

## Results of WLI Asia workshop - Suncheon, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013

The WLI and Sustainable Wetlands conference was held in Suncheon from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. After two days of presentations from WLI members and Korean colleagues, we held workshop which consisted of around 50 delegates, facilitated by Chris Rostron of WLI Global. Three workshops were asked to identify:

- The needs and issues facing wetland centres and CEPA staff
- The structure and function of WLI Asia and how it can help meet these.
- Plans for the next two years for WLI members, including for the venue / structure of the next meeting.

Discussions included the following:

### *1. Needs and Issues:*

We need to be able use the network to access expertise from across the memberships, and to work together on program development at a regional level.

There is a need for more evaluation of wetland centres and CEPA work. The current focus is often on visitor numbers not an increase in awareness and education.

Wetland centres should use their local wetlands and their issues to raise awareness of the public – they will respond better to local issues. What are the key messages, and how can we deliver them?

We should be moving away from a purely 'built centre' focus, to ensure that we include consideration of the software/humanware involved in centres. Our key tools are the staff and programmes that are involved in raising awareness, not just the built centres – but this is not always considered early enough in the process of visitor centre development.

We should develop some strategies for individual and community action to conserve wetlands (there is an opportunity to share our experience on a site-by-site basis)

Many other activities are taking place across the region for CEPA and wetland centres, for example through the Regional Ramsar Centre East Asia (RRC-EA) and the EAAFP. We need to coordinate better between us.

More active promotion of wetland centres is required to reach the wider public – currently we do not do enough to engage local communities and decision-makers, often relying too heavily on schools and visitors (those that are likely to already be 'converted' to wetland messages) instead of tackling those that are less aware of wetland issues.

Program development/resourcing is important. We need to access both financial and information resources. This could be supported through

- Twinning / MoUs
- Establishment of volunteer programs (code of conduct)

Adapting products to national language and situation is essential. At least in Chinese and English for the main web pages, but also with key documents translated into most languages – this could be done by country focal points?

### *2. Structure and function of the WLI network*

WLI could become a professional association in the future, with membership fees and services for members. We need to consider the benefits to members carefully and deliver a quality service.

Create sister agreements or MoUs between Centers, in a standardised way.

Create an Asia-based WLI post that will deliver projects in the region. Also identify country focal points to take charge of translation, communication and local issues.

We could usefully access some more resources for the members and to support central coordination work for the WLI Asia network.

### *3. Actions for the coming two years*

Guidelines on the function and design of Wetland Centers – through workshop at Seosan to be held in October / November this year with Ramsar, WLI and Seosan county.

Capacity building for centres - e.g. Internships, training sessions, etc. Including running training for those involved in CEPA activities (possibly at HKWP).

Work more closely with EAAFP and RRC East Asia to coordinate activities and complement each other's approach. Develop newsletter with EAAFP on CEPA at wetland sites in the flyway.

More translation of the main WLI website pages into Chinese, through colleagues at Mai Po, Guandu and Shanghai. Translation of other key documents into a range of languages, to increase accessibility.

Production of a newsletter by some of the partner organisations for the Asia region. This will go into more depth about Asia partner activities and with relevant issues to the region. Need to find interested party to carry this out (likely to be with EAAFP, see note above).

Evaluation (as above) to be rolled out from Mai Po's and Guandu work. Create an accessible version from their initial work which can be used and adapted for other sites.

The next WLI Asia Conference in 2015 should be a bigger event to showcase Wetland Centers (to interest a wider audience). This conference should be more ambitious, with focused activities / sessions on CEPA and wetland centres. Potential for the 5<sup>th</sup> WLI conference to take place in China. Joint approach between Shanghai Chong Ming Dong Tan, Wetlands International (who have experience of this), Mai Po wetland centre, and Professor Cui.

In addition to the regular steering group meeting, task groups to be set up to cover:

- Development of the WLI Asia Conference V
- Opportunity to develop WLI Asia as an 'association'
- Developing resources, including training manual for wetland centres, evaluation methodology, best practice sharing, and sister wetlands programme
- Volunteer management programme to develop guidance in improving volunteer support.

Specific RoK recommendations:

- Wetland manager cooperation through KFEM. The 20 local chapters have decided to make wetlands a focus for their future work.
- Focus on local communication in RoK, building links between the wetland centres across the region, including the RRC-EA.
- Develop a support mechanism for WLI Asia, particularly North East Asia, in partnership with Suncheon City.
- Monitor the new Suncheon wetland centre and make recommendations.