

**England Biodiversity Group**

**Minutes from  
EBG Meeting  
March 4<sup>th</sup> 2008**

**England Biodiversity Group  
11.00am to 2.00pm , Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

**Rooms A &B, Nobel House, London**

**Minutes**

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**Present:**

Martin Brasher (Defra, WHB)	Richard Wright (Natural England)
Sarah Webster (Defra, WHB)	Helen Dunn (Defra, FFG)
Steven Marfleet (Defra, WHB)	David Pape (ALGE)
Jane Goodwin (Defra, WHB)	Andrew Thompson (Natural England)
Pete Brotherton (Natural England)	Andrea Graham (NFU)
Roger Ward (NE/Defra)	Elaine Kendall (Defra, WSC)
Rebecca Isted (Forestry Commission, England)	David Slater (Natural England)
Sue Armstrong-Brown (RSPB)	Tim Bines (L&R SIG)
John Everitt (WCL)	Pippa Morrison (MoD)
Amy Coyte (WCL)	Helen Dunn (Defra, FFG)
David Goode (UCL)	Paul Raven (Environment Agency)
Ann Davies (Defra, ELM)	Doug Hulyer (EPU SIG)

**Apologies**

Paul Cobbing	GOWM	(Tim Bines representing)
Simon Pryor	Forestry Commission	(Rebecca Isted representing)
David Bullock	National Trust	
Andy Stott	Defra	
Rob Cooke	Natural England	
David Henshilwood	Natural England	
Andrew Wood	Natural England	

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Martin Brasher welcomed everyone to the meeting; noting that there were a number of guests and new faces, there followed a round table of introductions.

Martin explained that under Renew Defra, John Robbs' portfolio would be expanding. To accommodate this, Martin would be chairing EBG from this meeting onwards. As incoming chairman, Martin reminded the group of its Terms of Reference, published in *Working with the grain of nature – taking it*

*forward* - which included identifying the resource requirements for implementation and addressing cross-cutting issues between workstreams. He said that he felt that these were two important areas for the Group to focus on. He also said that the change of chair represented an opportunity for the members to express their views on the role and function of the EBG; Martin invited members to offer their views either under AOB or by sending them to the Secretariat after of the meeting.

**Action 1.1: Members to send their views on the best use that could be made of the group to the Secretariat.**

## **2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

**EBG-08-01**

Doug Hulyer's apology for the last meeting had not been recorded.

**Action 1.2: Secretariat to amend the minutes to record Doug's apology.**

**Previous action point: David Henshilwood to provide a note setting out the rationale for the regionalisation of targets.**

NE's note setting out the rationale for the regionalised targets had been circulated prior to the meeting. In David Henshilwood's absence, Pete Brotherton explained the background to the regional breakdowns for restoration and expansion targets; with one exception this was based on the share of the resource the region already had. The exception was for woodland habitats where it was felt that where there were large areas already present, the benefits of expansion would not be as great as creating new woodlands in open landscapes. Rebecca Isted explained that this was being taken forward through the Woodlands and Forestry SIG with a consultation with the regions underway. Pete Brotherton reminded the group that the regionalised targets had been circulated following the September EBG meeting with a deadline for response of 5 October. While some people had questioned the methodology for obtaining the figures, no-one had so far commented on the figures themselves.

Tim Bines advised that this had been a point of discussion at the last Local & Regional SIG meeting and that it was felt that consultation with the regions needed a clearer process and timescale. David Pape also thought that consultation with regional biodiversity fora was important as they were key players in getting such targets into regional plans and into the thinking of regional assemblies. Sarah Webster suggested that the regions be given further time to respond direct to NE and that their comments could then be passed to the Integrated Delivery Groups, once they had been established, for consideration. Martin Brasher thought that there would be benefits in allowing the regions another opportunity to comment on the regionalised break-downs. PB said that the rationale paper had been produced with the EBG in mind and that it might need some further thought to make it suitable for the regions.

**Action 1.3 : Pete Brotherton to consider how best to meet the request of the regional biodiversity fora for further input on the regionalised targets.**

David Goode had written to the Chair of NE highlighting the urgency of the need for national leadership relating to the priority urban habitat. He understood the difficulties NE were facing but felt that the Towns, Cities & Development SIG would be disappointed at the lack of progress.

Pete Brotherton advised that, with wide support for this within NE, this was considered a priority. However, this would be a new post coming at a time of staff reductions and therefore it was not possible to say when recruitment might happen.

**Action 1.4: Pete Brotherton to continue to press for progress on the appointments process and to update EBG on addressing concerns about the adequacy of resources for NE engagement with urban conservation.**

**Previous action point: Secretariat to place an item on the next EBG Agenda on the national biodiversity indicator for Local Government performance and how to maximise associated outcomes.**

This item was held over until the next meeting due to the absence of Paul Cobbing.

**Previous action point: Secretariat to place an item on the June EBG Agenda on the national biodiversity indicator for Local Government performance and how to maximise associated outcomes.**

**Previous action point: Secretariat to place item on the March/June 2009 agenda on outcome and valuation project**

Note that this referred to 2009 and was therefore still some way off – Secretariat will keep in touch with the Economics and Funding SIG over this. Action point still stands.

**Previous action point: Andy Stott to take forward Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation in the EBS**

Elaine Kendall would provide an update on this under the quarterly reports item.

**Previous action point: EBG members to provide comments to Pete Brotherton on the “Review of Habitat Action Plans – appropriate brigading of groups at country levels” paper.**

Pete Brotherton had taken account of comments made by EBG members at the last meeting and had circulated a consultation draft of a new EBS/BAP delivery framework . The deadline for responses to this consultation was 29<sup>th</sup> February. There had been a wide variety of responses but Pete had not yet had the opportunity to consider these.

The next steps would be to work with Link and others to agree species leads by the end of April and then to work in partnership to establish species recovery priorities; NE would work with partners to establish how the Integrated Delivery Groups would work. It was envisaged that the starting point would be to appoint two leads (one habitat- and one species-focussed) and that these leads would then take forward the formation of the group. There was some concern that this would put a lot of responsibility into the hands of just two people; Pete Brotherton noted that the benefit of this would be that responsibility would be clearly defined and it was expected that the groups would expand quickly. Amy Coyte asked, as this might be a complex process, whether any thought had been given to resource implications for this approach. Pete had considered the implications for the Defra family at a national level and said that it was anticipated that delivery would have more of a local and regional focus, building on the strengths of LBAPs. Tim Bines welcomed the regional involvement and said that it would be useful to have a meeting to discuss this outside EBG. Sue Armstrong-Brown supported the point on resource implications, welcomed the strong involvement of the NGOs and asked whether thought had been given to the role of National Parks and AONBs and the opportunity that they may represent. Pete said that he had received similar comments from others. Pete would produce a revised document and circulate electronically to EBG members between meetings.

**Action 1.5: Pete Brotherton to revise the paper and circulate to EBG members**

**Previous action point: NE Advice on Habitats and Species of principal importance under s.41 of the NERC Act.** Sarah Webster to clarify points with Defra lawyers

Sarah Webster had received advice from Defra lawyers. To sum up, there were strong grounds for a structured list, containing all the English species on the UK list, with supplementary guidance highlighting particular species for particular sectors. Defra had also obtained Hansard extracts from the passage of the CROW Act which first introduced the list, and this had made clear that the Government's intention was, precisely, to entrench the BAP process in legislation. NE had been consulted on the content of the list and a decision would be taken once NE's advice had been taken.

**3. Quarterly Workstream Achievement Reports**

**EBG-08-02**

Martin Brasher thanked workstream chairs for completing their quarterly reports on the BARS system. Steve Marfleet explained that the workstreams had taken different approaches to the reporting with some reporting at the overview level whilst others had reported at the deliverable or action levels. For this reason each of the worksheets would have a slightly different look to them.

Tim Bines expressed the view that guidance was needed, for example for RAG ratings, to ensure a consistency across the SIGs. It was agreed that guidance would be produced and that the overview reports provided a good flavour of what was happening.

Martin Brasher invited the SIG chairs to highlight any particular points they wished to raise.

The Climate Change Adaptation SIG had refined its principles paper and had held a pilot workshop with the Woodlands and Forestry workstream to 'road test' these. The workshop had been useful and informative with the Woodlands and Forestry workstream agreeing to hold a specific climate change adaptation meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Views from that meeting would then be passed back to the Climate Change Adaptation workstream to assist with further refining of the principles. The intention would then be to hold at least one further workshop to promulgate the principles within the remaining SIGs. Pete Brotherton had attended the pilot workshop and thought that the principles were a good product that could be promulgated much more widely. It was also suggested that the principles could be identified to Defra Communications Division as a good news story. Elaine Kendall agreed to distribute a copy of the draft principles to the EBG members.

**Action 1.6: Steve Marfleet to provide guidance about use of the RAG ratings in workstream reports on BARS.**

**Action 1.7: Elaine Kendall to distribute the draft principles to the EBG members**

Tim Bines said that the L&R SIG had been thinking about reporting through BARS and that Jane Goodwin was in the process of developing thoughts on this.

Richard Wright reported that stakeholders had met to consider the split of the Coasts & Seas SIG into separate Coastal and Marine groups. The meeting had been encouraging and work was underway to develop terms of reference, deliverables and targets for the new groups.

#### **4. Presentation by David Slater on targeting of HLS**

David Slater presented NE's work to assist with the targeting of HLS. The presentation was large so he would circulate a smaller version to the EBG

members. NE wanted to make the targeting system fairer and more proactive. The aim was to create a common currency using 1km squares to bring the five objectives of the scheme together in the form of a map, to identify target areas. The aim was to focus 80% of HLS into the target areas, with the remainder available for scattered habitats and features outside those areas. 5% of the budget would be set aside for habitat restoration/recreation.

Tim Bines asked whether the funding requirement for the modelled delivery had been calculated. David Slater replied that the modelling did not calculate the funding requirement but was used to aid decision making in relation to that funding which is available. Andrew Thompson reminded the group that HLS was a multi-objective scheme and that therefore decisions were not made solely on the basis of BAP delivery. John Everitt noted that this would be a valuable tool in the decision making process and thought that this would need to be linked with discussions on the regionalised BAP targets.

**Action 1.8: David Slater to circulate an abridged version of the presentation**

## **5. Wildlife & Countryside Link on Developing the Lead Partner Concept**

John Everitt introduced the papers as works in progress and a contribution to taking the process forward. He explained that Link were generally supportive of the consultation draft of the EBS/BAP delivery framework and were pleased to see NE as lead delivery body and a recognition of the NGOs as key partners. He underlined the importance of the role of NGOs beyond an interest in individual species groups.

Whilst integrated delivery appeared to be the route to take, discussion would be needed on the role of leads for individual habitats and species within the Integrated Delivery Groups to ensure that these elements were not lost. There would be cases where targeted species recovery would be needed but this would not be the same for all 'new' species; the signposting exercise would be important in resolving this.

With EBS workstreams, these would need to have a clearer role than at present if they were to be effective at influencing policy. Wildlife and Countryside Link welcomed the emphasis on the local and regional process to help drive delivery. Link welcomed further dialogue with NE to take forward the framework.

Pete Brotherton said that NE were conscious of the need to move forward but also that this had to be balanced with the need for consultation and shared ownership. Richard Wright thought that, with the papers having an England focus, it was important to remember that there was also a UK aspect to this and that this needed clarifying. John Everitt noted that there would be cases where there would continue to be a single lead group for the UK and this would provide

continuity across the devolved administrations. Pete Brotherton suggested it would be useful for the group to know what BRIG's view on this was. Sarah Webster advised that JNCC had begun to draw out the read-across between the habitat groupings emerging from each of the 4 countries across the UK, to identify the UK –level groups, but countries still had to firm up their groupings. Sarah would circulate the minutes of the most recent BRIG meeting to the members.

**Action 1.9: Sarah Webster to circulate the minutes of the latest BRIG meeting.**

## **6. AOB**

Rebecca Isted noted that, with the retirement of Rod Leslie, Simon Pryor would be attending the Biodiversity Programme Board on 27<sup>th</sup> March.

Pete Brotherton confirmed that the LBAP conference would be held 15-17 July at St John's College, Cambridge.

Martin Brasher asked whether members had any immediate thoughts on the functioning of this group. Sue Armstrong-Brown noted that the group seemed to focus on the reporting and auditing aspects of EBS and asked what role EBG played within Defra. Martin said that issues raised in this forum were taken into other fora as appropriate (for example to the Defra/NE Biodiversity Coordination meeting). Sue supported the proposal that the EBG spend more time on the identification of obstacles and this met with general agreement from the group.

## **9. Dates of future meetings**

10<sup>th</sup> June 2008

17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 (TBC)