

Central and Eastern Europe

Le réseau des organismes pour la gestion du patrimoine naturel européen

The network of organisations managing Europe's natural heritage

Building Capacity in Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia
Darwin Initiative: *Workshop 3: Management Planning and Stakeholders*

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01: Workshop Information

Location: Somerset Levels and Moors, Southwest England

01.1: Workshop Location Details

The Somerset Levels and Moors have international status as one of the most important wetlands of its type in the world. Most of the area is no higher above sea level than 25 feet. Some parts, the coastal marine clay "Levels", are higher than the "Moors" which are further inland and often have peat as their central feature. These areas are protected from sea flooding only by the slightly higher clay ridge at the coast and by careful control of water through pumping. It is this balance between the soil types of clay and peat that make each area of the Levels and Moors appear different. To the north of the Polden Hills the wetland is supplied by the rivers Axe, Sheppey and Brue, while to the south, the rivers are the Cary, Yeo, Tone and Parrett, the last of which is tidal up to Oath Lock near Langport. Each area is separated from its neighbour by well wooded, low Jurassic clay and limestone ridges.

The pattern of small fields, ditches (local name - "rhynes" pronounced "Reens") seen across the Levels and Moors, was created as a result of two main forces: the enclosure and sub-division of the wetland between the previous commoners, whose villages are reflected in the names of the droves or tracks, and the need to optimise the balance between the size of a field and the amount of land lost to ditches. If fields were too large, then the flood waters that used to cover the Levels and Moors, could not be drained fast enough from a field, conversely, too much of the land converted to ditches meant land lost to production.

From: *'The Somerset Levels and Moors Project web-site'* 2002

http://somerselevels.org.uk/lam_introduction.php

01.2: Workshop details

Dates: 13th 17th November 2002

Participants: 19 participants from 7 countries*

Estonia (2)

Latvia (3)

Lithuania (2)

Netherlands (1) (EUROSITE representative)

Poland (2)

Russia (3)

United Kingdom (6)

Hosted by: English Nature

02: Project Background

To help key individuals from Poland, Russia and the Baltic States improve understanding and practical skills in the management of wetland habitats. The project is lead by a consortium of leading UK conservation organisations and *EUROSITE*, National Trust, RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage, English Nature and the Wildlife Trusts.

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03: Workshop aims

- Summarising project progress to-date

- Learning to identify stakeholders
- Learning how to communicate with stakeholders
- Realising how stakeholders see us
- Critically evaluating stakeholder meetings
- Sharing of experience to-date
- Identifying what works and what does not work – based on experience so-far
- Consideration of how progress to-date effects the structure of management plans
- Planning the next phase of the project.

In compliance with the needs and expectations of *EUROSITE* Darwin Workshop participants - emphasis was placed on issues of *stakeholder management*; a theme of particular relevance to partners in Central and Eastern Europe where the involvement of stakeholders in environmental management planning is currently not common practice.

This report is an account of the third workshop in the project.

04: Workshop Activities

Wednesday 13th November

Evening - Arrival of participants

Thursday 14th November

Morning - Field visit – *meeting with stakeholders* – West Sedgemoor Reserve (*RSPB*)

Afternoon - Review of field visit and discussion

- What is communication?
- Communicating with stakeholders + practice
- How do stakeholders see us?

Friday 15th November

Morning - Field visit – *meeting with stakeholders* – Shapwick Heath (*English Nature*)

Afternoon - Review of field visit and discussion

- Who are your stakeholders?
- Involving stakeholders in management planning
- Case studies

Saturday 16th November

Morning - Round-up discussions and underlining of key points

- Identification of points for future discussion

Afternoon - Optional field visit

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05: Field Visits

05.1: Field Visit 1: West Sedgemoor Reserve

Background

West Sedgemoor Reserve is located within the *Somerset Levels and Moors*, Redhill, Somerset. Established by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (*RSPB*) in the late 1970's to combat the decline in numbers of breeding waders and other wetland wildlife in the Somerset Levels and Moors (64,000 ha). Over 50 land purchases made during the period 1978 to 1998 extended the West Sedgemoor site to over 1000 ha (560 ha owned by *RSPB*). The land purchased comprised of small groups of fields owned mostly by local farmers, who have been able to continue practices of cattle grazing and hay making under license and guidance from the *RSPB*.

West Sedgemoor: **STATUS**

West Sedgemoor Reserve was notified as an SSSI in 1983 - in recognition of high nature conservation interest.

The reserve constitutes part of the Somerset Levels and Moors *Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA – designated in 1987)*, in order to support environmentally friendly farming practices.

The reserve is also part of the Somerset Levels and Moors *Special Protection Area* and a

RAMSAR site – as an internationally important site for wetlands and wintering wildfowl.

West Sedgemoor: **HYDROLOGY**

Over several centuries the hydrology of the Somerset Levels and Moors has been changed to accommodate agriculture.

Modification of local river systems, the addition of a pumping station of the River Parrett and farmer use of small land pumps has lengthened the dry season and allowed for the intensification of farming practices.

In the absence of drainage, West Sedgemoor Reserve would be a freshwater lake for most of the year.

Hydrological modification maintains conditions suitable for grazing and haymaking from July to October, whilst the period from November to April sees the peaty soil waterlogged and often flooded.

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Management

West Sedgemoor: **RSPB Management Objectives**

- **Primary objective:** enhancing the ability of the site to support important populations of breeding and wintering wildfowl and waders without compromising other important species and habitats.
- **Management target:** to provide a mosaic of vegetation structures and soil water table conditions able to accommodate the different breeding wader species. And, provide large areas of shallow surface water for wintering wildfowl.
- **Hydrological objective** (*breeding waders*): maintain high soil water table over 300 ha of the area at about 10-20 cm below field surface from April to June.
- **Hydrological objective** (*wintering wildfowl*): Regularly provide up to 300 ha of surface flood from November to March.
- Traditional hay making and cattle grazing will be managed to provide conditions beneficial to breeding and wintering bird populations – also restoring and sustaining plant communities characteristic of lowland wet grassland.

West Sedgemoor Reserve: Wetland Management: **Stakeholder Issues**

Views of the Farming Community

The local farming community is largely unhappy with the reduction in land drainage. Increased water levels reduce the quality of the land for grazing and also the annual period available for grazing. The West Sedgemoor Reserve is used amongst things for beef farming, poor grazing at the site lengthens the process of beef production, this is costly to beef farm profit and is now compounded by the '30 month rule' imposed due to the BSE outbreak.

Views of the RSPB

Only 1/5 of the West Sedgemoor Reserve is managed to maintain *high (surface)* water level – there is a common (*but misguided*) belief that the whole area is managed for high water levels.

Where applicable, high water levels are maintained to create favourable conditions for the conservation of birds and habitats – farmers are generally unsympathetic to this cause – not understanding the importance.

Views of the Local Community

Members of the local community, other than farmers, have little opinion about the reserve. Most are unaware of its purpose and most likely the general goals of the RSPB itself. Consequently most members of the local public sympathise with the farming community.

Views of the RSPB

West Sedgemoor Reserve attracts 5,000-10,000 visitors per annum. The local community does not acknowledge or exploit the business potential associated with visiting ornithologists and wildlife enthusiasts.

Stakeholder Conflict

The RSPB identifies several factors that contribute to stakeholder conflict at West Sedgemoor Reserve; most can be categorised as either *(i)* conflict associated with hydrological management and land-use, complicated by limited communication and the involvement of different water management authorities. Or *(ii)* conflict associated with inadequate communication between the RSPB site and stakeholder groups *(i.e. little local knowledge of RSPB activities)*.

The relationship between the West Sedgemoor RSPB reserve and stakeholders is described as *'not good'*, to some extent this is evident from the low profile maintained by the local RSPB team. Official vehicles are unmarked and a few signs are in-place to indicate the presence or location of the main office or bird-hide – the site has little in the way of interpretive material.

It has been observed that a large number of stakeholders, and a great variation in stakeholder motivation is a limiting factor for conflict resolution. The average landowner in this area occupies a small 40ha, rendering a high count of land-owning stakeholders. The majority of these landowners are concerned with issues of grazing and water level, giving the RSPB some focus for communication with stakeholders; although progress is hindered by the involvement of: -

- The internal drainage board (*IDB*) (monitor and control groundwater levels)
- Farming cliques (*groups of land-owning stakeholders with similar motivation*)
- The Levels and Moors Partnership (*LAMP*) (focal point and mediator for issues arising in the Somerset Levels and Moors – inc. water levels)

These stakeholder groups are differently motivated and have no formal training in communication. There are also complications associated with the distribution of power and influence; for example, the IDB comprises of private landowners elected to a board. Their task broadly defined, *to find a solution between the needs/interests of farmers, landowners and conservationists (funding provided by landowners and the UK Environment Agency)* – it is possible that the vested interests of such a committee fails to represent the wider electorate. A shortfall in communication skills and a bias distribution of power (*actual or interpreted*) has the potential to inhibit consensus building and isolate individual stakeholders.

Walks, talks and school activities have all been employed by the RSPB in attempt to gain local support for their work. The RSPB have noticed some positive feedback from these consensus building exercises, but believe that greater levels of co-operation can be achieved with demonstration that the site is good for the local economy.

The RSPB references the small size of its local team (*20 permanent staff*) as a factor that inhibits their progress towards building a more amicable relationship with the local community. The workload associated with managing the site does not allow for a full time communication officer, therefore tours of the site are few and more often than not restricted to times that suit the RSPB and not the local public.

Conflict at the national level...

The RSPB West Sedgemoor site now faces conflict with the Governments *Sustainable Transport System* plan. The main railway line connecting the SW of England to London runs through the reserve - this route is part of the planned sustainable transport system. This creates a paradox for the RSPB; the railway line requires the regulation of local water levels (*reduced groundwater levels*) and disturbs habitats – this is not appreciated by RSPB... although RSPB policy supports the principal of sustainability!

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05.2: Field visit 2: Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve

Background and History

Shapwick Heath was designated a NNR in 1959, its wet heaths and scrubby woodlands were the haunt of birds such as Nightjar, Nightingale, Grasshopper Warbler and the Willow Tit. For centuries this site was hand-cut for peat, lowering the land by 8-10 metres since Roman times. The late 1960's witnessed expansion of the peat industry – extraction was mechanised. During this period the local water table was lowered with pumping to allow the free operation of peat extracting machinery. After land acquisition by English Nature peat cutting stopped in the early 1990's and water levels were allowed to rise once more. Shapwick Heath NNR is now a permanent wetland, part of an important complex of wetland sites in the former peat digging sites of the Avalon Marshes. The raising of water levels allowed the re-colonisation of vegetation to begin in 1993, slowly re-creating a 7-8,000 year old habitat. Today the site has strong legal protection as a NNR, and has full public access.

Adapted from Chown, D. 1999

'Breeding birds of Shapwick Heath NNR'

English Nature 1999

Shapwick Heath NNR – Status and Management

- Designated NNR in 1959
- Re-colonisation of vegetation began in 1993 after the cessation of peat digging and regulation of water levels to maintain wetland habitats.
- Management of the site aims to maintain a mosaic of wetland habitats – succession to woodland is prevented.
- The linear cell pattern of former peat dig sites allows for the creation of different hydrological habitat types, including water pastures, fish and reed beds – supporting a variety of protected species, including otter.
- Around 200 small islands have been created at the site, all at differing heights. This allows for the *maximum edge effect*, where individual islands (*height dependent*) are exposed or submerged/partially submerged as water levels change. Some islands are never completely submerged, whilst others remain submerged for most of the year, except for the drier summer months. This creates an environment that optimises the diversity of invertebrate species – providing an important food source for birds.
- Shapwick Heath is an acknowledged site of archeological importance (*now a scheduled ancient monument*), containing the remains of an ancient walkway dated at around 4000BC. The 600m walkway demonstrates a long history of human activity at the site.

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- There is no real economic return on the site – some reeds are harvested and sold to local basket weaving businesses, but this makes little contribution to the site. The potential for capitol gain from tourism has been acknowledged.

- Difficulty has been experienced in convincing the local public of the importance of the site – the local population does not view the site as an asset.
- The site and its periphery have experienced a long history of drainage for agricultural improvement.
- Neighbouring landowners are *suspicious* of the activities at Shapwick Heath, particularly with reference to the management of water levels; for example, where landowners rely on conditions suitable for grazing, or small-scale peat extraction.
- Monitoring of bird species since the re-wetting of the site has shown an increase in the majority of wetland species that frequent the area.

Stakeholder Involvement

Shapwick Heath NNR experiences a relationship with its land-owning stakeholders similar to that experienced by the RSPB at West Sedgemoor Reserve - a relationship largely based around mutual interest in local water levels. Neighbouring landowners are perhaps oblivious to the importance of the wetland site, but are fully aware of the need to maintain appropriate water levels on their own land.

The IDB mediates between the needs of neighbouring farmers and landowners and the needs of the wetland site. The site receives *generous* Government funding (*via the IDB*) for the resolution of such conflicts.

Stakeholder management plans have encouraged farmers to take pride in work that assists in the management of the wetland site and its periphery. Greater co-operation has been achieved in this way. Allowing farmers to understand that they are making a contribution to nature conservation, showing them the positive results, and helping them realise that they are *conservation land managers* has had positive results.

Observations suggest that co-operation is unlikely to be achieved if stakeholders feel distanced from the project.

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05.3: Field visit 2: Meeting with representative from the British Association of Shooters and Conservationists (BASC)

During the field visit of workshop day two, participants were able to have a brief meeting with the regional representative of the British Association of Shooters and Conservationists – a stakeholder group for issues concerning ducks, geese and other game wildfowl. This is an example of a group with a vested interest in wetland sites such as Shapwick Heath NNR and West Sedgemoor Reserve. The following offers a brief account of issues discussed and points raised during the meeting: -

- Whilst shooting is perhaps not immediately something that is associated with conservation, the BASC have a genuine interest in nature conservation – *the need to preserve targets creates a conservation interest*.
- Local membership of the BASC exceeds 600 individuals.
- Whilst some conservation organisations are opposed to all game shooting, the BASC has a good relationship with many nature conservation organisations, including the local English Nature team at Shapwick Heath.
- The BASC trains shooters to identify protected species, so that they might not be shot. The BASC state that whilst most of its members are good at identifying game species, some protected species are inevitably killed. This is often attributed to the poor light and weather conditions that accompany good shooting.
- The BASC works closely with conservation organisations for the preservation of wetland habitats; again members are kept informed about sensitive habitat areas and are instructed as to how to limit any damage their hunting activities might cause.
- The BASC actively promote sustainability within their sport and place caps on the

number of kills individuals can make in one hunting season. This figure is calculated based on up-to-date species inventories (*using international bird data*). Regardless of these measures, the BASC admit that they have limited control over the number of kills that their members make per annum, but believe that the majority of members abide by the rules.

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06: Review of the Field Visits

The workshop field visits were treated as an exercise in stakeholder communication. Workshop participants were encouraged to ask the field visit hosts questions that might be of relevance to stakeholders – the repose of the host and the structure and content of the visit was later evaluated from the perspective of stakeholder communication.

06.1: Field visit 1: Review: West Sedgemoor Reserve (RSPB)

What could have been better?

[1]

The Observations:

Post field-trip discussion revealed that not everybody completely understood the issues raised by the RSPB representatives. This was attributed to communication failure from both parties – the stakeholders (*workshop participants*) and the RSPB. The workshop participants failed to make the correct inquiries, and the RSPB failed to communicate ideas in a way that could be absorbed by all of the participants. The choice of language used by the RSPB was cited as a reason for confusion about issues relating to the management of West Sedgemoor Reserve.

The Recommendations:

If you don't understand... *ask questions!* – The feedback loop!

Understand your audience – *in this instance a multi-national group* – speech should be clear and to the point, jargon should never be used as this will distance the stakeholder, and whilst local terminology might assist relationship building with locals, it will only confuse non-native English speakers.

[2]

The Observations:

The RSPB made use of background information (*printed material – all in English*) to assist their in their illustration of the site (*background information – habitat types – species counts etc.*) this information was distributed at the beginning of the visit. The information provided was detailed, requiring some time to read and digest. The issue relating to this handout material is not associated with the content of the documents, but rather the timing of their distribution. The participants felt inclined to read the material upon receipt – this was not the intention of the RSPB who began their introductory presentation whilst much of the party continued to read.

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The Recommendations:

Printed information (*especially when detailed*) is useful as an introduction to a meeting or as further reading for after meetings have taken place. Introductory text (*and detailed handouts in general*) are best provided at times when the full attention of stakeholders is not required, i.e. not during a meeting. Such information should be handed out prior to the meeting if it is to form the basis for discussions, or after the meeting if it presents follow-up information and further reading.

In this instance the *stakeholder* group was multi-national, comprised of representatives from 7 European countries – handout material was provided only in English. For the

group in question this was not a problem, all participants have good English skills. This situation is perhaps uncommon, but is an example of a situation where communication could fail a plan for stakeholder involvement. Elements of a management plan that require the understanding of all of the stakeholders should be presented in a manner that accommodates the individual; returning to the need to *understand your audience*. In this case, language barrier was a potential problem; other situation might for example present a stakeholder group of varied educational background – again requiring a more thoughtful approach to communication.

[3]

The Observations:

The stakeholders (*workshop participants*) applied no structure to the meeting, questions asked of the host were relevant but random. This was an exercise in stakeholder communication; the workshop participants were previously unaware of issues relating to the site – this limited the validity of the situation. There was no real motivation behind the questions posed by the stakeholders; i.e. they had no vested interest in the site other than an interest in nature conservation that could be expected in a group employed to such a profession. Reflecting on their actions during the field visit the workshop participants were able to gain new insight as to the behaviour of stakeholder groups.

After the visit the participants felt that they still had questions – *a stakeholder with unanswered questions is potentially an unsatisfied stakeholder*. It is probable that the stakeholders in this case had questions outstanding because they were not prepared for the meeting - a point of interest for management planners.

The Recommendations:

If it is the case that the co-operation of stakeholders is assisted by answering all or as many of their questions as possible, then the management planner should strive to optimise stakeholder meetings. This field trip demonstrated that stakeholder groups can be unorganised, and that this has its implications for the level of understanding achieved by stakeholders during a meeting. As it is most likely to their advantage, what can stakeholders do to optimise such meetings?

- Split stakeholders into *interest* groups, so similar topics can be dealt with more efficiently.
- Try to gauge likely questions before a meeting takes place – use of surveys or briefings with key individuals representative of the stakeholder body.

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- Compile a list of *frequently asked questions*, this can help reduce repetition and assist the forward progress of meetings.

What was good?

[1]

The hosts introduced themselves to the group, and frequently entered into two-way conversation – asking questions of the participants. In this way the hosts created a relaxed meeting environment.

[2]

The hosts gave the impression of being honest and genuine – questions asked were answered without hesitation and in an open manner without obvious digression from the subject of the question.

[3]

The visit and discussions took place on-site; this made discussions more tangible as the group could physically see the landscape that was being described to them. The impact

of *demonstration* is most likely always a more powerful tool than description.

[4]

The weather was pleasant on the day of the visit, this is of course difficult to predict in many areas, but a field trip on a sunny day makes a lot more sense than spending the same day in a meeting room.

[5]

The visit was well planned, with an introduction, a visit to a bird-hide and three different speakers. Such organisation is important, it demonstrates to stakeholders that they are taken seriously, that their time is valued and therefore not wasted. It is also more likely that control of the group is maintained if the meeting has been well organised.

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06.2: Field Visit 2: Review: Shapwick Heath NNR (*English Nature*)

To avoid unnecessary repetition, the review of this field visit does not restate observations similar to those in the previous section; it is important to note that many similar observations were made.

What could have been better?

The Observations

The introduction and welcome was badly timed, many of the group had not yet gathered, leaving many participants confused as to who was who, and what their role was with regards to the management of the site.

The Recommendations

Make sure introductions are well timed and clear; stakeholder issues will be dealt with more efficiently if they have a point of reference for their queries.

The Observations

The visit had not been well planned. Plans to visit one part of the wetland site were revised during the tour as recent heavy rainfall had blocked a pathway. It could be assumed that a site manager familiar with his/her site would be prepared for such an event. The tour of the site at this point became unorganised, with part of the group splitting from the main body. This resulted in confusion, many of the participants being unsure as to where they were supposed to be or what they were supposed to be doing.

The Recommendations

An unorganised stakeholder meeting could give the stakeholders the impression that you are wasting their time – this is obviously not constructive. Stakeholders should be taken seriously and the time spent with them should be used to your advantage. This involves having a structure to the meeting that attempts to satisfy both the management plan and the uncertainties of the stakeholders – it might prove difficult to gather the correct stakeholders in the same place at the same time – don't waste this time.

The Observations

With reference to the meeting with the BASC representative - the venue was a poor choice. Background noise in a busy café made the speaker difficult to hear.

The Recommendations

Choose your meeting venue carefully, one to one meetings might work in such a venue, but this was not a good location for public speaking – there is no point preparing a presentation that nobody gets to hear.

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What was good?

[1]

The hosts seemed reasonably well prepared in their presentation of issues at the site.

They used language that was appropriate for the visiting group.

[2]

The hosts made good use of the historical value of the site – this added an interesting dimension to the need to maintain the site.

[3]

The hosts made good use of the 20year history of site management, effectively using their enthusiasm for issues relating to the site to generate interest and possibly empathy within the visiting group.

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07: Communication and Stakeholders

07.1: What is Communication?

07.2: The Communication Process

One-way communication:

This model demonstrates that *one-way* communication provides no guarantee that the receiver (*B*) understands the meaning of the message conveyed by the sender (*A*). Also, without feedback it is impossible for the sender (*A*) to confirm that *B* has understood the message as intended. Therefore *one-way* communication is unlikely to achieve mutual understanding and is unpractical when dealing with stakeholders.

'**Communication**, the process of sharing ideas, information, and messages with others in a particular time and place. Communication includes writing and talking, as well as non-verbal communication (*such as facial expressions, body language, or gestures*), visual communication (*the use of images or pictures, such as painting, photography, video, or film*), and electronic communication (*telephone calls, electronic mail, cable television, or satellite broadcasts*). Communication is a vital part of personal life and is also important in business, education, and any other situation where people encounter each other'.

Source: Encarta *on-line*, Microsoft Network:

<http://encarta.msn.com>

communication environment

message

A's Reality B's Reality

intended

meaning

perceived

meaning

B A

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A Communication Loop

The communication model below includes the use of *feedback*. Feedback ensures that communication is no longer a one-way process and reduces the potential for incorrect perception of sent messages. A communicator can utilise feedback to gauge the extent to which a message is received and understood. The model below shows that feedback gives insight to the original message sender as to the *receiver* perception of that message. After one loop of this communication model the *message sender* is able to better understand the receivers interpretation of the sent message, this is an improvement on the one-way communication model, although mutual understanding is more likely to be achieved after completion of several loops of the model. For example, if the *sender* detects that the *receiver* has misunderstood the intended message then the *sender* can rephrase the message using *feedback* to evaluate when the message has been correctly

understood.

Information and understanding may not be enough to produce the result hoped for or intended.

Feedback and Stakeholders

Feedback is essential when communicating with stakeholders – without feedback it is impossible to confirm that stakeholders correctly understand the message conveyed. Misunderstandings will inhibit progress towards consensus building and will reduce stakeholder confidence in your activities.

Communication with stakeholders must be maintained throughout the management planning initiative. It is important that stakeholders are kept informed and feel involved in the project, projects may fail if stakeholders begin to feel distanced from plans and activities and they can not be expected observe stakeholder agreements if they are illinformed or not correctly motivated...

A B Intended

message

Perceived

result

Result

communication

communication

feedback

Message sender Message receiver

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The following chain of events illustrates key points at which a project is vulnerable to failure if adequate communication is not maintained: -

SAID HEARD?

HEARD UNDERSTOOD?

UNDERSTOOD AGREEMENT?

AGREEMENT ACTION?

ACTION MAINTAINED?

For example:

- The site manager identifies a problem - the solution requires the co-operation of stakeholders.
- The site manager communicates a message to the identified stakeholders (*SAID*).
- Has the message been *HEARD*? – This refers to the message audience - Were the correct stakeholders involved? It is possible to have not included all relevant stakeholders, or to have missed stakeholders with the influence required for achieving project objectives?
- Assuming the message has been *HEARD*, there is no guarantee that it is *UNDERSTOOD*. Use of *feedback* can evaluate how the message has been interpreted. Also, the manner in which the message is conveyed (*SAID*) can significantly effect how the message is *UNDERSTOOD* – good communication practice will see a message tailored to the audience, reducing the potential for misinterpretation. In any event it is unlikely that *all* stakeholder parties will initially understand ideas presented to them, there will always be questions!
- Successfully conveying a message to stakeholders is only part of the challenge; once the stage has been reached where stakeholders have *UNDERSTOOD* the message

(i.e. the intended management plan) there must be *AGREEMENT* on the content/implications of the message. This itself requires communication skills, with a shift in emphasis from the initial communication of an idea/management plan to the new goal of consensus building.

- After achieving *AGREEMENT* the next stage will likely involve the need for stakeholder *ACTION*, which itself requires guidance and communication from the site manager, who must ultimately be able to motivate stakeholders.
- If the *ACTION* required for success of the project is ongoing then communication is necessary for stakeholder involvement to be *MAINTAINED* - again requiring the motivation of identified stakeholders.

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07.3: The Management Plan Consultation Process

Traditionally stakeholders were only consulted at the latter stages of management planning. This had the effect of excluding stakeholders from the decision making process, often resulting in stakeholder non-co-operation. Contemporary procedure sees the involvement of stakeholders from the outset, the consultation process often taking the following shape: -

This basic model is useful for site managers to compare against existing management plans, and management plans in the making – *are key stakeholders involved in the consultation process from the outset? – What are the implications?*

Error of judgement at the early stages of a management plan can hinder forward progress and impact upon the final outcome; the consultation process is no exception – time should be taken to identify and include all influential parties.

EXPERTS
CONSULTEES
STAKEHOLDERS
EXPERTS
CONSULTEES
STAKEHOLDERS
EXPERTS
CONSULTEES
STAKEHOLDERS
ISSUE GROUP
ISSUE GROUP
ISSUE GROUP
ISSUE GROUP REPORTS PLAN

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08: Effective Communication

08.1: Key points identified during the workshop:

Defining the Problem:

- When communicating with stakeholders it is important to define problems from the outset.
- The site manager should always confirm that he/she has the correct perception of stakeholder issues. Acting upon incorrect information will only delay/prevent progress towards consensus building.
- The use of examples (*case studies*) can help illustrate a point and reduce confusion.

Stakeholder Target Groups:

- It is beneficial to the outcome of the management plan to take time to isolate ‘*key stakeholders*’.
- A target group consists of stakeholders instrumental to the objectives of a management plan,
- Resourceful selection of stakeholders is advantageous.

Consensus Building:

- Consensus building is resource intensive.
- Consensus building assists the formulation of robust objectives.
- The process of consensus building is as valuable as the product.
- Identification of what motivates stakeholders provides a platform for consensus building.
- The target *product* should always be realistic. A realistic goal is more likely to be both achieved and accepted by stakeholder groups.
- Ideally, all parties involved should share an adequate and equal understanding of the issues at stake; this is essential for the management plan to move to the next stage.

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08.2: Listening skills: *Observations from the workshop:*

Effective communication is not exclusively measured by the ability to convey ideas and create understanding within stakeholder groups. Observation, interpretation and listening are just as important.

For example:

- Relationships with stakeholders will be improved if they feel that they are listened to and understood.
- Stakeholders are more likely to trust a site manager (*and his/her actions*) if they feel that their input has been absorbed, understood and factored into the management plan.
- Don't just *listen* to stakeholders, observe their actions (*body language*) and interpretation (*version of events*) this will allow greater insight to their point-of-view; their emphasis and reiteration during discussions will hint towards the issues which they find most important.
- Allow the stakeholder to speak. Interrupting inhibits progress. Initial meetings with stakeholders should allow the larger percentage of time for stakeholders to express their opinions. It is unlikely that they will be willing to listen until they have first expressed their own opinion.
- Maintaining eye contact reassures the individual that they are being listened to; an important factor when attempting to gain the trust of stakeholders.
- Non-verbal communication is a valuable tool for reassuring stakeholders that they are being listened to and that their message is understood.
- Don't forget the basics of communication, if you don't understand...ask questions!

08.3: Public Speaking: *Observations from the workshop:*

The workshop included a video session in which several participants were invited to make a short presentation on a subject of choice to video camera. The recording of their presentations was played back to the workshop group who then critically evaluated the quality of the public speaking.

The video session demonstrated to the participants that effective public speaking requires practice; the group concluded the *performance* of a public speaker has significant influence upon the interpretation of their message. Some of the key observations were as follows: -

Body Language

- Crossed arms convey defensive body language – this is inappropriate when attempting to gain the trust of stakeholder groups.
- Fidgeting makes a public speaker seem uneasy; this is also damaging to the apparent sincerity of the message.

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- Using *props* is a useful way of both facilitating the transfer of a complicated message and maintaining audience interest.
- Gesticulation gives energy to a presentation, but it must be maintained – it is noticeable when hand gestures are intermittent or absent after extensive use – again distracting from the message.

Voice

- Varying the speed and tone of your voice can sustain audience interest and also allows emphasis to be placed on key elements of a presentation.
- A monotone voice will not maintain audience interest for sustained periods.

Other

- Offering some personal information at the beginning of a presentation (*name, age, interests etc.*) displays openness, an important factor when stakeholders are looking for someone they can trust.

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09: Case Studies

Life in UK Rivers Project: *The River Avon Strategy*

Presented by Dagmar Junghanns

Background:

Financially supported by the European Commission via the *LIFE-Nature fund* the 4 year *Life in UK Rivers* project seeks to facilitate the conservation of UK rivers proposed as special areas of conservation (SAC) under the European Habitats and Species Directive. These SAC sites make up part of the Natura 2000 network.

Co-ordinated by English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency the *Life in UK Rivers* project includes 7 candidate SAC rivers - 2 in England, 4 in Scotland and 1 in Wales.

The project aims to cover the following work areas before its conclusion in December 2003: -

- Production of a handbook on the requirements of river habitats and 13 species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.
- Production of a handbook for monitoring the conservation status of SAC rivers.
- Developing techniques to address key issues affecting SAC rivers.
- Preparation of SAC river conservation strategies.

The River Avon:

Situated in South-central England the River Avon is a chalk river of which a 200km stretch (*mostly within Wiltshire*) is protected by candidate SAC status. The Avon is home to several rare or internationally threatened species, including, sea and brook *lamprey*, *bullhead*, *Atlantic salmon* and *Desmoulins' whorl snail*. The river is dominated by *water crowfoot* vegetation. The methodology behind the River Avon strategy aims to provide a platform for *favourable conservation status* for the designated features of the candidate SAC river system.

Definition of favourable conservation status (Article 1)

Article 1(e):

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and;
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and;
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined in Article 1(i).

Article 1(i)

The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and; there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

(JNCC 2002: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk>)

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The River Avon strategy has been developed with stakeholders involved in river and catchment management. During the initial stages of the Avon strategy numerous stakeholder groups were identified – landowners (farmers, private), fishermen and fishing clubs, statutory bodies (water companies, local and regional authorities) and several voluntary sector bodies including conservation groups. The River Avon strategy is co-ordinated by English Nature.

The River Avon strategy developed a stakeholder *model of participation* to identify key stakeholders; those with the capacity to effect the changes required by the project. Upon identification of the key stakeholders, working groups were established to identify issues and management criteria and accordingly prioritise proposed actions. The progress of the working groups was facilitated with input from professionals with relevant expertise. The next stage involved a series of consultations between the working groups, public consultation and the creation of a draft strategy – followed of course, by action.

The River Avon strategy incorporated three main stages to reach the *action* stage...

River Avon Strategy: Strengths and Considerations: Observations by English Nature

STAKEHOLDER

IDENTIFICATION

WORKING GROUP

CREATION

STRATEGY DRAFTING

& CONSULTATION

ACTION

1 2 3

Strengths

- Systematic methodology
- Effectively promotes negotiation
- Facilitates consensus building
- The decision making *path* can be retraced – useful when project outcomes are disputed

Considerations

- Time consuming
- The process can be slow and therefore may not produce quick results
- Organisational priorities versus strategy outcomes
- The expectations of management

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Issues experienced by the Avon Strategy area team

- Project timing – determined by the *LIFE* timetable.
- Management of expectations – meeting the expectations of all stakeholder and internal management groups, before, during and after the project.
- Intensive use of area team staff resources.

- Making best use of available budget – i.e. the capacity to finance appropriately qualified staff.
- Overcoming *strategy fatigue* – approximately 30 management plans for the Avon catchment preceded the *River Avon Strategy*, this was detrimental to the consensus building process.

Issues for the future

- Potential to secure UK *National Lottery Funding* – this would be extremely beneficial to the project.
- Continued development within the habitat restoration programme.
- Greater emphasis on education and demonstration, promoting community involvement and accessibility to increase public interest and support for the project.

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10: Working with Stakeholders

10.1: RSPB (Scotland)

The RSPB work with stakeholders from 6 defined groups.

Neighbours

This group mostly consists of the local farming community and landowners within and surrounding natural sites. The RSPB experiences difficulty and occasional hostility when dealing with this stakeholder group. Initial meetings are typically short as the relationship between the RSPB and the stakeholder develops; continued communication with this group often results in longer and more productive meetings – mutual understanding can be achieved with the application of time and patience.

Volunteers

Comprised of conservation workers this stakeholder group is normally sympathetic to the work ethic of the RSPB and therefore a good working relationship can be expected. This stakeholder group is often essential to the success of RSPB projects and remains an asset to management planning. The RSPB relies upon the financial support of the larger body of this stakeholder group; this is a prerequisite for good communication.

The public

A stakeholder group comprised of individuals, often with individual agendas. Success is often achieved with this group during relaxed meetings on neutral territory – often a local pub provides the right atmosphere.

Political researchers

Professionals often concerned with factual information essential for the politicians for whom they work. The potential influence of this group on other stakeholders and the resultant implications for the natural site requires that this group be considered an important stakeholder – often catered for with guided tours.

Internal stakeholders

Internal stakeholders (*in the case of the RSPB*) are those working within the RSPB – the staff. It is important that *external* stakeholders trust the methodology of the organisation; this trust will be more easily obtained if they can observe professional consistency. It is therefore useful to consider organisational staff as stakeholders; if key players within your organisation do not understand the contemporary issues at-hand, it is unlikely that *external* stakeholders will. This internal solidarity is at its most important when faced with more controversial issues.

The whole community

The RSPB works to involve '*the whole community*', this refers to all of the stakeholder groups. Experience has demonstrated that if all parties feel equally involved and share a mutual understanding then the implementation of management plans can be more

successful.

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Other Observations

- Some staff within the RSPB are specifically trained in communication skills to develop relationships and understanding with stakeholder groups. Even though staff receive communication training it has been observed that individual capacity for effective communication differs from person to person.
- Identification of the best communicators within the organisation facilitates the understanding of elements of good communication – this provides a platform for teaching and development.
- The most effective form of communication is that of the ‘*natural conversation*’, time should be taken to establish a relationship with the stakeholder/s – ideas should not be forced and initial meetings should not attempt to immediately solve problems. Patience remains a virtue when communicating with stakeholders.

10.2: English Nature

An Overall Perspective

- Approximately 900 staff.
- English Nature is a large organisation and is therefore particularly vulnerable to political agenda, such as issues of health, education and law. It is in the interest of the survival of English Nature to remain informed and involved with contemporary political issues.
- English Nature identifies key players using a ‘*stakeholder map*’; this allows for identification of the most important (*influential*) stakeholders and provides a focus for the creation of a prioritised stakeholder action plan.
- English Nature recognises that it should make better use of stakeholders with political and economic influence; there are political and economic benefits of nature that can be exploited for the benefit of a management plan.
- English Nature regularly reviews progress with management plans and stakeholder involvement, this allows for a more complete understanding of project progress and complements the formulation of future goals.

The English Nature publication ‘*Revealing the Value of Nature*’ provides insight to the socio-economic values of the natural environment – useful for communication with stakeholder groups.

The publication is available on-line (*PDF format*) at the following link: -

<http://www.englishnature.gov.uk/pubs/publication/PDF/valueofnat.pdf>

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10.3: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

9 years ago the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (*SWT*) had no consultation or communication procedure for dealing with stakeholders.

The importance of stakeholder involvement in management planning has since been realised by the SWT and as such attempts have been made to build relationships with stakeholders.

The SWT classifies three stages of progress to the levels of communication that they now achieve with stakeholders: -

- **EXCLUSION** – Initially stakeholders were excluded from the decision making process and were not informed about developments and future plans.

- **INFORMATION** – A later policy involved the communication of finalised plans to local stakeholders, an improvement on *exclusion* but stakeholders were still isolated from the decision making progress.

- **CONSULTATION** – Representative of the current situation between SWT and stakeholders. Interested parties are now consulted about future management plans, have some input to the structure of plans and remain informed as to the methodology, goals and timetable of management planning initiatives.

SWT adopts the communication strategy of identifying common ground with stakeholders. This contributes towards the creation of an amicable relationship with stakeholders.

Farmers are motivated to participate in land management schemes if they are put in the position of '*land manager*' this allows farmers to actively facilitate the management process and hopefully gain some satisfaction from their contribution.

The communication strategy of SWT is now incorporated into their land acquisition programme – only acquiring land that is of interest to the local community. If no useful interpretative material can be placed at the site then the SWT will not take on the site.

One of the methods used by SWT to keep stakeholders informed about land management schemes is to hold open-days and provide interpretative media.

SWT believe that it is essential to gain the understanding of stakeholders before cooperation can be achieved.

The SWT is a relatively small body and has a localised profile; it is therefore disadvantaged, as many stakeholders are unfamiliar with their work.

The SWT has observed that stakeholders with an interest in nature conservation are typically *middleclass*, this has implications for stakeholder support and the involvement of the wider community.

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10.4: The National Trust

The National Trust is a large organisation employing 7,000 staff in the high season and it has over 3 million members.

The size of the National Trust limits its capacity for efficient communication. The large number of staff employed complicates internal communication which itself has implications upon the ability of the organisation to communicate with stakeholders.

The National Trust identifies the process of communication with stakeholders as timeconsuming and repetitive; efforts to reduce the time and resources involved make use of a *stakeholder matrix*, used to identify key stakeholders with the influence and power required to achieve conservation objectives: -

* Indicates the zone occupied by *key stakeholders*, those with the most influence and power. This group is often targeted at the initial stages of stakeholder involvement as their influence and power can be beneficial to project goals.

! Indicates the zone occupied by the majority of stakeholders. Individually characterised by low influence and power.

The National Trust selects the best natural communicators for stakeholder contact,

recognising that individuals have different communication skills. For example, policy makers have excellent written communication skills, but this does not often translate to good person to person communication that is essential when talking with stakeholders. Patience and persistence are valued skills in National Trust communication personnel: -

- **Patience:** Stakeholders can be aggressive and difficult to persuade, often such work is frustrating and initially unrewarding.
- **Persistence:** It is important not to convey *mixed messages*, this will confuse the stakeholder and will hinder the progress of communication work.

Market research is a tool utilised by the National Trust to evaluate the potential success of a project and the future direction the project might take. Market research can be used to determine stakeholder reaction to management plans and knowledge of stakeholder opinion and motivation can facilitate the selection of an effective communication programme.

INFLUENCE

POWER

high

high low

low

*

!

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10.5: Scottish Natural Heritage (*Loch Leven*)

Loch Leven has been a designated National Nature Reserve (*NNR*) since 1964. It was designated as a site important for national heritage and research. The public had minimal involvement in the decision for the parks designation and there was no real communication programme attached to the awarding of the *NNR* status.

Loch Leven is one of the largest lochs in lowland Scotland and one of the most important sites for waterfowl in Britain. Scottish Natural Heritage (*SNH*) seeks to enhance their breeding, migratory and wintering wildfowl populations as a priority in their management of the *NNR*. Contemporary stakeholder issues rise from the combination of *SNH* management priorities and the importance of the site for the local economy. The loch provides local employment and is a source of income for landowners. All factors must also be balanced with the requirements of Loch Leven research programmes. The *Loch Leven catchment management project* that was initiated in 1995 provides an example of a stakeholder initiative, involving *SNH*, government agencies, local authorities and numerous other organisations and public bodies.

The *RSPB* are actively involved in managing part of the Loch Leven site, holding responsibility for Vane Farm. The *RSPB* has made use of a consultant to formulate stakeholder management plans and has identified that informing the public about future plans and activities at the earliest possible opportunity is advantageous to the progress and acceptance of management plans.

The *RSPB* facilitates the development of stakeholder relationships by identifying common issues with the private landowners, such as water quality. Common interests are sometimes complicated by other organisational/landowner priorities. For example, water quality is valued by the *RSPB* for the maintenance of local Cormorant population (*approx. 500*). The local fisheries value water quality for the management of their Trout

stocks. The complication arises because the Cormorants at Vane Farm feed on Trout from the local fish farms, to the obvious frustration of fishery managers. This is a good example of the complexity of stakeholder relations – the shared desire to preserve a particular facet of the local environment can be motivated by ideals that ultimately result in new conflict.

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11: Communication Plans

11.1: Estonian participant examples

Case example: Tagamoisa Peninsular – Natura 2000 V's Port development

- The aim is to modify an existing management plan draft for natural sites (SAC) at Tagamoisa on the North peninsular of Saaremaa. This management plan has the objective to bring the sites to favourable conservation status, to increase the probability of Natura 2000 designation and assist in the prevention of a port development at Saaremaa.

Issues at the site

- The sites in question support 25 recognised habitat types, supporting a range of protected species including the Lynx
- There is a decline in farming in the region – the older farming generation is dying out and the younger generations are opting for life in the cities
- This leading to rural depopulation
- The constituent population is aging – this has its implications for the sustainability of any management programme
- The population is also small, only 70 people live within the area that has been identified for management planning
- Grazing is becoming discontinued – and is currently not intensive enough
- 10% of the land in the region is owned by foreigners – mostly Swedish holiday makers
- The problems associated with attempting to implement a management plan for biodiversity conservation in a region where the main goal of stakeholders is to improve the quality of life
- The management plan is currently too general for use on a Natura 2000 site, and will require modification in the event of designation

Progress

- The project so-far has made use of a consensus building approach, and the small local population has assisted in stakeholder communication allowing meetings in small groups which has proven useful
- The existing management plan has been identified as being over-complicated and over-sized
- The management plan has been edited down so that is more widely understood by the stakeholders, although it seems that the report should be further refined
- The project to-date has received a reasonably positive local response – there is potential for the creation of a local NGO to support the project and assist in its implementation
- Pending the success of stakeholder communication and the formation of an NGO, there is potential to receive support from the Estonian government – but it is too early to gauge if this is a realistic idea
- Potential support from foreign stakeholders has not yet been investigated (*Swedish tourists*)

Case example: Emajogi Suursoo Mire

- This site experiences a high level of commercial logging; there is little information currently available as to the effects of such activities on important species, including the White-tailed Eagle.

Main stakeholders:

- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Landowners
- Hunting clubs and hunters
- Local population
- Tourists and investors in the tourist trade

Relationship with stakeholders:

- Hostile relationship with hunters and hunting clubs – hunters are unwilling to cooperate with management plans. Issues include a management plan initiative to let dead wood litter the forest floor – this is good for nature conservation but provides unwelcome cover for a hunters game
- Tourism is on the increase; this presents financial incentive for activities potentially contradictory to the goals of a conservation management plan
- The relationship with the local population is troubled by the implications of a management plan on the traditional use of the forest. Foresters have grown old forests for timber harvesting which they have been unable to fell due to new environmental protection – the woodsmen are now unemployed and understandably opposed to any management plan

Progress:

- The attendance of stakeholders at a presentation of a draft management plan offered indication of the interest of the stakeholder community
- Concern has been expressed as to the length of the *project period* – it is believed that too little time has been factored in for achieving the co-operation of more determined stakeholders.

11.2: Latvian participant examples

Case example: Adazi military training site

Adazi military training site is a coastal site consisting of wetlands, dry heathland and several mesotrophic lakes. A management plan for this region will attempt to integrate military and recreational use of this site with sustainable conservation objectives, with emphasis placed on hydrological issues.

Other issues: -

- The initial stages of the project have revealed great difficulty in defining the stakeholder groups – much work has to be done in this area before the management plan can progress.
- There has never been a study into the *carrying capacity* of the park.
- Recreation and tourism is a growth market in this region – this is problematic due to the lack of recreational infrastructure.
- Lack of management within the park has had its effects, for example, several of the parks *open* areas have become overgrown – this has displaced recreational users to more sensitive zones of the park.

Main stakeholders: -

- The Ministry of Defence – training (damage by machinery and trampling + noise)
- Recreational users – including: -
- Anglers – club members, individuals, different clubs, different fishing types in different areas – therefore this group has proven difficult to define
- Day-trippers – swimmers, campers, walkers – litter, trampling by foot and by careless use of motor-vehicles + noise
- Municipal police

Relationship with (*and between*) stakeholders: -

- Further definition of stakeholder groups is required to gain a greater understanding of the status of *relationships*.
- The military use the site for training – there are issues of safety for the visiting public as live rounds are used – currently no policy for safety exists, leading to a ‘*wild-west*’ type situation.
- Anglers are unhappy about the increase in recreational use of the park, as this inevitably disturbs their fishing.

Progress: -

- Controlling systems are being developed, including: -
- The initiation of environmental inspections/evaluation
- The controlling of traffic through the involvement of the municipal police
- The beginning of measures to define the location and timing of military training
- Efforts to encourage recreation in less sensitive areas of the park.

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11.3: Lithuanian participant examples

Case example: Metelai Regional Park – ‘Consultation plan for pond turtles’

This is a small (80ha) mosaic wetland site with forested hills, there are relatively few stakeholders for this site (*mostly small scale land-owners*). The management plan was initiated to increase the population of this important European species.

Main stakeholders: -

- Landowners
- Foresters
- Regional population
- Local population
- Ecologists
- Farmers
- NGO’s
- Visitors
- Hunting clubs
- Environmental protection agency
- State drainage service
- Schools

Problems: -

- Lack of economic viability in the region for farming
- Decreasing quality of wetlands
- Shortage of information about financial support for farmers
- Inappropriately high numbers of predators and wildboar

Relationship with stakeholders: -

- The small site and low number of stakeholders allows for a good frequency of one to one meetings with stakeholders
- The media (*press*) has been used positively to develop local knowledge of the project

Progress: -

- Media campaign
- Meetings between stakeholders – informing stakeholders of the potential for financial gain from regional nature, also the possibilities for eco-farming.
- Increased levels of dialogue and information exchange
- The profile of the project has been raised by school trips and pupil involvement in the creation of interpretive material.

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11.4: Polish participant examples

Case example: Czarnodin NP, Oder Delta, Poland

This is a 400ha grassland area, important for bird species including the *Aquatic Warbler*, the *Corncrake* and the *White-tailed Eagle*. The management plan objectives include maintaining and enhancing a biotype-mosaic of wet and dry-lands and the creation of optimal conditions for important European bird species.

Main stakeholders: -

A stakeholder communication plan exists and has identified 5 *key* stakeholder groups – considered the most influential to the project. These stakeholders have been factored into a five part group plan.

The 5 key stakeholder groups: -

- The regional authority
- The local authority
- The maritime office
- The drainage board
- Grazers

Other stakeholders: -

- The local population
- Neighbours
- Universities
- Tourists

Problems at the site: -

- Controlling water levels
- Not enough grazing
- Protected lagoon molluscs
- Legal issues
- Diversity and scale (*the peninsular, the lagoon and the wider maritime area*)

Relationship with (*key*) stakeholders: -

The regional authority (*powerful decision makers*)

Experience has shown that it is important to keep up-to-date with this group; maintaining dialogue is very important to maintain the working relationship.

The local authority (*influential decision makers*)

A reasonably good relationship exists with this public body, the local authority appreciates the value of the reserve for the financial contribution that it makes to the municipality through tourism and special events.

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The maritime office (*power to influence water levels*)

High maintenance stakeholders, demanding frequent meetings and the reiteration of messages (*meet and repeat*).

The drainage board (*control over inland water levels*)

An old establishment with traditional working methods - has proven difficult influence. Experience has also shown that this group does not like to have the word *education* pointed in its direction.

Grazers (*their co-operation required to maintain habitats*)

The relationship with grazers is maintained through *meet and repeat*, whilst financial incentives and the provision of land for grazing help ease tensions.

Progress: -

- Differing levels of progress are evident among the various stakeholder groups. For this reason it has been decided that bringing together the stakeholder groups for meetings at this stage, is inappropriate – potentially damaging forward progress to date.
- Progress towards increased grazing has to be balanced with the control of lagoon water levels – maintaining a favourable brackish water environment for protected mollusc species.
- Lagoon management plans attempt to find common ground with the maritime office, which manages the coastline, rather than the open sea.

11.5: Russian participant examples

Case example: General stakeholder involvement

‘Momentum building’

- A momentum building approach is suggested a means to gather support and cooperation for management plans.
- A stakeholder involvement initiative often begins on a very small scale; key stakeholders are identified, then met on a one-to-one basis.
- The support gained during these meetings (*several meetings with same individuals*) is followed up with communication media, including leaflets and targeted letters etc.
- The use of communication media to *inform* and *activate* a wider audience allows for the next stage – group meetings.
- Group meetings attempt to gather the wider stakeholder collective who are hopefully already informed as to the project (*due to contact with key influential stakeholders and the follow-up communicative material*). This process is described as ‘*softening-up*’ – seeking to inform the stakeholder collective about a management plan before meeting with their majority.

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12: Points for Consideration

Identifying stakeholder target groups

- Which groups will help you solve the problem?
- Identification of influential stakeholders gives you a focus for communication.
- Are the groups similarly motivated... are they interested in what you want?
- Some stakeholders might have objectives that suit the goals of the management plan; failure to observe the stakeholder collective can result in missed opportunities for co-operation.
- Understanding the motivation behind stakeholder actions is important to

improve the efficiency and positive output of stakeholder communication. Upon the identification of stakeholder issues and groups, the management plan can apply targeted response to specific issues or problems, this is more efficient than guesswork.

- How much do they know?
- Begin by discovering their knowledge – this provides a base from which to work. Knowledge is rarely evenly distributed; some stakeholders will need to *catch-up*.
- What is the source of their knowledge? The potential for misinformation can be limited if the source/s of stakeholder is/are knowledge is identified. It is likely that the source is also a stakeholder – if this source is providing information damaging to the project, this represents a weak point in the communication plan.
- How do they feel about the situation?
- Take stakeholders seriously – *you want them to take you seriously*.
- What are their beliefs/values?
- Traditional?
- Unconventional?

Can the stakeholders be 'grouped' based on this knowledge? Would grouping them be beneficial to the project?

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What to take away

During the final session, participants were invited to state the items covered in the workshop that they felt would be most useful for their future management planning work; the following is a list of those points: -

- The need for an awareness of the priorities of stakeholders
- How to build on relationships with stakeholders, taking into account their attitudes and motivations
- The apparent flexibility of stakeholders (*previous belief that they could not be co-operated with to a great extent*)
- The importance of identifying problems, and the significance of this for the effectiveness of a management plan to reduce said problem efficiently
- Practical examples - illustrated the similarities between cases – reassuring and representative of the ability to make positive results with management plans
- Choice of words used when communicating with stakeholders – not previously given much consideration in the management plan
- Being serious, but not *too* serious (*of course depending on the circumstance!*)

For the future...

During the final session, participants were also invited to state any items that they would like to be covered in future workshops; the following is a list of these points: -

- How to optimise the efficiency/cost effectiveness etc. of the project
- More (*and more varied*) examples of conflict – and what we can learn from them
- More (*and more varied*) examples of success – and what we can learn from them
- Examples of stakeholder co-operation – and what we can learn from them
- More work on the political implications and restrictions influencing management planning and stakeholder relationships
- Development of a more structuralised way of classifying stakeholders

- How to maintain the continuity of a project – not losing direction and having focus
- NGO <> GO relationships
- How to make the best use of the media

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Appendix A

Note:

This third Darwin workshop occurred before follow-up country visits could take place, therefore participant mission statements remain unaltered from the previous report (*Darwin workshop 2: Wicken Fen, UK – 12th-16th June 2002*).

The mission statements describe planning and progress towards the creation of management plans. Mission reports are completed following visits to partner countries by the *UK facilitators*.

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Appendix A

Building capacity in Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in Baltic States, Poland & Russia

Mission Report

ESTONIA

Name of Project Team member

Michael Shepherd (SNH)

Paul Brooks

Country visited

Estonia

Dates of Mission: 27 April – 4 May

Purposes of

Mission

- Make contact with potential new participants in the Darwin project.
- Identify new site for management plan development.

Participants and other contributors

Kaja Peterson: Nature Management Programme Director, Swedish Environmental Institute Tallin Centre, Estonia Institute for Sustainable Development.

Veljo Volke: Chairman of Saaremaa Bird Club/potential participant

Marika Kose: LIFE Nature Project Manager/potential participant

Mati Kose: Estonian Ornithological Society/potential participant

Kadri Moller: Senior Officer, Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation Department.

Merit Otsus: Senior Officer, Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation Department.

Main activities

carried out during

the Mission

Meeting in Tallin with our intermediary Kaja Peterson; discussed objectives of the visit and finalised logistics.

Site visit to Tagamoisa Peninsular potential Special Protection Area (pSPA) on the island of Saaremaa; met with Veljo Volke on site and discussed issues relating to the management plan he is currently involved in preparing for the pSPA, as part of the Dutch Government MATRA-SPA project.

Site visit to Rannametsa-Soometsa nature reserve/pSPA nr Haademeeste; met with Marika Kose and Mati Kose on site and discussed site management issues and progress with the development of a management plan they are preparing for the pSPA as part of a LIFE Nature project. Meeting in Tallin with Kadri Muller and Merit Otsus from the Estonian Government's Nature Conservation Department to explain the objectives of the Darwin project and inform them of the outcome of our visit.

Main results

accomplished

Signed up two new participants to the Darwin project, Veljo Volke and Marika Kose. Both agreed to attend the second UK workshop at Wicken Fen in June. Mati Kose also expressed a desire to become involved in the project but was unable to make the forthcoming workshop because of other commitments.

Identified Rannametsa-Soometsa pSPA as a suitable site to act as a focus for management plan development. Developed preliminary ideas for management of reedswamp habitat at Rannametsa-Soometsa pSPA, through restoring system of water level control on the site of a disused fish farm. Liaised with Government officials, raising awareness of the Darwin project and informing them of our findings and recommendations from the visit.

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Recommendations to Darwin Team

Veljo Volke, Marika Kose and Mati Kose should be invited to participate in the Darwin project. They are currently working on site management plans in relative isolation, and so should benefit from the opportunities afforded by the Darwin project for interaction with UK staff and other participants from Central & Eastern Europe. The involvement of these individuals would also result in collaboration between the MATRA-SPA project, LIFE Nature project and the Darwin project. Rannametsa-Soometsa pSPA should be the primary site on which to focus our efforts in developing a management plan. The site contains wetland habitats with significant management issues to address eg. raised bog, coastal grasslands and reedswamp. Marika Kose has the security of LIFE funding covering a similar period as the Darwin project, which will enable her to advance work on the management plan between UK workshops.

The timetable for completion of the management plan for Tagamoisa Peninsular pSPA has a much tighter deadline (November 2002) but we could nonetheless try and assist with this plan where possible.

Further work to be carried out before next workshop

Provide Veljo Volke and Marika Kose with additional background information about the Darwin project and arrange their travel to the next workshop.

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DARWIN INITIATIVE

Building capacity in Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in Baltic States, Poland & Russia

Mission Report

LATVIA

Name of Project Team member:

Adrian Colston (NT)

Country visited:

Latvia

Dates of Mission: 25th May - 31st May

Purposes of Mission Familiarisation with the three sites and their employees involved with the Darwin initiative.

Participants and other contributors

26th May - Adaxi Military Training Area - accompanied by Ivars Kabucis of the Latvian Fund for Nature

27th - 29th May Kemer National Park - accompanied by Janis Kuze of Kemer National Park

29th-30th Lake Pape - accompanied by Valdimarts Slaukstins of WWF

Main activities carried out during the Mission

Detailed visits to all three sites, this enabled the main ecological interest to be identified and discussed. This was followed then by discussions regarding the main nature conservation management issues and problems along with the

proposed solutions

**Main results
accomplished**

Good understanding of the three sites, management issues and problems along with discussion re. Progress regarding production of Management Plans also discussed.

**Recommendations to
Darwin Team**

All three projects have high levels of ecological expertise and a good understanding of the issues and problems. Issues relating to visitor management and stakeholder involvement less well developed.

**Further work to be
carried out before next
workshop**

Nothing identified

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DARWIN INITIATIVE

Building capacity in Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in Baltic States, Poland & Russia

Mission Report

LITHUANIA

Notes from Lithuanian visit – May 2002-06-12

Personal notes of Mr. Mike Deegan (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust) on his visit to Lithuania and meetings with Darius Mr. Darius Stoncius and Mr. Arunas Pranaitas.

Site with management input from Lithuanian Fund for Nature – north of Kaunas

Site Description: Island in artificial lake – scrub controlled and nettles cut.

Primary feature: Breeding black headed gulls

Secondary feature: Associated species – terns & some waders. Potential for more numbers

Management Issues:

Want to maintain/increase breeding population and associated species. Management has shown that reducing the vegetation has increased the vegetation. Unfortunately, the density of birds and droppings encourages dense growth of nettles that possibly reduces the potential for breeding pairs.

Management Options:

Re-profiling: The island has a concave profile. This could be mechanically re-profiled to lower & level the island. The remaining soil could be either re-sown or covered with gravel (nettles might still be a future problem).

Following a bathometric survey, the soil could be re-profiled around the edge of the island to create emergent vegetation and muddy areas for waders. This would be best carried out in late-summer/autumn.

Burning: Could be regularly burnt at end of each autumn or in early spring to remove any rank vegetation. This would require a skilled and controlled operation.

Chemicals: A number of approved pesticides (ie. asulox or glyphosate) could be used to control nettles. Not a long-term solution and would be best carried out in conjunction with another option such as grazing. Would be best option for controlling scrub.

Grazing: Although access is limited and the area is small, this is the optimal long-term management regime. Browsing stock such as goats (or a hardy breed of sheep) would graze off nettles and any re-growth from the scrub.

The animals could be used in early spring, before the gulls breed, to eat the nettles and scrub growth when they are young and tender. They could then be re-introduced in mid-summer to control any subsequent re-growth. A willing

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grazier/farmer would have to be found, but the animals would not require

tethering and would perform a sustainable Management role.

Cutting: As long as you have adequate resources/volunteers, continued manual cutting is a reasonable short-term option. However, this work is laborious and dependant on the availability & good-will of volunteers.

Information required by Darius:

- Examples of English Biodiversity Action Plans
- Land Acquisition Strategies - to buy or not to buy nature reserves!
- Evidence of the ecological and economic benefits of 'larger' biodiversity areas – including facts and figures.
- Advice/support on marketing and fundraising issues – including industries, government, membership, sponsorship, profile/image.
- Veteran trees – guidelines for foresters on managing deadwood/saproxyllic species.

Relevant conservation and rural issues noted:

- Rural communities suspicious of formal projects/advice – former collectivism
- People sick of words and suspicious of new initiatives/incentives – 'empty drumming'
- Aging rural pop. Apathy of older generation – legacy of soviet regime
- Low standard of living – environmental issues are not a high priority
- Many people gone back to farming small plots
- Large expanses of abandoned agricultural land/collective farms. Problems – loss of traditional grassland habitats/rural traditions. Also opportunities for encouraging sensitive management or even land acquisition where necessary.
- No extensive use of fencing
- Mainly dairy cattle – no herds, individually tethered. Some horses. Lack of appropriate grazing stock (ie.beef cattle) – never saw any sheep!
- Cattle only have 7 months grazing because of climate
- Potential threat from future western farmers? – but land very fragmented ownership. Also changes from EU membership/CAP
- Rural communities/villages – no gentrification/commuters/retirement
- Woodlands – no ride management. High forest structures, but remarkably good ground flora. More mature trees (esp. veteran oaks) than expected
- Forestry currently a real threat - insensitive management of 'natural' stands and considerable encroachment onto other semi-natural habitats.
- Lithuanian Fund for Nature – small NGO and thinnly spread. Greatly under resourced and tending to be funding/project-led.
- Excellent ecologists within organisations (ie. Darius and Arunas) but lack of support and management/implementation infra-structure.

Zuvintas

- Strict nature reserve – no intervention
- Strong influence from academics/scientists prevails
- Attempt to maintain a natural system in an unnatural environment
- Problems of lack of management – excessive succession, water pollution, predators – leading to declines in key habitats and species.
- Limited intervention would be more appropriate and greater input from those with practical management knowledge and experience.
- Wonderful surrounding meadows outside nature reserve – rank and with scrub encroachment – habitat loss and species change - <aquatic warblers. Enormous potential to utilise local farmers/community to cut or farm – this would sustainability maintain the habitat, rural traditions and create valuable local employment

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Community work already done by Arunas

- Leaflets and press releases asking for information on pond turtle sites
- Superb education centre

- Work with schools/follow-up

UNDP – UN Development Programme

- Funded by the global env facility (Turkey, Poland & Lithuania)
- Environmental projects with strong community factor
- 50% funding for projects, 25% in kind, 25% money from any other source
- 1-3 years with a very quick turn-around (2-3 months)
- Only NGO's, but can collaborate with govt orgs
- VAT money back to NGO's for capacity building
- 3 focus areas:
 - i. Biodiversity for protection
 - ii. Internal waters/pollution prevention
 - iii. Climate change

Management planning seminar

Toolkit – possibly to be adopted as national guidelines. Lithuanian Fund for Nature (Darius) has produced a booklet.

My talk outlined broad recommended structure. Makes clear management policy, the managers role and the resources/work required. Key principals to follow:-

- i. Continuity
- ii. Review
- iii. Consultation/consensus
- iv. Flexibility
- v. Keep it simple

Management Plan for Pond Terrapins

Arunas has completed the plan for this species, using the toolkit format and ideas established in the first workshop. It should, however, be possible to further develop the plan and make possible amendments over the course of the project.

Meeting with G. Jodinkas, Senior Specialist – Min. Of Env:

- Lithuania has a Biodiversity Action Plan (1998), but no real mechanism for implementation. Now up for renewal.
- Inadequate resources (people and funding) to implement plan.
- EU membership will be a double-edged sword – beneficial grants and legislation, but more intensive agriculture.
- Good working relationship with NGO's and regional parks. However, municipality authorities are not particularly progressive or amenable.

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Challenges

- Maintain the landscape, culture and biodiversity, whilst raising the standard of living.
- Utilising EU membership to enhance biodiversity and not destroy countryside (ie. silage)
- Important to prioritise and establish sustainable future structures and processes for NGO's and govt organisations
- Utilising international funds such as the UNDP

My possible future input

- Further support in developing Man Plans – maintaining plan structures, focus, targets and key principals
- Funding/marketing opportunities
- Access/community initiatives

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DARWIN INITIATIVE

Building capacity in Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in Baltic States, Poland & Russia

Mission Report

RUSSIA

Name of Expert:

Dr T J Bines (EN)

Country visited:

Russia

Dates of Mission: 15 April to 18 April 2002

Purposes of

Mission

See attached objectives and programme.

**Participants and
other contributors**

Dr Yuri Bouivolov, Dr Dmitry Katz, Dr Alexander Gorbunov, Dr Natalia Vinogradova, Dr Victor Popov, Lev Emel'yanov, Dr Nicolai Sobolov, Dr Armen Grigorian, Dr Alexey Zimenko, Jonnathan Rudge (consultant RHS Associates) and other staff of the Biodiversity Conservation Centre in Moscow.

**Main activities
carried out during
the Mission**

1. In depth comparison of the current Russian management planning system with the Eurosite Toolkit and identification of differences.

2. Consideration of :

- management planning differences and identification of way forward and publication position
- staff training and adoption requirements.
- development of normative document and adoption of management planning system within the Russian Federal system for National Parks and Zapovedniks following adoption of the Management Strategy for National Parks.
- auditing and reporting requirements to assess quality, fitness for purpose, common standards, and assessment of progress in delivery.
- Discussion with BCC about joining Eurosite.
- Development of new projects to cover workshop findings and extend the work into effective change.

**Main results
accomplished**

Better understanding of the Eurosite Management Planning Toolkit and the opportunities for usage. Clarification of the way forward to achieve legislative adoption at a national level.

**Recommendations
to Darwin Team**

- Work at the next workshop for the Russian contingent needs to concentrate on producing clear outputs including: a. Normative documentation. b. Audit methodology.

**Further work to be
carried out before
next workshop**

- Preparation by BCC (Yuri Bouivolov leading) of drafts of the way forward for adoption of management planning by the Ministry of Natural Resources.
- Consideration of auditing methodology suitable for National Parks and Zapovedniks.

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Appendix B

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