

**East of England Biodiversity Forum Meeting Minutes 3 July 2012
Abberton Reservoir Visitors Centre**

<p>Present</p> <p>Steve Scott (chair)~Forestry Commission Rebecca Banks ~ Essex LBAP Mark Iley ~ Essex LBAP Catherine Wyatt ~ Herts LBAP Catherine Weightman ~ Natural England John Sharpe ~ RSPB Kim Wallis ~ Essex and Suffolk Water Dominic Coath ~ Environment Agency Tony Chadwick ~ Woodland Trust Eve Dewsnap ~ National Trust Gemma Hallam ~ Environment Bank Deb Howard ~ Essex Wildlife Trust (minute taker)</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Andrea Kelly ~ Broads Authority Liz Anderson ~ Central Bedfordshire Council(algae rep) Henry Bexley ~ National Trust Stuart Warrington ~ National Trust Simon Odell ~ Landscape East Martin Horlock ~ LRC rep Ben Hammond ~ BTCV Gen Broad ~ Suffolk LBAP Laura Kitson ~ Central Bedfordshire Council Mike Drew ~ Anglian Water David Hooton ~ Deer Initiative Haidee Bishop ~ Norfolk LBAP</p>
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	Action
<p>Minutes from the last meeting Held on 25 November 2011 were agreed as correct</p>	
<p>Matters arising and action points from previous meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Scott confirmed that he sent a letter of support from the EEBF to the NIA applicants • Mark Iley gave an update of the secretariat; he informed the forum that £11807.00 remains unspent. £180 paid for the website hosting. Mark asked the forum to email any requests for funding outlining the idea or project. The money is in a restricted fund and will be rolled over at the end of the financial year. 	
<p>Abberton Reservoir Project Kim Wallis from Essex and Suffolk Water gave a presentation (powerpoint attached)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim explained that the reservoir was originally built in the 1930's, it has 16km of shoreline and provides water to 1.7 million people • The original concrete banks have been removed and a 1 in 3 slope changed to a 1 in 15 slope • A 5 year management plan for after completion has been put in place • The reservoir is not used for fishing, sailing etc as it would have a detrimental effect on the birds. However, bridleways, cycle routes and pathways are planned. 	

Local Nature Partnership (LNP) progress

Update from LNPs

- **Catherine Wyatt** explained that Herts have submitted their LNP bid on 6.6.12 and will hear from DEFRA by the end of July. A stakeholder event took place at the end of February with a county focus and a Local Economic Partnership (LEP) presentation. Leaders of East Herts attended. Terms of reference have been completed and endorsed by Hertfordshire sustainability forum. There has been a Steering Group meeting however, the meeting proved to be too large as everyone was invited to attend. It is hoped that a more focussed Steering Group will be formed. A link has been established with NHS Herts, but not ready to speak to private companies and currently have no response from the Health and Wellbeing Boards. Catherine feels it is a positive move so far.
- **Mark Iley** informed the forum that a team from EWT, Essex County Council (ECC) and Essex Biodiversity Project (EBP) had decided not to take the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) forward. The £22,500 funding was to be used by end of June and the bid was time consuming and due to lack of interest from Kent and East Sussex and restructuring at ECC, it was felt that time would be best spent on other priorities. The money was returned. Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) and EBP have offered to work in partnership with the Thames Estuary LNP if required. EBP are already engaged and working with partners without LNP status.
- **Suffolk/Norfolk LNP brief update as Gen Broad unable to attend** 'The Springboard event at Ickworth House in May went really well with over 60 participants including strengthening sectors such as health; we have good support from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership; and we applied for full LNP status from Defra in early June. New Anglia launched their Green Economy Pathfinder manifesto to demonstrate how the economy can benefit from a healthy environment, see EADT article http://www.eadt.co.uk/business/suffolk_new_anglia_lep_to_unveil_green_economy_pathfinder_manifesto_1_1404051
The New Anglia website is at <http://www.newanglia.co.uk/>
- **Catherine Weightman** gave LNP updates for:
 - Bedfordshire** have lost their LBAP officer so they are focussing on their GI consortium, they have had workshops on health, planning and an academic workshop at Cranfield University and they are building on what they have already achieved. Jon Balaam is currently the chair but they are hoping to get a new chair.
 - Northants** working with existing leadership group.
 - Greater Cambridgeshire** has had an impressive event which went well and is looking to recruit corporate sponsors. There was a good speech from a health official but unfortunately they do not capacity to get involved.
 - Lincolnshire** are building on their LBAP partnership with steady progress and they have also had engagement with their LEP

Update from Nature Improvement Area's (NIA)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Thames Marshes NIA is mainly in Kent with a small area of South Essex. John Meehan is leading the NIA on the Essex side and the biodiversity offsetting pilot seems to be a major part of the Essex offer to the NIA. • MI said that he has offered to help out with NIA work taking place and is catchment pilot lead for the River Mardyke which lies within the NIA in South Essex. • The Nene are advertising 3 additional posts, are putting a quarterly monitoring programme in place – requirement of all NIAs. They are in partnership with the County Council, Woodland Trust, Environment Agency and Natural England is involved with the management of the Agri environment schemes. • There are 8 failed NIA's but as business plans have already been put together and some projects with still proceed, it is believed that £30,000 per year has been offered to them for the next 3 years to carry out some of the work. 	
<p>WFD in Essex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MI explained that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) work had several strands all funded by the Environment Agency (EA). The work includes Pennywort removal, identifying sites suitable for woody debris and crayfish ARC site work. He explained that a team from Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Essex Biodiversity Project (EBP) have been working with Mike Neale and Matt Butcher from the EA on River walkover surveys on the Pant Chelmer and Ter. Surveys of 70km of rivers in 500m sections have already been completed; the baseline data was needed to identify future projects to underpin a CRF bid that has been submitted for the work (the bid can only be applied for by a charitable organisation). Mark agreed to send Dominic Coath the new Principal Officer-Biodiversity for the EA a copy of the report. Work is currently being mapped on GIS. 9 major sites have been identified for significant work, these are projects that can be delivered, there are also smaller scale projects that will connect up. The bid is for just under £500,000. There are 12 bids in the region, the bid is in the top 4 with strong support from the EA, expected to hear mid-July. On the whole response from landowners has been positive and there is a need to keep in contact with supportive landowners to carry out these potential projects. FWAG are involved and it is hoped that some farmers will be keen to monitor their own phosphate levels. There will be more walkover surveys taking place on the River Crouch and Mardyke later this year. The CRF work could take 3 years to complete and extra staff may be needed, casual staff has been used to carry out some of the walkover surveys. RB said that there were woody debris projects on the Roman River and the River Colne. MI told the forum about liaising with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and will be running training sessions for other Wildlife Trusts and relevant partners. 	<p>MI</p>
<p>Fens for Future Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catherine Weightman showed the forum a large map of 400,000 hectare Fens for Future Partnership project which covers the Fens NCA, stretching 	

<p>from Lincoln to almost Cambridge. The project was too large to be an NIA. A 180 page report has just been published with a strategic plan. There are buffers and waterways links, but no aspirations to work directly into the Wash as there are already lots of projects taking place there. A Biodiversity audit has created c.1 million records of 8459 species at Wicken Fen alone. There will be workshops taking place for reserve managers and stakeholders.. EA and NE mainly have contributed staff time to complete the report. A project officer is needed.</p>	
<p>Gemma Hallam from Environment Bank gave a presentation on the Bio-offsetting pilot in Essex (see attached powerpoint)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot scheme is intended to find pitfalls • It is a long term plan to reverse current decline • Working with planners for like for like trading for compensation close to an intended site. • At present there is no legal obligation on developers it is purely voluntary • On site mitigation would still have to take place • There still unspent Section 106 money which could be used by councils to ensure it is spent on Biodiversity • Environment Bank currently have land available in Essex if you have potential land that you would like to register please email Gemma. It must not be already be protected, currently there is no cost to register sites. 	
<p>Independent Panel on Forestry and Targeted grants for woodland birds by Steve Scott</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Scott informed the EEBF that Woodland creation grants have been increased to a maximum of £4800/ha. If the application is made, trees planted and grant paid before December 2013 there would be annual payment for up to 15 years also available. Steve encouraged the group to put in Woodland creation bids; it is not means tested as long as they are not state funded. • The Independent Panel on Forestry report will be issued on 4 July, Steve will circulate to the EEBF when it becomes available. • There will be a government response in January 2013. • Steve Scott gave a Woodland Birds Grants presentation (see attached presentation) 	<p>SS</p>
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catherine Weightman expressed disappointment regarding SITA no longer offering 3 year projects. All funding will now be for 1 year only. This will rule out larger projects. • Catherine Weightman also informed the EEBF that there is still no cover for Michelle Russell's position at NE and an external advert will be circulated by Catherine when available. • Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) has been revamped and there 	

will be workshops available for partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brecks Partnership and Ouse Washes have submitted Landscape Partnership bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund.	
Date of next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thursday 11 October 2012• Dates for 2013 meetings to be circulated	
The meeting closed at 13.15 p.m. followed by lunch and a guided site visit around Abberton Reservoir Visitors Centre and Reserve	