

- Rachel gave an update on pond creation and restoration in the Tees Valley this winter with pictures.
- The Mill pond near Guisborough is of heritage interest and work has been carried out to remove 2/3 of the vegetation.
- At Kell Gate Green, Stainton village, a smooth newt laying eggs was seen in the tiny pond there, another small pond was created close by to provide further habitat for amphibians
- A Local Wildlife Site at Thornton Wood, which is an historic site for great crested newt, was found to be very shaded which no pond vegetation. A PSYM survey was carried out and it was found there were no aquatic plants or invertebrate interest, so the area was cleared of trees up to 2m away to let in sunlight. The pond was cleared of dead leaf litter and some silt and newt friendly plants will be introduced in the hope of encouraging them back to the area.
- At Lucite an exciting new site was created when a further pond was cleared of 2/3 of the reeds. Smaller pools and ponds were added which will be good for amphibians and invertebrates.
- At NWL site at Billingham reeds were re-established at lagoons with concrete sides to help improve the flora.
- At Coatham Marsh a mosaic of ponds were created and a few scrapes to improve the present network there.
- RSPB will go and visit these sites to check birdlife. Toby asked for the location details to be passed on to him.
- In total, Rachel has created 10 ponds, restored 10 ponds and created around 14 scrapes and is currently on target.
- Working with Redcar and Cleveland Council to secure funds from Million Ponds project (landfill tax) to improve ponds Carling How. Funding now secured
- Data for 17 ponds were passed on for PSYM analysis and two came back as sites, both in Middlesbrough were discussed.

#### **5. Reed beds and coastal limestone grassland habitat action plans**

- Allan has done a lot of good work on reed beds HAP especially on habitat mapping. We now need to form up the targets and actions. Discussion followed
- **Action 6: Toby to look at the draft reedbeds plan and feed thoughts back to Sue and Allan**
- Rachel has looked at marsh and swamp but considered that a plan not needed for this habitat.

#### **6. Any other business**

- Anne-Louise reported that the invasive species project deadline for SITA application is 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Sue mentioned that need to ensure that the sites in the application are not the same as the Lustrum Beck water vole otherwise SITA will not fund.
- Good news-Tees Rivers Trust have appointed a rivers officer- Ben Lamb who is starting in April. Anne-Louise is already in contact with him.

Thank you to Stockton Council for providing the meeting venue.

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at Billingham Beck Visitor Centre.**