

South Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership

MINUTES: BOARD MEETING – Tuesday 25th April 2023, 10am – 12pm

Virtual meeting on Zoom

Board Members Present: Liz Ballard (Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust) – Chair, Anthony Downing (EA), Hazel Earnshaw (YW), Catherine Hammond (SHU), Laurie Heykoop (SYMCA), Alison Holt (Natural Capital Solutions), Melissa Massarella (Doncaster MBC), Erika Phoenix (DCRT), Neil Pike (NE), Brian Tinnion (independent), Paula Tweed (Barnsley MBC), Tom Wild (University of Sheffield), Mike Winstanley (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)

Also present: Ian Cracknell (SRWT) – Secretariat, Kim-Roll Baldwin (RMBC), Sarah Bird (PDNPA), Ruth Brearley (NE), Angus Hunter (SCC), Andy Lee (RMBC), Rowan Longhurst (SCC), Jackie Lowe (EA), Matthew North (SRWT), Jim Smith (FC), Pete Tomlin (SRWT)

Apologies: Helen Batt (EA), Nick Sellwood (WT), Crispin Thorn (FC), Chris Wilson (SCC)

(N.B. first names are used in the minutes where attendees have the same initials)

2. Minutes of last meeting, actions and matters arising

Farmer/landowner map – data gathering continuing, to carry over.

IC and NP provided info re: in-person meeting at Humberhead Levels.

3. BNG

Angus H - concerned re: urgency and that BNG too bitty, will not be delivered as needed. Willow tit locally reduced down to 3 pairs and looking likely to go extinct. All funding for forest trees, scrub and grassland loss continuing, but funding for this appears non-existent. Willow tit lost from Dearne Valley due to change in uniformity of age of planting blocks.

JS – woodland loss, 500ha lost each year re: development – training staff on BNG, is funding for natural colonisation process.

MN – working with Doncaster MBC, scrub etc considered as whole, dependent on land banks where these are, range of tools, needs land to be identified, have discussed these issues with Angus.

RB – New metric release, guidance provides links on LNRS and BNG – alt plans to be used before LNRS maps available. Taxation – how this will work, sums of money substantial, does it fall into capital gains tax for example – discussions happening on this. Training at NE re: BNG involvement understanding of metric as fully as possible but will be some issues that emerge

JL – conversations at EA re how difficult to achieve targets, 20% - list of projects people can buy off the shelf if needed?

RB – not for SY but has been research in West Yorks re nature recovery project, might be insights we can share, detail on how might be set up, thinking

LB – LAs will identify wildlife sites, natural sites for BNG so will be an amount of land identified

SYLNP Chair: Liz Ballard. Tel: 0114 263 4335, Email: l.ballard@wildsheffield.com

Interim SYLNP Secretariat: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, email: i.cracknell@wildsheffield.com

Paula T – have internal meeting on this for sites to look at own habitat bank, early stages

MM – two sites, one with YWT adjacent/joint land. One has river units – probably retained by EA to satisfy requirements. certain open space for tree planting, conflicting land uses/requirements re access to green space, standards. Doing LWS surveys for uplift, unclear at present.

LB – thinks there must be a forecast for BNG units and likely supply? Need a land use map for SY, keep open space, food production etc but still deliver BNG.

AD – difficulties re: river units etc, BNG pilots with WT Blackburn Brook, Sheaf and Porter, not favourable for river units, don't have continuous landowner, only work on one bank seriously reduced units, high demand. Not that big an owner, very complicated esp riparian ownership, multiple owners, agreements on how used.

TW – weaknesses in metric for river units, flawed in protection of river corridor habitat, if lack of connectivity – lot of valuable riparian habitat, vertical drops to channel, habs under double pressure – vulnerable in metric and lack of compensatory BNG. Metric is root of issue.

EP – anyone had conversations with large housing developers? Wonder if will be big land grab?

MM – yes, reducing impact through mitigation hierarchy, option to purchase tariff - some going down that route as don't have own schemes and lack of other site, useful but struggling to establish habitat banks – case by case basis. Site register won't be able until Nov so will be even less prepared, as developers won't have info beforehand

LB – have had conversations with developers - has affected their business models, have started to rethink sites they have purchased, much more consciously looking for sites where they won't have to find high BNG units – so low value biodiversity sites. Is quite positive!

BT – orgs, AD mentioned different owners, Dearne – river acts as boundary to all LAs, nature doesn't follow these. If site on one side of river, are different LAs to accept BNG needed for other side? Is thought being given to cross boundary process?

Angus H – working with PDNPA on this.

AL – SPD on BNG, understand income in Rotherham will stay there, Barnsley will stay in Barnsley, not discussed cross boundary working. On some sites will make more sense, but think it will stay within LA borders. Whole point is BNG should be used as close to site as possible. Can see benefit but unfortunately this moves into political arena.

SB – trying to develop case studies around BNG, struggled to engage developers on this, are experiencing land grab, investors purchasing land to sell carbon credits, BNG units – definitely happening now. Disappointed to hear about cross-boundary, we've been working with Derbyshire Council to make sure where appropriate money can flow across boundaries to where needed so would like to see this across all our boundaries.

LB – at board level where politicians, raise there about issue and where pros and cons are and see where that goes.

Actions:

RB to share WY info with IC

SYLNP Chair: Liz Ballard. Tel: 0114 263 4335, Email: l.ballard@wildsheffield.com

Interim SYLNP Secretariat: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, email: i.cracknell@wildsheffield.com

4. NRN and LNRS

Pete T – SWRT have been doing work for MCA to prepare for LNRS, 4 areas, NRN mapping, species prioritisation, data audit, looking at current landscape scale projects. T&F group looking at NRN mapping, methodology – look at flat opp layer, prioritise these, add LWS to core restore network – sent off to MCA to sign off on, then circulate to LAs and other partners. Also done some work on statutory guidance, that element done, recommends for next steps and MCA to decide what to do. Species - agreed workflow for long list one year ago at Potteric Carr, going through workflow, 3 data centres doing data search. Data audit – Google sheet circulated which already has a lot of data that MCA might find useful for LNRS for reference. Could use some detail from Rotherham and Doncaster. Mapping landscape initiatives, tie-in to farming map, current thinking is some sort of story map, SLLP, Dearne Valley etc – get detail on project, who contact is etc, info for all of us on farming advice etc. Have Dearne Valley, Moors for the Future, Don Catchment etc. Any other projects, send PT shape files or info.

Alison H – just read latest guidance on LNRS, first stage is map about areas of biodiversity, can only be protected areas and areas considered important which is narrow area and to be defined. May have to take areas out re level playing field – definition of ‘irreplaceable habitat’.

Pete T – mapping started from habitat based approach overlaid with designated sites so primarily all included, some slithers of SSSI or other nature sites not included, so bit of work on this, core restore layer sites etc in actual LNRS map, MCA might want additional map which is suggested in NE guidance. PT interpreted as agreed areas important for wildlife, can keep those areas in?

JS – will be mapping portal soon which will be key, have sent open data with over 100 areas of data you can use, happy to chat through.

Pete T – need license, will be MCA that will benefit from this.

RB – data portal, don’t yet know when release but understand not too long, are conversations with responsible authorities and Defra re burdens so can be non-provisional but actual responsible auths over following weeks. Once all LAs signed up, defra will do public comms to announce then get rolling. NE not planning to hold data, just to enable access and get most up to date version. Will also be detailed non-statutory guidance on this. Happy to take any questions away for our team. Are discussions on how we make clear roles and responsibilities of ‘supporting authority’ which is new in guidance.

5. Regional Climate Forum

CH - WT charring maybe need more joint reporting, session on planning and climate change looking at what Y&H region LAs doing to go over and above gov policy on carbon reduction, zero carbon in planning policies, green infrastructure, flooding etc. Decision made as some LAs ahead of game re govt advice, good idea to come up with regional principles, local development plans get adopted then what benefits so LAs can support each other, precedents for more advanced approach. 3 sessions to develop high level principles around climate mitigation in region, govt NPPF to things most relevant for climate. Particularly picked up on nature, linking into planning, development management policies to id land through planning that can be targeted and enhanced for land allocations to protect land, design codes that can pick up on nature recovery etc. At moment quite high level principles, next stage will be to unpack more re: putting into practice and making operational. Having conversation with Andrew Wood in coming weeks.

Alison H - Sheffield has drafted something very similar which PAS are now using as a case study.

SYLNP Chair: Liz Ballard. Tel: 0114 263 4335, Email: l.ballard@wildsheffield.com

Interim SYLNP Secretariat: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, email: i.cracknell@wildsheffield.com

LB – spoke with equivalent at YWT about this feeding into LNP, will pick up with MW on this so can share bullet points from this committee.

JL – Helen Batt sits on this. JL attended workshop at Potteric Carr re land use framework – one issue is direction of travel, not engaging with landowners or farming groups, policy/strategy level.

Actions:

CH/IC to circulate RCF details

LB/MW to look at how can feedback from Y&HCC

JL to check in with Helen Batt re: any info to feed in

6. SY Woodland Partnership update

MN presented a report about the 2022-23 year. Now up to full capacity in team with 4 members of staff. Drop off, people testing the water and withdrawing or deferring to later planning years, Ukraine has also had some impact re prices. Working on 47ha with private landowners now, also working up projects with BNG. Looking at outline sites with scrub and woodland, at end point 5 year consent. There to help enable woodland and scrub, range of techniques inc natural regen. KPIs can be circulated. Will be job ads soon re community engagement roles, tree planting and woodland creation strategy SY wide, to id more than 250ha in SY, will be cooperative endeavour to allow complementary mapping across boundaries and tie in with LNRS. Working with urban tree observatory at University of Sheffield. Due to start feasibility study on green skills and shortage in sector. Delivery training through LNP WC forum, use cohort to publicise and ask for training needs, next one is UK Habs and BNG measurements through previous SRWT ecologist.

7. Partner Updates

RB – landscape recovery scheme 2nd round, will be future rounds if unsuccessful, nature recovery scheme grant, Defra species survival fund in May. Holding participatory democracy session.

Pete T – AWI update commissioned by NE and WT. Started Jan, unfortunate delay in data but now have it. Analysts working on this, looking at archival data available – prioritising work in Doncaster first as less archival data in later parts of process. Set up advisory group, if anyone from Rotherham interested that would be useful. Bits of hidden woodland in patch, need to make decisions on whether AW or not.

JS – woods in active management? Would be great to see outputs.

Pete T – no, NE methodology is specific re epoch I maps and aerial photography re: long established woodlands, archival, site surveys etc. Not looking at management or condition.

MW – lowland peat work at Humberhead Levels, extended nature for climate funding to august for discovery grant network, increases reach of survey work particularly on local farmland, increase buffer sites. Have amount of funding re: River Went to build on Living Went project, where to best use for local community and further sustainable work. Dearne Valley – has been a reset of partnership through colleague Mike Jones who has been working with partners on establishing boundary especially re: NRN, gather scale and look at bigger agendas. Window open for Landscape Recovery round 2, Dearne Valley could be ideal candidate. Potteric Carr – putting final touches to lottery bid re access for all, needs for people, meaningful work for diverse audiences.

SYLNP Chair: Liz Ballard. Tel: 0114 263 4335, Email: l.ballard@wildsheffield.com

Interim SYLNP Secretariat: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, email: i.cracknell@wildsheffield.com

Angus H - had latest survey data for willow tit, species may be lost before work finished. Asked if can be willow tit emergency recovery group for cross boundary working group? Can be solved rapidly with tree planting. Map data and work with cross boundary partners. Jim Clarke led on data in Sheffield, volunteer surveyors across SY and into Peak. Scrub mosaic, transition habitats.

LB – advised Angus and others interested to establish a willow tit recovery group and keep the LNP updated with any developments so we can support this activity.

SB – draft of Peak District nature recovery plan today, consultation launch 5th June with in-person events on 15th June, will share and keen to hear of any case studies to support nature recovery plan so please let SB know. Farming and protected landscapes plan, could fund habitats creation - species recovery fund for willow tit? Looking to put in bid to landscape recovery scheme for white peak. Another ELM text, did one 2019-21, another for protected landscapes as conveners. Re farming, farm advice team – MN to contact.

JS – wood innovation management - £20k fund, will go into Peak District area. Deadline 15 May.

Actions:

Angus H to share any info re: willow tit recovery activity with IC for circulation to LNP

SB to share draft and farming contacts with Pete T/IC/EP

MN to contact SB re: Peak District farm advice team for discussion re: habitat creation funding

8. AOB/future agenda items

AD – Peak District farm advice, working with farmer groups cluster activity in Dearne, matching farm business interest with EA work for biodiversity or reducing flood impact, soil health, carbon, develop aeration programme, soil health baseline studies – wider SY Don catchment plan useful.

MW – YWT have done a lot of work in Upper Aire on soils which we could support AD with.

LB - SLLP is continuing, funding ends March 2024 but partnership keen to continue and developing 10 year plan, legacy event on 28 June – get in touch for more details. Key component of ongoing work is working with farmers in area, particularly in SCC tenanted farms. Also looking at possibility of species recovery around water vole.

All – please come along to in-person meeting prepared with thinking on ideas over next 5-10 years that we can develop together. Pete T should have project map available to support this.

Future agenda items:

BNG

NRN & LNRS

SYWP report

Farmer/landowner mapping update

Partner updates

Date of next meeting:

TBC July 2023

Doodle Polls for next dates to be circulated by Lynn Campbell at SRWT.

SYLNP Chair: Liz Ballard. Tel: 0114 263 4335, Email: l.ballard@wildsheffield.com

Interim SYLNP Secretariat: Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, email: i.cracknell@wildsheffield.com