



## BRINGING BUGS BACK TO LIFE: action for threatened invertebrates

LIFE Platform meeting on invertebrates

18th-19th September 2018, STEP Scotland Business Enterprise, Stirling, Scotland

### SUMMARY FOR POLICY MAKERS

#### *General Messages*

- Our delegates felt it was important to get 'SPECIES' back into the heart of LIFE NATURE projects, there was a general agreement that the proposals (and therefore the evaluation process) focussed too much on externalities such as ecosystem services and green procurement.
- The invertebrate specialists often belong to small organisations or are individuals. They see LIFE as too risky as they are too small to provide the match funding.
- Assessment of habitat quality should also have a component of invertebrate monitoring either using indicator species or functional groups and not just plant assemblages.

#### *Project Opportunities*

- Invertebrate projects should focus on habitat quality for the targeted species and on habitat connectivity in specific cases. In addition these projects should always focus on improving public perception of invertebrates and communicate the importance of invertebrates for biodiversity and in terms of their functional role (e.g. pollination).
- Encourage habitat-based projects to include invertebrates possibly as indicator species, '*intelligent proxies*', to show short term gains and long term monitoring. Habitat-based projects often provide benefits to invertebrates (not necessarily in the short term) so we should find ways to improve how we report invertebrate content in all our LIFE projects.
- Encourage projects to include species specialists on project Steering Groups to ensure there is a voice to champion species interests, particularly for taxa easily ignored such as invertebrates and lower plants.
- Citizen science focused projects offer a good opportunity to engage more stakeholders in invertebrate conservation, while increasing the knowledge on invertebrate distribution and habitat at the same time.
- The LIFE programme and national focus points should raise awareness of other available strands in the LIFE programme which could also benefit invertebrate conservation. Such as a GIE projects relating to awareness raising campaigns regarding the important role of invertebrates.
- The EU Pollinators Initiative represents an important opportunity for future LIFE projects to focus on pollinators as a theme. This could be included in the MAWP. Is there a possible role for the Council of Europe's European Strategy for Conservation of Invertebrates?
- Projects should move away from focus on a key species towards functional groups. For example:

- Pollinators/recyclers – this would also link across to other LIFE strands more effectively and lends itself to popularisation and better public awareness of invertebrates as enablers.
- Many LIFE Nature projects targeting habitat types or area-measures for species could include specific actions targeted towards management for invertebrate habitats to increase abundance and diversity. An *'umbrella approach'* to add value and link invertebrates to key messages that the public can buy into more easily i.e. promoting invertebrates as a food source for birds.
- Communication is key to supporting invertebrates as essential enablers, but dissemination actions can be an afterthought in the development of projects (sometimes copy and paste from other proposals). The discussion focused around how to make invertebrate conservation more attractive to the wider public. Shared examples included an art exhibition of up-close invertebrate photography, wider use of common names, and development of apps (like Pokemon-Go for invertebrates).

### *Improving Communication*

- Generally poor awareness that EU Red listed species can also receive funding – participants also unaware that there was an EU Red List for Habitats.
- National agencies and LIFE Programme to better align funding objectives to increase match funding opportunities to provide opportunities for smaller organisations/individuals.
- National agencies to actively promote species of conservation concern.
- National Contact Points – could they do more? Existing and, more importantly, potential LIFE beneficiaries should get a lot of their information from the NCPs. The fact that there are no Red List Species in the portfolio, despite inclusion in the programme, suggests that some messages are not getting through. Maybe include more information at the **Info Days** and make sure critical gaps are covered and include some of the recommendations from this Platform Meeting.
- Case Studies – it would be helpful to have access to some case studies on the LIFE website to show that ENV, Climate Change and perhaps Solidarity Corps projects could provide a good platform for invertebrate projects.

### *Project Development/Proposal Stage*

- Encourage involvement of invertebrate specialists at project design stage.
- Better advertise proposal writing support workshops/info days and flexibility within LIFE
- Improve the interaction and communication between the LIFE programme and potential project developers. Better advertise proposal writing support workshops/info days (LIFE and National Focal Points) and the flexibility of the LIFE programme.
- Development of guidance/checklist linking habitats to specific species (listed on the annexes or listed as threatened on red list) that need to be considered where a project has an impact on a habitat type.
- Development of additional tools/tips (or through capacity building workshops) for engaging with landowners during/beyond the project regarding invertebrate conservation.
- Increase the profile of invertebrates in the Multi Annual Work Programme, or in the application guide – reduce emphasis on peripheral things (e.g. green procurement) and increase emphasis on invertebrates and other species groups that are under-represented in the programme.

### *Incentives*

- Include an incentive/bonus in the evaluation marking scheme to favour invertebrates, especially in habitat-based LIFE Nature projects – more marks if the beneficiary can demonstrate they have consulted an expert group
- Projects should get 75% funding if targeting an invertebrate species on Annex II.
- A suggestion that threatened species on EU Red lists should attract the same level of funding as priority species listed on the Directives Annex as this would stimulate more applications for invertebrate-focused proposals and assist those smaller organisations to apply for LIFE funding.

### *Resource Gaps*

- Collaboration will be key to retain specialist ID skills and to train new experts.
- Acknowledge that there are insufficient experts and groups to be involved in many projects. Establish a support network of experts to provide advice on invertebrates that could be vulnerable or important within a habitat-based project. For example, if your project is a bog project in southern Europe you could contact the expert and request advice on appropriate methods to include for invertebrate conservation.
- There is a clear opportunity for an Information Project focused on invertebrates. There is much information available from previous projects, but it is not being disseminated effectively or communicated to the wider public. There is an opportunity for a project to bring this learning together.
- Could we have invertebrate PRE projects?
- Could invertebrates be included more widely in IP projects or under a small grants component? Projects focussing on threatened invertebrates are often small and unlikely to require large amounts of funding. One project could cover many smaller initiatives by distributing small amounts of funding to deliver targeted projects on priority species throughout Europe.
- Specialists with expertise in field identification could be brought together to share skills and pass on knowledge – there was a general feeling that skills are being lost.

### *Sustainability Considerations*

- Improve how LIFE acknowledges the role of farmers/landowners in projects to boost engagement and instil pride.
- Improve and implement After-LIFE plans.
- Use invertebrate indices to evaluate rural development programmes in order to focus more attention on invertebrate groups.