
MIGRATORY BIRDS FOR PEOPLE PROGRAMME STRATEGY PLAN, 2011-16



'Inspiring birds, inspiring people'

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Network	5
Current network.....	5
Future network	6
Core values	7
Structure	7
Programme Outline.....	9
Vision	9
Problem analysis	9
Strategies.....	10
Action Plan	11
Public Awareness Strategy	11
Capacity Building for Staff	13
Network Development Strategy.....	14
Funding Strategy	14

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009 Staatsbosbeheer, Wetlands International and Wetland Link International have initiated a network of visitor centres along the flyway of migratory birds related to NATURA 2000 wetland sites. The project aims to develop an active network of visitor centres along the East Atlantic Flyway, to tackle four key issues that we identified as: the lack of joint work and communication between wetland centres, the need for more people involved and attached to wetlands, the need for more and better tools and stories to communicate the importance of a network of wetlands for migratory birds, and the requirement to improve the conservation status of wetlands along the flyway. We see wetland engagement (CEPA) as a vital tool in changing perceptions of wetlands, and improving their protection.

Without a sound understanding of why wildlife and sites should be valued, local communities and decision-makers will not help to save and protect wetlands and their wildlife. Conservation professionals may be well-trained and enthusiastic, but this has to be communicated more widely. CEPA has been identified as a key action for many multi-lateral environmental agreements such as Ramsar and the Convention on Biological Diversity, plays a complementary role to the EU Birds and Habitats directives, which focus more on technical aspects of wildlife conservation, and forms a central part of the Nature 2000 network across Europe.

More visitor centres were invited to take part in this developing programme, as the programme developed through regular skype meetings and phone contact. Partners met during a 2-day workshop in Aiguamolls de l'Emporda, Spain (25/26 January 2011) to set up the outline for a project proposal to be submitted under the LIFE+ bid for 2011, as well as by skype conferences over 2011. The deadline for the LIFE+ bid turned out to be too ambitious, and the partners concerned decided to postpone their application, to allow the time to develop a well thought-out project.

In September 2011, several of the MBP programme partners, met in Brussels for a workshop to discuss the way forward. This document – the action plan – contains the results of the last workshop, complemented by the content of the LIFE+ application and the outcomes of other (Skype) meetings.

The MBP programme has been promoted and discussed at several conferences (NATURA 2000 meeting 2011; meeting National Ramsar Committee; Annual General Meetings Eurosite and EUROPARC). Since January 2010 newsletters have been regularly issued for the communication in the network.

NETWORK

The MBP partners are working together because they see the following benefits of developing a network:

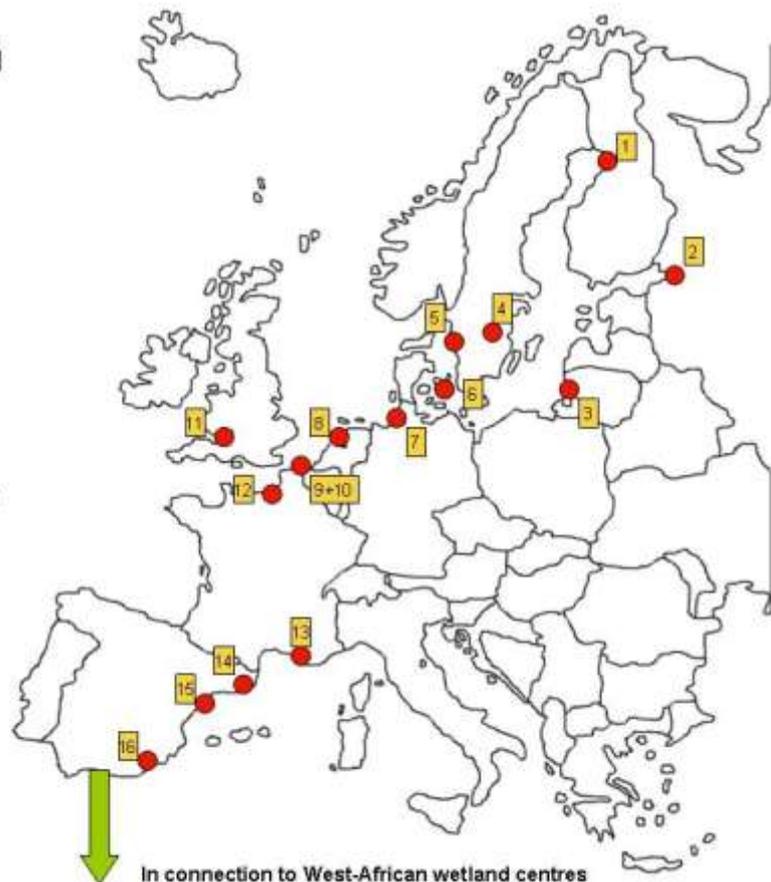
- It is a tool to forward the goals of flyway conservation, helping to protect birds and the wetlands they depend upon (Ramsar/ N2000);
- It is a way to connect wetland centres, building on the Wetland Link International network;
- The network can be used to acquire more knowledge and improve wetland (centre) management;
- By sharing experiences and expertise the centres can improve communication to the general public and increase outreach (to local communities) by communicating similar messages;
- The programme can be used for obtaining resources (e.g. EU funds) for projects and actions;
- A network will lead to more cooperation between nature practitioners;
- Sharing tools and materials will improve and increase what can be done and communicated in each individual centre.

CURRENT NETWORK

Participating visitor centres (Europe)

(February 2012)

1. Finland: Liminganlahti
2. Russia : St. Petersburg [CEPA-team]
3. Lithuania: Nemunas Delta (proposed)
4. Sweden: Lake Tåkern
5. Sweden: Getterön
6. Denmark: Vestmager
7. Germany: Husum
8. Netherlands: Oostvaardersland
9. Belgium: Het Zwin
10. Belgium: Uitkerkse Polder
11. United Kingdom: WWT, HQ, Slimbridge
12. France: Baie de Somme
13. France: Camargue Gardoise
14. Spain: Aiguamolls de L'Emporda
15. Spain: Ebro Delta
16. Spain: Las Salinas de San Pedro



The current network consists of 16 partners. A coordinating group has taken the lead to work on project development and communication. This group is planning to continue securing funds for programme actions and is keen on enlarging the partnership further, see next paragraph.



The core group is made up of the following organizations (21.09.2011):

- Lake Tåkern – Lansstyrelsen(Sweden);
- Oostvaardersplassen – Staatsbosbeheer (Netherlands);
- Uitkerkse Polder – Natuurpunt (Belgium);
- Wetlands International, WWT;
- Wetland Link International

FUTURE NETWORK

The goal is to have an active network of organizations owning or managing visitor centres located near or in Ramsar, Natura 2000 or other internationally important wetland sites covering the East-Atlantic flyway. Currently, mainly Russian and West-African partners are missing. Several criteria were developed (see below) that each partner needs to adhere to. The MBP programme does not limit the number of people from each organisation or centre that wants to participate in the network. However, the geographic range is limited to the East Atlantic Flyway.

Criteria for new partners:

- Own and/ or manage an internationally important wetland site on the East-Atlantic flyway;
- Own and/ or manage a visitor centre located near or in the wetland site;
- Run an active programme of public engagement (CEPA, Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness), creating a better public understanding of the importance of wetlands for migratory birds.
- The wetland site attracts migratory birds of international importance;

- Willing to invest resources (time and funds) in the MBP programme and network;
- Actively participate in and communicate with the network community;
- Believe that the MBP programme and network is an added value.

CORE VALUES

To create an effective network, that will provide all the benefits described above, each partner in the network should be selected on the basis of the partner criteria. But, equally important, the coordinating group needs to make sure that the network remains an interesting platform, providing an added value for its partners, and it should be well-organized. Therefore, the MBP network should observe the following core values:

- The MBP programme deals with the East-Atlantic flyway and its migratory birds and habitats;
- The MBP programme provides a platform for networking, sharing experiences and communication;
- The MBP programme actively applies for funding to further develop the programme and network;
- The MBP programme provides an added value to its partners, by offering a relevant network and by sharing science, materials, and tools;
- The MBP partners have a shared goal;
- The MBP programme is organized with clear roles, responsibilities and objectives.

STRUCTURE

The MBP programme is structured along four layers: the coordinating group, active partners, networkers and work groups.

The **coordinating group** acts as the lead for the MBP programme. They support the programme by taking an active role in programme actions and development. The composition of the coordinating group will vary in time, and can contain 5-10 members. The coordinating group is responsible for the following issues:

- organizing networking events at least once a year, preferably on site;
- lead and assist with the development of funding proposals;
- attract and engage new partners;
- develop a platform for networking and sharing (e.g. a website or other tool);
- provide relevant (and scientific) information about migratory birds and the flyway;
- developing the MBP newsletter four times a year;
- help coordinate the working groups.

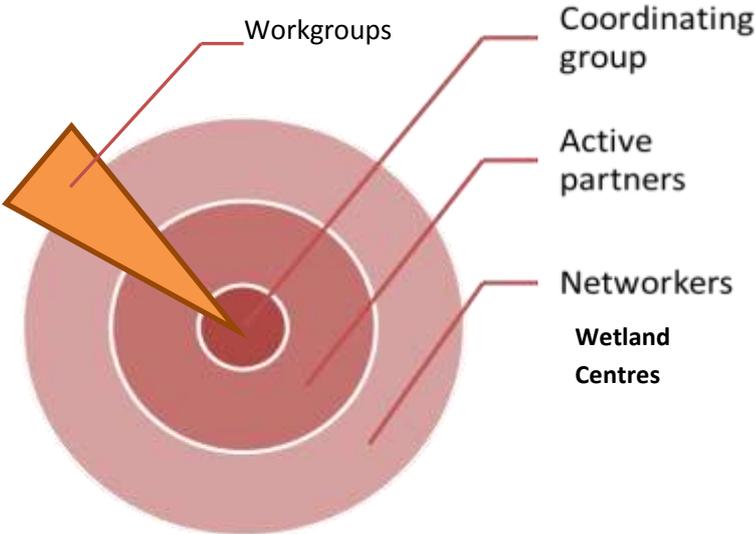
The coordinating group meets at minimum once a year in a face-to-face meeting, preferably alongside a Eurosite / Europarc conference or other relevant (large) networking event. Furthermore, they have regular contact through e-mail and (Skype or tele)-meetings.

The **active members** are a group of partners that actively participate in programme components. They (help) organize events, actively provide information to the MBP network and platform, they (help) develop materials and tools for sharing, they (help) develop funding bids and they offer support to the coordinating group.

The **wetland centres (WLI)** form the largest group of the network, and as a minimum they are members of the Wetland Link International network. They are responsible for providing input to the MBP newsletter, they use the developed tools and materials and provide feedback, they communicate and network with each other via the platform or networking events and they are responsible for updating their MBP membership profile.

Last but not least are the **workgroups**. The working groups are formed ad hoc and are based on a specific topic or project, related and relevant for the MBP programme. Workgroups can include and attract people from

outside the MBP network. Workgroups are responsible for communication and sharing of their results via MBP platforms (website, newsletter, events, etc.).



PROGRAMME OUTLINE

MISSION

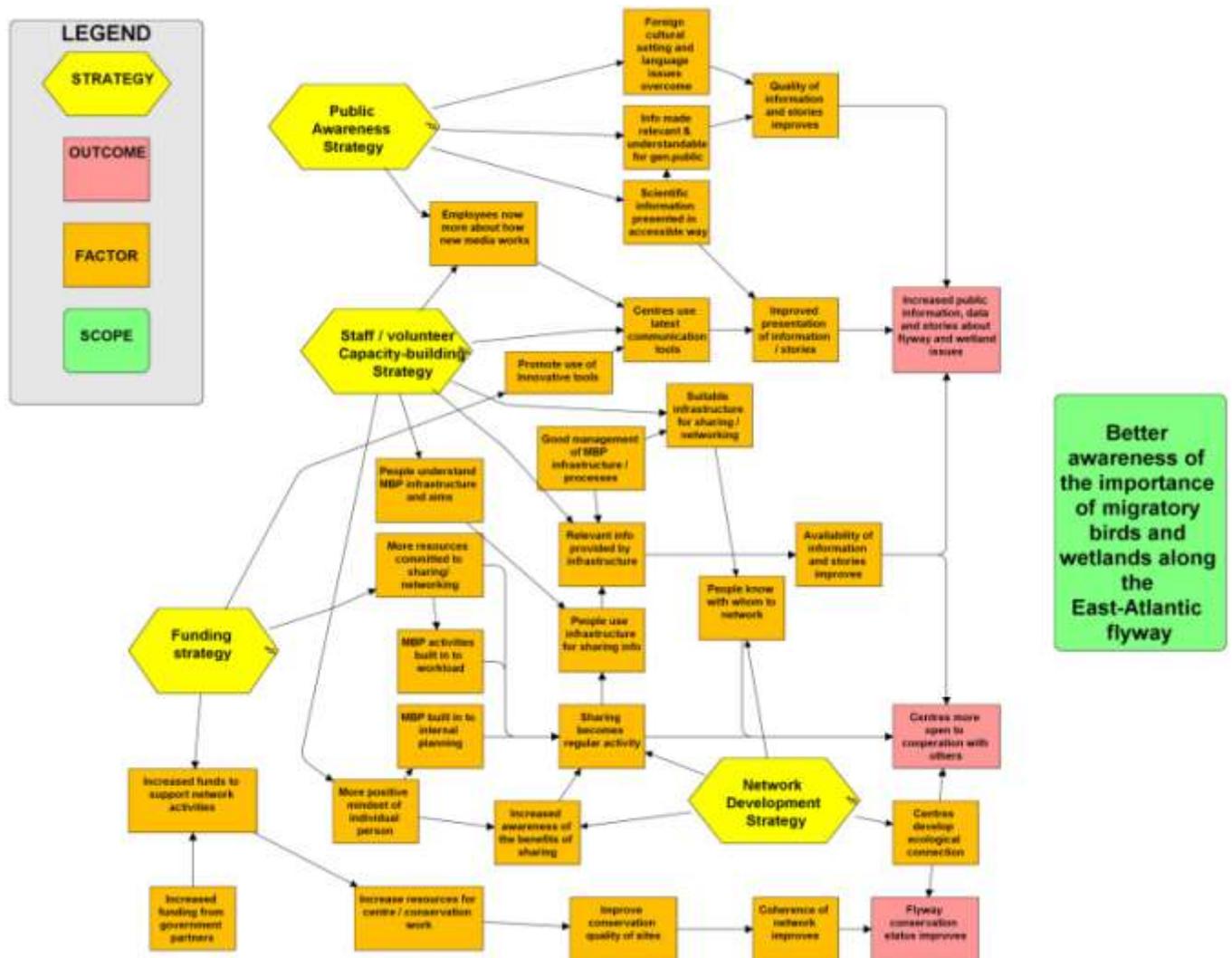
“An effective network of visitor centres across the East-Atlantic flyway connecting people to birds and promoting the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats”.

VISION

Inspiring birds, inspiring people

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Below you see a figure outlining and describing the problem analysis of the MBP Programme.



The figure is read from right to left. The MBP Programme identifies three major problems:

1. Lack of information and stories about the (importance of the) flyway;

- Better up-to-date flow and exchange information of migratory birds flyways needed.
- The information available needs to be better quality; sometimes it is presented in a foreign language, or developed in a country with different cultural ideas or it is presented too scientifically and using ‘in-crowd’ language;
- The presentation of the information needs to appeal to the general public. Visitor centers should use up-to-dated communication tools and be open to using new media;

- Furthermore, visitor centers need better access to good stories, or know of ways how to present it effectively. There should be an infrastructure which allows for networking and sharing of materials, tools and best practices. People should know who or which organization to approach or where such information can be obtained.

2. Centres are internally focussed;

- Centres are often focused internally because sharing is not a priority due to high workload. Attitudes need to change and resources found to build networking into internal planning, time allocated for it in projects and decision-makers made aware of the benefits of sharing and networking.

3. Flyway in unfavourable conservation status.

- Migratory birds depend on a healthy flyway, but in some countries the habitats for the birds along the route are in poor condition. This undermines the conservation status of other sites along the flyway. Increased capacity and funds are the best solutions to improving the state of poor habitats. For all partners (and African countries particularly), there is a lack of capacity and access to new tools and resources, but MBP aims to improve this situation.

STRATEGIES

To tackle these problems, the MBP Programme identified six strategies. Within each strategy there are several objectives and several actions. The 'Action Plan' chapter describes the strategies and related actions in more detail.

1. Public Communication Strategy;

This strategy addresses the involvement of more people by higher quality of the available stories and information. It includes translation of material, adapting material into a clearer language fit to communicate with the general public and adopting new methods for communicating, e.g. using social media and online communities.

This strategy addresses the fact that current presentation tools are out-dated. Actions in this strategy include development of touch screens, using webcams and bird tracking, improvement of the CSN tool, and also improvement of guided walks.

2. Capacity Building for Staff Strategy;

This strategy focuses on the sharing of information between centres and nature practitioners. It includes actions like developing a best practice guide on communication practices, translation of materials, organizing on site events to share knowledge, social media workshop, etc.

3. Network Development Strategy and communication;

This strategy looks at the further development of the MBP Partnership. It's important to let people know the MBP network exists and that sharing is beneficial. Actions include setting up a programme website, development of the newsletter, improving the WLI database, and expanding the network.

There are also specific actions for developing the network in Africa. This includes actively looking for new partners, acquiring funding and sharing experiences with African counterparts.

4. Funding Strategy;

Some of the actions can be implemented without extra funding, but most require extra financial resources. The funding strategy will focus on looking for appropriate funding possibilities and forming project teams to develop applications.

Action Plan

PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGY

This strategy addresses the involvement of more people by higher quality, better focus and the presentation of the available stories and information. It assumes that if visitor centres can improve the quality and presentation of the information (through exchange, translation and adaptation of current material, development of new stories) and use of more modern communication methods (social media, online community), then more information will be available, centres can improve the promotion of the importance of the flyway and more people will become involved and aware of the unique features of the flyway, the international aspects and the importance of each individual site, particularly the one nearby.

Thru coordinated actions on development of coherent interpretation plans as well as exchange of experience and info-materials and footage, the quality and outreach of the information program of individual centres will grow and have a larger impact on visitor's attitude and their connection to the flyway.

In addition, current presentation tools are sometimes out-dated. Actions in this strategy focus on the development and improvement of tools, like touch-screens, webcams, bird tracking interface and the CSN tool. Looking at the figure below, in the second line, we find the assumption that if visitor centres have access to updated communication tools, that they will use them. But this would require extra strategies to be in place as well, like the Funding and Sharing Experiences Strategies, to make the funds available to acquire and develop the tools and to educate people in the use of webcams, social media and adjacent programs to get people involved.

Strategy	Public Awareness Strategy	
Objectives	To raise public awareness of the importance of the network of wetland sites for migratory bird conservation. To provide shared communication tools designed to better engage visitors and the public.	
Indicators	1.1 By 2013 each centre has an inventory of facilities, qualities and needs 1.2 By 2014 each centres has written its own interpretation plan 1.3 By 2016 each centre has extra migration-related stories to present to the general public which are clear, simple and relate to the flyway; 1.4 By 2016 each centre has improved its presentation to the general public by adopting and using different communication methods, use of CSN tool and exchange of footages 1.5 Amount of facebook pages, tweets, twitter accounts related to the programme, hits on the website etc. 1.6 Number of people involved in programmes (including number of children) 1.7 Area of wetland centres and wetland itself 1.8 Number of activities	
Action	Implementation (how and when)	Comments (funding, joint work etc)
1. Interactive inventory	Every centre does an inventory with colleagues from other centres to define its qualities, needs and stories related to migratory birds. Produced 'mission statement' for each centre.	It gives a thorough inside view of qualities of each individual centre, with help of a 'fresh pair of eyes'. Fit in an overall structure it will help to focus and define individual goals for improvement and co-operation.
2. Interpretation plan		
2.1 Develop Interpretation plans for each site and/or centre	Based upon an overall framework for the entire flyway, each centre writes its own interpretation plan, including a mission statement.	The plan should specify the unique characteristics of its environment, the core-message, a list of experiences, facts and activities

		each site is offering.
2.2 Development of Interpretation (incl. bird hide)	As an outcome of the plan interpretation facilities will be developed in the neighbourhood of the centre providing all sorts of experiences, such as bird hides, information panels, watchtowers, guided walks, panels etc	Basically every site has an urge to facilitate bird-watching and other activities nearby its centre. The layout of the individual site can have its inspiration out of the cooperation with other centres.
3. Linking nature and people		
3.1 Develop outreach programmes	Work with external groups such as hunters, farmers, community groups etc	Involves work outside of the centre boundaries
3.2 Plan to better reach young people.	Young people are sometimes hard to engage positively, particularly 12+ year olds	Teenagers particularly useful target group. Evidence of the importance of working with under-12s to give later awareness benefits?
3.3 Develop (new) comprehensive flyway stories that can be shared with the general public (the 'Flyway News Bulletin Board' available in each centre)	Wetland centres to provide materials (text / pictures / footage). Lead partner to collate into useful format.	Theme and major stories to be identified with lead partners at workshops.
3.4 Using social media.	Requires some specialist work, possibly external. Or use centre with active communications team.	Need for funding to bring specialist on board? Linked in?
3.5 Developing a website.	Existing pages on WLI website allow some visibility. More advance website would be useful, but will need funds.	Wait for larger funding bid and more activity before this happens.
3.6 Developing an online community 'Flyway Friends'	Action program to actively start communicating, blogging, writing flyway-journals, etc.	Managers need to develop skills and programs not to adapt birds but become intermediate between birds and people
3.7 Development of webcams.	All sites/centres probably are running their webcams. Connecting to other sites would be helpful as well as exchange of knowledge, experiences and technical information.	Assuming that every centre has some webcam program, they can already be linked on one or several websites. Depending on this experience, quality (and funding) improvements can be made.
3.8 Development of touch screen.	Screens are already available. Content needs to be developed for presentation in individual centres, having links with other centres, their webcams, footages and stories.	Related to funding as well as screens already available
4. Exchange of information/materials		
4.1 Translation of current material in different languages.	Partners to manage translation into their own languages. Ongoing.	If funding available, could be done professionally.
4.2 Translation of research and knowledge to 'general public' language.	All centres to use best practice at each of their locations. New material to be worked on together.	
4.3 Development of bird tracking exhibit for the public	Contact with scientist/universities can provide real time data to show in centres and on sites.	Consideration: by doing so centres also can perform as intermediary between science and general audience.
4.4 Development of publicly	Needs a translation and an	Funding is needed

accessible WI Critical Sites Network exhibit.	interpretation towards a layman's understandable and accessible version	
4.5 Development of an open footage / picture database per site/centre	Many birdwatchers / visitors in general shoot millions of pictures during their visits. By a photo-contest or any other step these pictures can be stored in a database and used by all the flyway-centres	Funding is needed to set up this database but a start can already be made.
4.6 Tourism activities publicised through centres; bird travel agency	Each centre should develop some bird-tourist packages (lodging, bird-watching, etc.) being marketed by colleagues to their visitors.	An extra opportunity to present the unique qualities of the local wetlands and the migratory birds.

CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

This strategy focuses on the sharing of information between centres and nature practitioners. It includes actions like developing a best practice guide on communication practices, translation of materials, organizing on site events to share knowledge, and a social media workshop. The assumption is that if centres have more information available to them and they know where to find it and with whom to network, they will be focused more externally.

Strategy	Capacity Building for Staff	
Objectives	1.9 Create better framework and tools to share experience	
Indicators	Regular communication between centres (per year: minimum 4 newsletters, 1 face to face site meeting, 4 virtual meetings, communication between regional centres). Amount of information available in shareable formats (website, partner profiles, good practice bank). Number of people gaining experience through visits and MBP meetings	
Action	Implementation (how and when)	Comments
Site meeting of visitor centre staff	Once per year, hosted at one of the MBP partners. Training/workshop provided by 3 members. Identify theme per session.	To include site visits, information sharing and training sessions (create list of dates in advance, report back on training)
Convert experience to downloadable web tools	Partners to prepare materials and information based on work and visits.	To be accessible more widely. To complement the best practice guides.
Best practice guides produced	Identify areas of work that people need the most.	Work required identifying these areas. Technical knowledge, exhibition building, flyway stories, migration games etc.
Web structure created to enable information sharing	Link to the WLI site. If needed, create forum for discussion. Also link to Eurosite?	Chat forum has been tried before but was not popular. Could use facebook page? Join with other networks?
Meetings by Skype	Core group already meets by skype. Potential for wider group to use this to discuss and share.	Skype can be unreliable. Other tools such as 'gotomeeting' could be better.
Learning strategy	Training needs survey of staff. Use this to create suite of resources for staff	Make sure you address both professional development ideas and training for specific tools e.g. social media
Training sessions	Both distance training and training at site meetings. Use learning strategy to inform this.	Training given both by existing 'expert' partners, and by external trainers on specific areas.

Engage with centre managers and decision-makers.	Identify key people in management roles. WLI members to send material outlining the benefits of the project, and copy in to key e-mails.	Need to get the 'budget-holders' on board to ensure that centre staff get commitment to the project, for time and resources. Up to date flyer / presentation.
Internal member newsletter	Produced 4 times per year	

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This strategy looks at the further development of the MBP Partnership. It's important to let people know the MBP network exists and that sharing is beneficial. Actions include setting up a programme website, development of the newsletter, improving the WLI database, and expanding the network.

The Africa network is undeveloped, and requires more work in identifying centres and developing the links between them and their European counterparts.

Strategy	Network Development Strategy	
Objectives	To expand the numbers of active MBP partners, as well as strengthen links between them and develop joint projects	
Indicators	Numbers of active partners Strategic coverage of partners along the flyway Amount of activity between partners (defined above)	
Action	Implementation (how and when)	Comments
Strengthen network.	Improve communication, links and joint projects	Not just about numbers of partners, but how they work together
Survey of members	Through the WLI network	To better serve members of MBP
Expand communication	Through newsletters and website	Roelof and Chris
African partners on board	Id relevant Africa centres and contacts.	Through WI offices in West Africa. Through WLI membership.
Active communication between W. Africa centres and European centres	Through WI offices and WLI network.	Find best offices in each country. More work to use MB P to raise awareness of importance of wetlands as part of flyway (visit?)
Submit funding bids for African / Europe projects	As part of broader MBP network.	Need to identify suitable funding sources.
Engage with centre managers and decision-makers.	Identify key people in management roles. WLI members to send material outlining the benefits of the project, and copy in to key e-mails.	Need to get the 'budget-holders' on board to ensure that centre staff get commitment to the project, for time and resources. Up to date flyer / presentation.
Network coordinator	Seek funding. Possibly delivered through project.	
Annual planning meeting	In conjunction with Eurosite	Separate to site meeting. Fewer people.

FUNDING STRATEGY

Some of the actions can be implemented without extra funding, but most require extra financial resources. The funding strategy will focus on looking for appropriate funding possibilities and forming project teams to

develop applications. Another important action is improving the story around the MBP Programme to better explain the need for this programme to funders. It's important to show how the sites are ecologically connected.

Strategy	2. Funding Strategy	
Objectives	2.1 Create plans for likely projects to seek funding for	
Indicators	Number of bids submitted Amount of funding generated	
Action	Implementation (how and when)	Comments
Identify key actions to fund	Through project planning	
Identify match-funding	I.d. forthcoming projects and partners delivering similar work	All to list investments planned. Be creative with other partners projects.
Resolve resources issues to encourage participation	Survey of partners to show where centres require additional funds	Ongoing exercise
Resources for African partners	Bird festival etc. Possible international projects through existing EU members.	