

Nature Map Working Group Meeting Minutes 4th June 2008

Attending

Basil Greenwood
Naomi Brookes
Tim Corner
Simon Bates
Ray Perrins
Colin Studholme
Mark Robins (am)
John Waldon (am)
Matt Low(pm)
Sarah Jennings (pm)

Apologies: Jeremy Clitherow, Phil Tolerton, Victoria Whitehouse, Craig Dixon

1. Minutes of last meeting.

Previous Actions:

Nature Map Guiding Principles (discussed in full later). Possible need for:

Opening Statement

Iteration date stamp on all maps

LBAPs may need to negotiate fees with LRCs to undertake this work – this needs further local discussion. BioSW may also need to negotiate ½ a day with LRCs to provide regional update of NM to NE.

A decision on what minimum % change is regarded as “significant”

Mark R suggested a bulleted, simple version of the Guiding Principles – group felt at this stage the Guidelines stood as they were to prevent confusion and misinterpretation.

Action: NB/BG needs to meet with Matt Sperring about Natural England’s role in holding, receiving and collating updates.

Ongoing Action: NB is working with SWCCIP to produce a report on the vulnerability of SNAs/BAP priority habitat to Climate Change.

Actions Complete: Naomi and Simon met Roger Catchpole regarding Nature Map and connectivity. See AOB

Phil T was to prepare a statement on Nature Map for farmers and he has written a brief statement for the BioSW website.

NM General Comments: Mark R noted there was a negativity about Nature Map in some non-biodiversity organisations and while it was encouraging that they had at least heard about Nature Map we need to address this negativity.

NB said some LBAPs don’t seem to have full “ownership” of Nature Map and BG highlighted the need for strong advocates at the local level. Simon Bates suggested

using an ecosystem services approach – the SNAs are not just for biodiversity but are green spaces, flood prevention, tourist sites etc.

2. Report on the NM visioning workshops by John Waldon

The one day visioning workshops were partly a trial for future Nature Map developments, to see how one or a group of SNAs might be developed over the next 50 years. The initial impression is that a full vision could not usually be achieved in one day. The one workshop where this was managed (Bath) was assisted by several factors: the attendees were all the right people; BRERC had lots of information in a really available format (including the Avon BAP atlas); the room was very good. This was possible even though the SNA habitat type was changed from woodland to grassland (but with substantial woodland). The two negative points from this workshop were firstly that the very ability to produce a detailed, attractive map on the day sent the message that this was a “done deal” and secondly that there was a lack of ownership or impetus to take it forward. This could be solved by having a second session. There is also a need for someone to take it forward – the vision need attaching to an appropriate delivery mechanism, such as mining in Cornwall, the grassland project in Gloucestershire etc. Whoever is the lead for the delivery mechanism will need to be convinced the Nature Map work will “add value”.

In general the workshops were quite conservative and unable to achieve a genuine 50 year vision, but rather one of “like it is now, but with a bit extra” or to revert to a past state that was perceived as beneficial. One possibility is to leave the timescale of the vision open, to be determined during the day. The Cornwall workshop wanted to extend the vision to 100 years as a result of the detailed plans of the China Clay mining industry.

Where the vision was not fully developed, the groups often lacked experience. One group discussed past problems without looking forward. This might be avoided by setting ground rules for the day or through more directed chairing/facilitating.

JW was asked if he could develop a template for future visioning workshops.

Action: JW agreed to this along with the report, but emphasised the need for flexibility between workshops and the need for caveats. The two most important of these was (1) to leave enough time and (2) to make sure ALL the right people are at the first meeting. It was also suggested that those workshops that had gone well could be cited as examples of best practice.

It was agreed some sort of vision or development plan was desirable for each SNA. JW supported this and said a map seems to work for most, although one workshop wanted a set of “guiding principles” rather than a map. For most mapping was hard to get going but then hard to stop. We should also see how we can take each SNA forward in developing a “sense of place”.

Mark R suggested to use the term “opportunity mapping” rather than visioning. There was concern that LBAPs might be worried that the process would be forced on them, especially those LBAPs with many SNAs. We would send out the report and template as advice for them to use when they are ready. It was suggested that a prioritisation

process might be of benefit to draw together a list of SNAs to be completed, but this would await further comment from LBAPs.

Action: Naomi to circulate guidelines and ensure they are widely available when complete.

3. Working Guidelines and Change Protocol

These need to be signed off as soon as possible. NB has sent these out for consultation but had not yet had many replies. LRCs had some concerns over possible extra costs and it would be difficult to sign up to something with an open-ended commitment. Holding the local Nature Map should be minimal extra work, but LRCs may also get lots of enquiries which might take up more time and incur possible costs. NB to consult LRCs around this issues. Despite this, the LRCs were very supportive.

The next step is to come up with an itinerary for implementing the change protocol.

Action: NB will (1) Add a timescale for implementation to the guidelines (2) come up with an itinerary for signing off basic changes and add a standing item to the agenda.

There was some discussion on what would happen in the case of BioSW **not** ratifying a change proposed by the LBAP and the exact criteria required for approval of changes. It was concluded that with the option of local maps, separate from the official Nature Map, that conflicts were unlikely and would be resolved on a case by case basis. It was suggested that named contacts could be added for each organisation mentioned and that the South West Nature Map full name should be used every time, where appropriate. Under section 7 it was agreed a full review of Nature Map, including methodology, lessons learnt etc, would be every five years, starting in 2010.

Action: NB will send the draft guidelines for comments to LBAPs and LRCs with an aim to finalise it by the end of June.

4. Gloucestershire Nature Map Update

CS went through the changes Gloucestershire Local Biodiversity Partnership have proposed to the Nature Map for their county. It was felt that there had not been full coverage in putting together the current iteration. The changes they have proposed all follow the original methodology but have revised the number, size and occasionally the habitat designation of the SNAs. These were published in the LAA in March 2008 with a CD and are intended to be the Gloucestershire element of the regional Nature Map. There was some issues with terminology of habitats. The original Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh has been renamed Lowland Wet Grassland in Gloucestershire and Lowland Heath is called Woodland/Lowland Heath Mosaic. The latter is a patchwork forming SNA habitat mix rather than a matrix forming one. In addition there are areas on the Gloucestershire map marked "Possible Future Limestone Grassland" which are the correct SNA size but do not possess sufficient core habitat. These are included as areas of aspiration rather than opportunity and therefore are not intended to be included on the regional NM. This

map has been digitised to field boundaries while the original NM was deliberately “blobby”. This led to further discussion on a review of NM methodology and it was proposed that a NM technical group might be formed:

Action: NB and SB to set up a NM technical group. CS, TC, CD have so far volunteered to join group.

It was noted that the Gloucestershire map publicity did not mention the regional NM or BioSW. It should be ensured that this is done in future output. There was also an issue with the terminology “Possible Future Limestone Grassland” in the local map as people might then assume the NM Limestone Grassland SNAs were complete and needed no further work. There were also issues to do with SNAs that go across the county boundary, for example into Wiltshire and some SNAs that had been changed from Standing Open Water and Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh to Neutral Grassland. CS has agreed to provide a written response to the issues raised and to follow the draft Nature Map Working Guidelines to ensure that Gloucestershire version adopted regionally following the correct procedure. Group agreed that the presentation and style of the Gloucestershire leaflet and CD were excellent and should be used as lessons learnt for the regional NM.

Action: CS to submit response to questions about Gloucestershire version NM to NMWG and to following NM Change protocol. NMWG to assess at next NMWG meeting.

5. Results of the Partnership meeting and NM Workshop of 12th March.

A table of comments from the BioSW Partnership meeting was discussed. This meeting had received very positive feedback, although it was noted that some within the broad biodiversity sector were not as familiar with NM as they might have been. A number of themes from the workshops emerged:

- 1) NM is, by its nature, very rural. There were several comments on the rural/urban interface and how NM related to Green Infrastructure. Devon County Council are hoping to organise a GI seminar/workshop which will involve NM. Natural England has been asked to lead on GI at the regional level, with Naomi Wright being the contact. In terms of what is meant by GI, the Regional Spatial Strategy has a good definition.
- 2) There was some debate about whether the visioning process was needed. This need to be tackled in any publicity from the trial visioning workshops.
- 3) County versus regional versions of NM and updates, similar discussions to item 3.
- 4) The fact that HLS targeting is using NM was seen as very good and that there was a very good correlation emerging between SNAs and areas for targeting. Although NM is not used directly in other schemes (eg Woodland Grant) there is still a good correlation. There is a need to consider how NM should be used with regard to energy crops.
- 5) Funding for NM and work on the ground
- 6) NM and the “people” agenda – social aspects of SNAs
- 7) How to direct work for species or in the “white” areas of NM. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are looking to use NM in general wildlife and community projects, not just landscape scale ones.

8) The presentation by John Hopkins on climate change adaptation was especially well received and many attendees wanted more information. The next Partnership meeting is likely to focus on climate change adaptation. The coast came up as a priority under this and the resilience of NM to climate change, with work being done in partnership with the SWCCIP biodiversity group, who are going to develop a case study focused on the Exe estuary.

Action: The attendees need to be given the positive feedback from the day and kept informed of future activity.

Action: The advocates list need to be updated for those who want more information.

It was suggested that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan might be useful to prioritise and target people from the workshop/key audiences.

Action: NB to draw together outline plan for discussion.

6. NM Development Plan – Simon Bates

Simon Bates led a session on refreshing the Nature Map Development and Advocacy Plans.

Action: Simon Bates to put together the results from this for discussion.

A Development Plan was generally seen as a good thing and a starting point would be to ask for comments on the old Development and Advocacy Plans. What has been done, what has worked, how it can be cut back. This needs to take into account new media or formats for showcasing the maps (3D mapping etc), and the development of tools for using it that can be simply accessed and used, aimed particularly at those outside of the biodiversity realm. Case studies of NM use should also be collated for use.

Action: NB to ask for comments on the old Development and Advocacy Plans.

7. Any Other Business

Simon and Naomi met with Roger Catchpole from Natural England to discuss his work on connectivity mapping and NM. This England Habitat Network is seen as rigorous and repeatable in terms of the science involved and is one area which might be built into the next round of NM methodology. In general it was agreed the NM Technical Group should also look at other maps (GI, connectivity, soil types, HLS targeting) for interactions with NM and NM methodology.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 16th September 2008.