

Biodiversity

Action for Kent's wildlife

Annual Forum

Friday 26th of November 2010

Workshop Notes

Recorders: Sue Young and Richard Moyse

Workshop 1 - Kent Environment Strategy: delivery plan for Action 9.1; “Establish functional habitat areas and wildlife networks in BOAs that support local landscape character”.

Q I *We have been asked to identify where gaps are in current delivery of biodiversity targets. Data gathered from Kent Biodiversity Action Plan partners shows that there appear to be shortfalls in delivery for saltmarsh, sand-dunes, beech & yew woodland, acid grassland, fen, wood-pasture & parkland, maritime cliff & slope, wet woodland, saline lagoons, standing open water, and a range of coastal and marine habitats (coloured orange, pink and blue on the attached sheet).*

- *Are these gaps in delivery real?*
- *Of the real gaps, which should be considered a priority for addressing?*
- *Are there other important priorities which should be addressed?*

Group 1, Recorder- SY:

- Perception of gaps depends on what targets were
- Might not be possible to increase size where achieving condition might be more achievable.
- Are we confident we are capturing all delivery? Reporting element is a significant issue – and we may be identifying false gaps.
- Broadleaf continuous canopy woodland doesn't exist in Kent – gap in woodland – all about woodland management.
- For the green – going well – it's possible that there is a focus on targets met but we may have significant gaps in other targets e.g. creation of heath land good but management of existing poor

- Some habitats fall outside of schemes where funding available so achieving action very difficult.
- There is a need to communicate between strategic level and those working/monitoring on the ground. Difficult for people to know where key habitat types are to go and record e.g. wood pasture.
- The nature of the targets excludes active individuals in the environment sector as they are aimed at organisations - & this is important for identifying success of action – measuring condition.
- Need to make better links between project managers, budget managers and individual recorders.
- Favourable status is a relative concept depending on perspective.
- Long term sustainability important.
- Need ongoing monitoring for a range of groups.
- An important action for BAP could be to actively support/increase number and capacity of recorders.
- BAP targets are habitat focused. Support focus has been lost over years. So not strong incentive for support groups to get involved in BAP process.
- But need to take broad brush approach with multiple support so that don't decrease habitat quality for several whilst focusing on one.
- Habitats important – get habitats right and support follow but better to have integration at both approaches.
- Flagships species are useful approach and help us know habitat action plans are working but we don't take that in Kent.
- Need to consider habitats like scrub – not picked up as priority habitat but very important for multiple support eg rough habitats/pioneer/brownfield.
- We should be concentrating on habitats that Kent is important for in a national context – eg chalk grassland. Even if success seems to be achieved – there are questions over 'favourable condition' and there are different types of chalk grassland we should be looking to.
- How do we convert information collected into useful data eg moth records showing new species to Kent in Fen habitat. What does this mean for directing concentration? Ways at processing data – useful information. Record centre role.
- BOA – or maps people are sending out. Maps (?) are not useful in terms of identifying areas to survey. Issues with different tech capabilities between organisations/people.
- Records centres do not interpret info – that site better with the specialist groups, but the KMBRC are vital in resolving logistical problems.
- Again this should be the role of the record centre to resolve this.
- Favourable conditions – Bat role in communicating where the criteria come from and how interpreted – recording groups.
- BAP group – recognises voluntary aspect of recording organisation when expecting them to respond to complex consultation and engagement. Strong dislike of committees.

- Special groups can – info on support that are important and on conservation concern in Kent context. But bear in mind some recording groups have much higher numbered support to consider, so much harder to pick at which ones important.
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Group 2 Recorder RM:

- Are Gaps Real? – MOD data
- No – Hedgerows – DT has raw data much on how planted restored etc, but base data poor, is quality the same.
- Cereal margins – Chalk rivers/rivers.
- Yes – Orchards (probably) – see common ground?
- No – Maritime cliff and slope – check definition, where is it in Kent?
- Yes – A.G. – vulnerable, under recorded, HA data? G/sand ridge very significant.
- Vegetated shingle – see MOD – invite to BAP SG
- Yes – Fen
- Yes – intertidal – E.H., Nat. Trust
- Some/some – saline lagoon – see Cliffe Pools
- Yes – Wood pasture
- Intertidal probably most important – influencing, but not action
- Acid grassland under pressure

Q2 *It is proposed that the Kent Biodiversity Partnership should establish a pilot large-area habitat restoration project. Earlier consultation suggested this should be focussed on chalk grassland, with woodland being second choice.*

- Is chalk grassland still the right habitat for a KBP-driven large-area project? If not, what habitat type should be the focus?*
- Where in Kent should this project be taken forward? Why?*

Group 1, Recorder- SY:

- Looks as if chalk grassland projects are already being achieved through HLS re Dan's talk.
- Best areas for Kent are ones where no insecticide is being used – better than native reserves. A large area project could be one where no insecticide is used – very large area.
- The project should not aim at broad favourable conservation status but should set different parameters – mosaic of conditions.
- Long scale restoration to non-natural, but farmed mosaic implanting extensive, historic agricultural techniques (involve organic farmers).
- Would be assessing gains by species not habitats.
- Could look at areas of small farmers and fields and improve communication/liaison with farmers.
- Using indicator species that reflect different aspects of environment to set objectives and then for monitoring of landscaping and ecology.
- Resource / habitat area / ecological process / dispersal limited spp
- Once objectives set, how do we monitor change?
- Bioblitz? Baseline is essential. Needs to be co-ordinated between all recording groups.
- Extend required at landscape level is greater than volume recorders could cope with. Need dedicated team. Co-ordinator at least needs paying and can they get land owner access and liaison between groups.
- Think global act local, so although individual interests might point to rare habitats in Kent like acid grassland, at a national level chalk grassland management in Kent.
- Need mosaic, so if we go for chalk grassland, it should be aiming to produce a mosaic habitat on the chalk. Avoid a monoculture of chalk grassland.
- Need to avoid crating an extended dog walking resource approach and manage disturbance/recreation.
- A living landscape mosaic would be an ideal approach.

Group 2 Recorder RM:

- What are easy wins: Parks/local got land – improve management.
- Large area project
- CG but including mosaic of habitats
- Biggest opportunities – west end of MK Downs
- NB Folkestone – Dover HLF
- Sale – see Martin Down (Hants/Wilts/Dorset)
- Where would LA input be essential?: Suggestions – M20 corridor East of Maidstone – Medway Gap

Workshop 2- Kent BAP Targets: New review approach and target setting priorities

Q3 *It has been difficult to gather data on progress towards current Kent BAP targets. This is especially difficult where the target relates to a process (e.g. “An increase in public awareness and appreciation of coastal sand dune resulting in the more positive management of this habitat”) rather than a particular outcome (e.g. “Enhance and restore 58 ha of coastal sand dune in Kent by 2026. Ensure there is no net loss coastal sand dune in Kent up to 2026”).*

- *What are the barriers stopping us from making the reporting process easier?*

Group 1, Recorder SY:

- Communication.
 - Targets should be measurable and achievable with the available resources (within organisations tasked to deliver).
 - Difference between aspiration and achievability.
 - Access or awareness targets increase disturbance and recreational pressure.
 - Actively raising awareness targets difficult due to lack of public understanding.
 - Some funding linked to access and social agenda.
 - Species groups are excluded from the BAP reporting process.
 - But should be included as essential to assessment of success and condition.
 - Recording some species issues is essential to the BAP process because
 - a) flags up issues that could be damaging e.g. disease
 - b) flags up needs for precautions to be taken when monitoring/surveying even for botanical survey.
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Group 2 Recorder RM:

- Use Sharepoint – eg Adobe.com
- AMR process especially for negatives – get planning footprints challenge to KP/KPOG
- CMPs not using GIS but keep tally of work
- Reporting form / system for everyone
- Draw from BAP register

Q 4 Because a number of Kent BAP targets have been met or exceeded, there is a need to 'refresh' the targets to ensure they are up-to-date.

- Can you suggest ways in which this might be done relatively rapidly?
- What should we do about targets for habitats where most action is driven by national projects or programmes (e.g. rivers and streams)?

Group 1, Recorder SY:

- Recording groups not contacted during previous HAP review even though they are part of HAP groups.
- BARS and similar are not communicated.
- Need communication between those responsible for habitat reporting and species monitoring groups.
- Partnership working can lead either to double accounting or what you are actually responsible for.
- Lack of expertise to assess what has been achieved re recovering/restoration favourable (of an improvement).
- Lack of baseline data to base these assessments on.
- Lack of feedback when people do respond to consultation? (needs to be to wider organisation not one person?)
- There are lots of different habitats (HAPs) and as voluntary groups, can only contribute to a certain amount.
- Consultation (esp by email) can lead to information overload. Need to simplify to enable people to contribute.
- Difficult for the HAP leads to co-ordinate this amount of work. Lack of time and resources. Not going to improve.
- E-mail not best way of communication.
- Do we know that HAPs are relevant to conservation?
- Moving toward BOA mosaics in a step forward.
- Only work well when there is an individual or organisation who has an interest in outcomes and will push it forward. Needs to be some driving force – often personal.
- Interest driven – need to capitalise on this.
- Would a way be to bring species interest people in.
- If move from HAPs to BOAs, need to avoid only valuing priority (HAP) habitats, and ensure follow range of habitats make up the BOAs.
- Only upgrade targets where there are things we want to achieve.

- Re nationally driven targets, our local input is still needed so shouldn't drop.
 - National agency may not be doing so much locally.
 - Need to know what national agency is doing locally – communication so that we can assess and decide whether we need to take additional action or not.
 - Need to co-ordinate species level knowledge and input with BAP strategic planning. BRC should be the mechanism for this bearing in mind difficulties listed earlier of volunteers having time and resources to get involved.
 - BRC need to build capacity and resources to be able to do this. And innovate to improve efficiency.
 - BRC would benefit from greater input from recorders.
 - Make BAP relevant to a wider audience, including recorders.
 - Recording groups would (and do) support targeted monitoring of large area projects provided there were not too many. Could do monitoring and/or training of local volunteers.
 - Big species driven project could be developed.
 - Pilot study to investigate feasibility.
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Group 2 Recorder RM:

- Where targets met/exceeded.
- Was target good? No – What should it be? What spatial focus – local
Yes – protection, quality, check it's working for species
- Spatial focus
- Process targets – quantify
- More communication to improve co-working.
- District – by – district (prioritise – leave difficult ones till last? / first?. 2 per month – all partners to get together on all action in district (+ve / -ve), what all are doing.
- Agree key statistics +/- or things to be measured.