

SEFTON COAST PARTNERSHIP

NATURE CONSERVATION TASK GROUP
NATURE CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY SUB-GROUP
MINUTES OF EIGHTH MEETING

21 November 2006
2 p.m. Ainsdale Discovery Centre

Present:

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| Steve White (Chair) | Lancashire Wildlife Trust |
| Rachel Northover | Sefton Leisure Services Department |
| Andrew Brockbank | National Trust |
| Tony Baker | RSPB |
| Dr Phil Smith | Lancashire Wildlife Trust |
| Christine Bennett | Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service |
| John Houston (Minutes) | Sefton Coast Partnership Biodiversity Project Officer |

Apologies: Dave McAleavy (Leisure Services) and Mike Downey (Natural England)

1. Minutes of the seventh meeting -30 August 2006

Approved –to be added to SCP website. **JH.**

2. Matters arising from the Minutes (not covered under Item 3)

(i) Beach Management and SPA issues

The planned meeting to discuss SPA issues in relation to the nature conservation strategy has not yet be held. JH to coordinate and invite Steve White, Phil Smith, Andrew Brockbank, Tim Melling, Dominic Harmer, Tony Baker, Dave McAleavy and others. The meeting should also be used to advise on the SPA-related information in the Beach Management Plan and to consider the current objectives in the Regulation 33 package.

There is some concern about the collection and dissemination of bird-count information, without access to which it is difficult to judge condition of site (or take actions).

The importance of bird populations is an identified feature for the nature conservation strategy. The meeting would be asked to advise on how this is presented.

JH to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

(ii) Golf and Environment Seminar

Confirmed that a meeting is being planned for Spring 2007 hosted at either Royal Birkdale or Hillside Golf Clubs. Delivering the event forms part of the contract between Liverpool Hope University and Natural England through the UK sand dune network.

JH to provide further details at the next meeting

(iii) Higher Level Stewardship

Natural England has identified HLS as the most appropriate funding through its 'remedies' initiative to target sites on the Sefton Coast in unfavourable condition. Sefton Council has begun to draw up plans for the Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills. A meeting with the RDS officer to be arranged. **RN**

However, there are concerns over the funding of HLS and no further applications are to be accepted after the end of 2006. More information should be available by the next meeting.

Discussions on a potential Local Grazing Scheme are on hold awaiting the results of Sefton Council's discussions with RDS.

(iv) Research meeting

Graham Lymbery and Paul Wisse are finalising the report of the meeting held 14 July 2006. The proceedings will be published on the web-site.

3. Matters arising from the eighth progress report

3.1 First phase of consultation

The first phase of consultation closed with a meeting of working group members on 14 September 2006. This agreed a set of features to be addressed in the strategy. All the information from the consultation process is published on the website. It could be included as background documentation to the final strategy.

3.2 Common Standards Monitoring and Conservation Objectives

A 'discussion paper' is proposed for the next SCP NGTG to consider alternative options to the current division of Sefton Coast into 31 'units' based largely on land –ownership. There is no obvious, clear-cut solution –hence the importance of a discussion at SCP level. JH to coordinate the preparation of a discussion paper. **JH**

It would be useful to convene a meeting of the SCP NCTG in January 2007 prior to the SCP Board meeting on 18 January 2007. DM to be asked to consider suitable dates. **DM**

The response from Natural England on the questions raised at the CSM training event on 13 July is still awaited. JH to contact Graham Weaver at NE-Peterborough to request a response. **JH**

No update or progress report from Natural England on the development of conservation objectives for the Sefton Coast SSSI. JH to contact Natural England at Wigan. **JH**

3.3 Life Long Learning

RN reported on meeting of Life Long Learning Task Group. Funding for projects on the Sefton Coast has been secured from Capital of Culture funds and Family Learning funding. Opportunities to develop educational activities are hampered by a lack of resources.

The National Trust will be pioneering the use of acoustic-guides at the Formby Point property.

Links between nature conservation and life long learning should continue to be developed. **JH/RN**

3.4 Funding

(i) Breathing Spaces

No update

(ii) Heritage Lottery Landscape Partnerships programme

Following positive visit by HLF officers SCP will submit an application for a planning grant by 1 March 2007. Construction of bid and submission being coordinated by Sefton Council Leisure Services (Richard Hubbard and John Houston). Submission to be guided by SCP Working Group and Board.

(iii) SITA Trust

CB reported that SITA Trust was looking for projects within Merseyside. Only most northern and southern parts of the Sefton Coast lie within the catchment area of SITA but as the SITA boundary touches the Sefton Coast SSSI it may be possible to develop projects along the coast. **All**

(iv) Environment Agency funding

Paul Thomas (EA) has helped to secure £10,000 for works at Ainsdale and Birkdale LNR and £10,000 for further works at Freshfield Dune Heath.

4. Progress with development of draft nature conservation strategy

Working draft document circulated before the meeting along with outline of the contents of the proposed three-part product.

Discussion points:

Mersey Forest and NMBAP are sharing information on reporting requirements in an effort to reduce demands on land managers. The strategy should support this process and not add additional monitoring requirements. **JH** to take part in discussions. **JH**

CMS software could be considered for use as a reporting tool for the strategy. Land managers have mixed views on its value –especially whether the effort justifies the result. Most conservation site managers are using GIS –but not golf courses, military sites etc. On a coastwide basis there would be a need for an information officer. **JH** to attend CMS users group meeting on 29 November to find out how appropriate the software would be for a multi-ownership site. **JH**

The set of features identified so far may not be exhaustive. The conservation objectives of the other sites (Mersey Narrows, Ribble Estuary and Hesketh Golf Links) should also be checked. **JH**

Definitions of ‘conserve’ and ‘biodiversity’ to be taken from Government publications – PPS9 and England Biodiversity Strategy. **JH**

The vision was generally welcomed. Comments to be submitted to **JH**. Work will begin on the opportunities map to accompany the draft strategy. Support to be offered from Leisure Services. This could also form the basis of a summary leaflet. **All-to submit comments and suggestions to JH.**

Suggested also to look at past (e.g. using 1945 maps), present and future –to show how the main habitats and land use patterns have changed. This could be shown in sample areas of the coast. **JH** to discuss possibilities with Paul Wisse. **JH**

The BAP process identifies potential conflicts –this should be taken up in the strategy. The NMBAP has prepared action plans only for priorities –it addressed all biodiversity interest through its wider objectives.

Work to continue on the three parts as proposed. The first part would be as presented by the Board of the SCP, the second part a more detailed analysis of features leading to the setting of objectives and the third part being the action plan with quantifiable outputs. The First part will focus on issues (fragmentation etc) rather than projects. **JH**

The draft strategy will be taken to relevant Area Committees and Council Committees. **DM/JH**

5. Communication mechanisms

Discussion deferred due to lack of time

6. Dates of Meetings

**Next meeting of NCTG sub-group Tuesday 30 January 2007, 2 p.m. Ainsdale
Discovery Centre**

7. AOB

Local area Agreement

The Sefton Coast Partnership has been asked to contribute to Sefton's Local Area Agreement by delivering the PSA targets for the Sefton Coast. Information has been requested for each year of the LAA. This may be difficult in practice but we will have to try to comply.