

Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership

Communications Plan

July 2008 - March 2011

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Cheshire region
**Biodiversity
Partnership**

www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk

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1. Introduction

The Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership (CrBP) is responsible for coordinating the Cheshire region Biodiversity Action Plan (CrBAP) and has, since 2006, directed its work priorities through a Business and Communications Plan. Actions aimed at communicating the work of the group to its partners were integral to that plan.

A new Memorandum of Agreement between Natural England (NE) and the CrBP came into being in 2008 and it includes a new requirement for a separate communications plan. The purpose of this document is to meet that requirement and provide a specific focus for communication around the CrBAP for the next three years.

2. Objectives and Vision

A separate communications plan will emphasise the importance of good communications to the success of the CrBAP. The CrBP needs to communicate its work effectively to all audiences. Good communication is key for the future of the Partnership. The CrBP must promote its work for it to be seen as being valuable and gain support from partners, the public and funding bodies.

The objectives of the communications plan are to:

- Raise awareness of the CrBAP and threats to biodiversity to key audiences within the Cheshire region;
- To gain funding and support for the CrBAP;
- Ensure the CrBAP plays a full part within the broader UK BAP framework;
- Keep partners informed of CrBAP work;
- Improve representation on the CrBP from all sectors;
- Fulfil the CrBAP's reporting requirements.

The Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership's vision is a place where biodiversity flourishes; where everybody helps to nurture and enhance our biodiversity; and where biodiversity is a natural consideration in policies and in society as a whole.

In order for the CrBP to meet these objectives and achieve its vision, we need to be clear about our target audiences, the messages to be delivered and the tools we use to do this.

3. Audiences

The CrBP is a very broad and dynamic partnership of organisations and individuals with specialist skills concerned with conserving biodiversity in the Cheshire region. However the local community needs to be an integral part of this plan and therefore we will pay particular attention to them. For the purposes of this plan we have identified clear target audiences. The target audiences are:

- General public and local communities;
- Local Authorities;
- Local Businesses;
- CrBP BAP local and regional framework partners;

- CrBP funding partners;
- CrBP core partners;
- CrBP wider partners.

The BAP framework partners are those involved in the BAP framework and process at national and wider regional levels e.g. the North West Biodiversity Forum, the England Biodiversity Group and the UK Biodiversity Partnership.

The CrBP funding and core partners are described in more detail within the *Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership Business Plan 2009 – 2011*. Funding partners are those that provide direct financial support to the CrBAP, for example Natural England and the Environment Agency (DEFRA), Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Cheshire East Council. Core partners refer to those partners that have a relatively close association with the CrBAP and whose core business directly relates to the conservation of biodiversity in the Cheshire region. These include organisations such as rECOrd and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. Wider partners are organisations that associate with the CrBAP but whose core business is not directly related to the conservation of biodiversity. Examples include United Utilities, Liverpool John Moore’s University and Cheshire Fire Authority.

The local community are a crucial target audience which must be reached in order to communicate the work and vision of the partnership. Despite the original good intentions for the UK BAP framework to be inclusive and foster a ‘broad constituency’, a 2007 Gallup poll uncovered some telling attitudes towards biodiversity in the UK (and the rest of Europe).¹ For example, when asked how well informed they felt about biodiversity loss, a staggering 63% of UK citizens felt that they were not well enough informed. It is still not uncommon – 15 years after the BAP process started – to be asked by people of all ages and backgrounds “*What does biodiversity mean?*” If we fail to communicate our concerns, vision and plans to the people that live and work in Cheshire, then the CrBP will be seen to be of little value.

4. Messages

At the most basic level, it is necessary to communicate why the CrBP and the CrBAP is needed. It is crucial to communicate these messages to audiences that are not already directly involved in the business of conserving biodiversity. Our messages are:

- Explain role of CrBP and purpose of CrBAP
- To explain why Cheshire region’s biodiversity is important
- Describe the threats to Cheshire region’s biodiversity.

As well as delivering these messages, we must communicate the, delivery and progress of the CrBAP to the target audiences. To do this we will:

- ‘Advertise’ the targets and proposed actions of the CrBAP to ensure that they are understood and ‘owned’ by relevant partners;
- Report successes against the HAPs and SAPs;
- Report failures against the HAPs and SAPs;
- Invite opinions and assistance with the future development of the BAP.

¹ Flash Eurobarometer series #219: Attitudes of Europeans towards the issue of biodiversity.

5. Delivery mechanisms

The CrBP has made good use of the following methods of communication:

- CrBP website;
- Bi-annual newsletter;
- Partnership conferences and events;
- Regular reporting to funding partners;
- Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS);
- Media (e.g. local press and radio);
- Partner communication channels;
- Representation.

5.1 CrBP Website

The CrBP website is hosted by the local records centre under a service level agreement and maintained by the Cheshire region Biodiversity Manager. The website was reviewed and re-developed in 2007. The website is updated monthly.

5.2 Bi-annual Newsletter

The CrBP produces a bi-annual newsletter. The first edition was December 2008 which was warmly received as a communication tool between partners. The next step for the newsletter is to encourage partners to circulate it to a wider audience.

5.3 Partnership Conferences and Events

The CrBP encourages the full partnership to come together once a year alternating between a big conference and a smaller event. At a smaller event the full partnership are invited. This provides a useful tool to re-connect partners who may not necessarily communicate during their normal work hours. The last event was held in March 2009 and based upon 'The Purpose of the Partnership'. Lack of communication was highlighted as one of the barriers to the CrBP working effectively. Actions suggested to overcome the communications barrier included workshops on specific topics and implementing the communications plan.

The larger conferences encourage the full partnership to come together as well as a much wider audience to hear about biodiversity issues.

5.4 Regular Reporting to Funding Partners

As part of Service Level Agreements between the CrBP and its funding partners, regular reports are provided to the funding partners. These highlight the work done by the CrBP and encourage funding partners to see the value of the CrBP.

5.5 Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)

BARS has so far been used to fulfil the obligations of the 2005 and 2008 UK BAP reporting rounds. Increasingly the system has been used by the CrBP to record progress also. The updating of BARS is limited by the time partners have to input data. However, through encouragement and help from the Cheshire region Biodiversity Manager the system is becoming better informed of the work of the

CrBP. Further data inputting still needs to be done, on top of the regular reporting of current actions, to fully recognise the work of the CrBP.

5.6 Media

Opportunities to use local media to highlight the work of the CrBP have been used. These range from articles in newspapers to publications in magazines such as Cheshire Life. Press releases have mainly gone through the communications team of Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Opportunities to use the communications team of other partners need to be explored.

5.7 Partner Communication Channels

There is considerable potential to use the communications channels of the CrBP partners to deliver some key messages to target audiences. Methods available include partners own publications, partners press releases and leaflet publications from projects. These are currently under utilised.

5.8 Representation

Partners representing the value of the work of the CrBP at events and meetings is becoming an increasingly important tool if the objectives and vision of the CrBP are to be achieved. This will help to influence and persuade local politicians and leaders of the benefit of the UKBAP and the CrBP.

6. Delivery

This table cross references each of the main types of message that we want to communicate against the most useful delivery mechanisms. It also identifies which are the target audiences for each combination of message and delivery mechanism.

		Message to communicate					
		Explain Importance	Describe threats	Advertise CrBAP	Successes	Failures	Enlist support
Delivery mechanism	CrBP Website	Public; Wider	Public; Wider	Core; Wider; Public; Funding	Core; Wider; Public		Funding, Core, Wider; Public
	Bi-annual Newsletter	Wider; Funding; Business	Wider; Public; Business	Core; Wider; Public; Funding	Core; Wider; Funding; Business		Core, Wider; Business
	CrBP Conference and Events	Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP	Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP	Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP	Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP		Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP
	Regular reports			BAP; Funding	BAP; Funding	BAP; Funding	Funding
	BARS			Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP	Wider; Core; Public; Business; LA; BAP	BAP; Funding	Business; Public
	Media	Public; Wider	Public; Wider	Wider; Public; Business; LA	Core; Wider; Public; LA; Business		Core; Wider; Funding; LA; Business
	Partner Communication Channels	Public; Wider; Core	Public; Wider; Core	Wider; Core; Public	Wider; Public, Funding		Funding, Core, Wider; Business; LA
	Representation	Core; Wider; LA; Business; Public; BAP; Funding	Core; Wider; LA; Business; Public; BAP; Funding	Core; Wider; LA; Business; Public; BAP; Funding	Core; Wider; LA; Business; Public; BAP; Funding		Core; Wider; LA; Business; Public; BAP; Funding

The message types and delivery mechanism are expanded within the text of this communication plan. The shorthand for the target audiences is explained below:

BAP = BAP framework partners; **Funding** = CrBP funding partners; **Core** = CrBP core partners; **Wider** = CrBP wider partners; **Public** = members of the public and local communities; **LA** = Local Authorities; **Business** = Local Businesses.

The delivery table indicates how each of the broad types of messages that we need to communicate are best delivered and identifies the target audience for each.

The detail regarding delivery of the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership Communications Plan is contained within the attached Delivery Matrix under the linkage of communications and is a living document which both informs and directs the work of the CrBP.

This document is regularly reviewed, monitored quarterly at the Steering Group meetings and reported on bi-annually to DEFRA.

7. Monitoring and Review Procedure

The CrBP Steering Group meets quarterly (April, July, October, January) whilst the Executive Group meets when necessary. Further information on the CrBP Steering Group and Executive Group can be found in the *Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership Business Plan 2008 – 2011*. The Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership Communications Plan together with the Delivery Matrix are tabled for update at each meeting of the Steering Group and reviewed annually by the Steering Group.

8. Contact Information

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