

**England Biodiversity Group  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**Minutes from  
EBG Meeting  
June 27<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**EBG-07-12**

**England Biodiversity Group  
11.00am to 2.30pm , Wednesday 27 June 2007**

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

**Minutes**

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**Present:**

Martin Brasher (Defra, Wildlife Habitats and Biodiveristy)	Paul Cobbing (GOWM/Defra)
Sarah Webster (Defra, WHB)	Diane Mitchell (National Farmers' Union)
Andy Stott (Defra, LLS SD)	Simon Pryor (Forestry Commission, England)
David Henshilwood (Natural England)	Alex Tait (LGA)
Pete Brotherton (Natural England)	Doug Hulyer (Independent consultant)
Mark Tollitt (Defra, CD)	Brian Eversham (Wildlife Trusts)
Julian Hughes (RSPB)	Amy Coyte (WCL)
Paul Raven (Environment Agency)	Helen Dunn Defra
Roger Ward (NE/Defra)	David Pape (ALGE)
Lara Clements Defra CD	David Bullock NT
Joanna Robertson (CCW – observer)	Pam Whaley, (Defra ME)

**Apologies**

John Robbs (Defra)  
Andrew Wood (Natural England)  
David Goode (UCL)  
Mike Barry Marks & Spencer plc  
John Everitt (represented by Brian Eversham)  
Pippa Morrison (MOD)  
Andy Simpson RSPB

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Martin Brasher welcomed all present and extended a particular welcome to Diane Mitchell, Chief Environmental Adviser for the National Farmers' Union, who was temporarily replacing Fiona Howie and Joanna Robertson from the Countryside Council of Wales who was attending as an observer.

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

**EBG-07-07**

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted without amendment.

### **ACTION Point 2: Biodiversity Policy Unit to report back on plans to review the implementation of the NERC Act biodiversity duty.**

Defra had written to local authority and other public authority chief executives attaching the guidance that was published on 22 May. The letter had informed chief executives that Defra would be writing again to ask them to share their experiences of implementing the duty. The information so collected would help to inform the review (which had to be completed by 2009) and should also help partners target support for implementation and improvement. Due to the diverse nature of public authorities, Defra were keen to allow flexibility in the approaches used to implement the duty and did not propose to introduce a “one size fits all” monitoring mechanism.

**Action Point 3: David Goode to send note of Health and Greenspace seminar on 27 March** David Goode had informed the secretariat that the note was still in preparation, and he would be happy to present this to EBG in September. The Chairman asked NE about a further seminar on Health and Greenspace which NE were organising. Doug Hulyer explained that NE had organised a major conference the previous week which would feed into EBG thinking on this – Guy Thompson led for NE in this area. David Henshilwood agreed to find out more and report back.

### **Action Points 4 & 5. Refreshing the biodiversity partnership in England: Defra/NE to discuss follow-up and report back**

A letter from Defra Minister Barry Gardiner to NE had been circulated with the meeting papers. Defra had met with NE on 18 June and David Henshilwood reported progress on the actions outlined in the letter:

Regarding the work commissioned on reviewing the functioning and purpose of the HAP groups, NE was undertaking some work internally and once this had been done, would be seeking the views of partners.

NE was on track to produce a regional subset of the targets on which it led.

Draft targeting maps were being drawn up for Environmental Stewardship, and longer term work was in train looking at targeting from 2008 onwards. EU Rural Development Programme rules meant that biodiversity was but one of a number of objectives served by Environmental Stewardship, and this breadth of focus meant that not all the resources could be harnessed to achieving biodiversity targets.

On Local Records Centres, NE had resolved to enter into 3 year agreements with LRCs, although this would involve the complexities of justifying Single Tender Actions for relatively large sums of money – this was in train.

On support for the climate change workstream, the current representative, Mike Harley, was moving to a new job and NE was considering which of 2 new climate change specialists would replace him.

On Peat bog restoration, NE's "Moors to the future" programme was looking at peat bog restoration in the uplands including assessing its contribution to carbon sequestration.

On the Section 40 Biodiversity duty, NE had allocated £15K to each region for programmes to raise awareness and provide guidance about practical actions regional partners might take to meet the biodiversity duty on the ground. This would involve seminars and individual action on the part of Local and Regional teams. NE would target their initial actions towards Local Authorities who were most in need of support or perhaps those who had biodiversity hot spots.

NE was also working out the contribution SSSIs and AONBs contribute to BAP targets. 50% of BAP habitat occurred outside SSSI boundaries, although a significant amount of this fell within other designations such as AONBs. NE were trialling the ecosystem approach in National Parks.

NE were seeking a date for a joint meeting of their executive board with Defra on the range of issues set out in the letter.

Amy Coyte asked how NE would be approaching SAPs, and raised concerns on the part of Wildlife and Countryside Link members about the lack of dialogue. David Henshilwood explained that NE's thinking was at an early stage and as soon as they had formulated their ideas they would come out to seek people's views. He said NE would hope to go out to external consultation before coming back to Ministers and expected this work to be substantially complete by October/November time.

Alex Tait welcomed NE's support for awareness-raising at the local and regional level but felt the figure of £15K per region was low. He felt it would be useful to develop resources such as videos or power-point presentations that could be used for awareness raising/self-teaching. Lara Clements has produced similar resources on other topics and could look at producing something along these lines based on the guidelines. This could perhaps include a power-point presentation that could be tailored for local use.

Joanna Roberson of CCW was talking to ALGE about a self learning pack and felt it would be great to work together on this to deliver something that would be very useful in all regions.

**ACTION:** David Henshilwood to act as contact point for taking these ideas forward

Simon Pryor was pleased that the regionalisation of BAP targets was underway but was concerned not to have been aware of this work previously. As lead for the woodland habitat he had given considerable thought to regional targets. David Henshilwood replied that the initial work was for the habitats for which NE was the lead partner. Hitherto, there had been no mechanism for disaggregating HAP targets, and so it was important to do this developmental work first.

Paul Cobbing felt it would be helpful for this work to be shared with all groups. It was suggested that the outcome be circulated via EBG.

**ACTION: David Henshilwood to forward the results of the regionalisation exercise to secretariat for circulation to the group.**

Andrew Stott asked about targets for which NE did not lead. Pete Brotherton replied that there were some targets eg on cereal field margins or hedgerows that only NE could deliver. But a lot of work was going on to put BAP on a regionalised footing and this would need to involve a wide range of stakeholders; this represented a considerable piece of work. NE's work built on that already done through regional spatial strategies. Julian Hughes commended the progress made but felt it needed to be more complete. Alex Tait felt it important to check that the sum of the regional targets was *no less* than the national target – it wasn't of concern if it were greater. Julian Hughes felt climate change needed to be factored in, in terms of the relative supply of particular habitats in the North and South of the country.

Martin Brasher asked NE to respond to the Minister's letter reasonably swiftly in the form of a progress report, covering each of the items individually. Joanna Robertson offered to send David papers setting out how Wales had disaggregated their targets to LBAP level. MB also asked for a report back at the next EBG meeting.

**ACTION: NE to respond to the Minister's letter in the form of a progress report on all items and also report back to the next EBG meeting.**

**Action Point 6: Comments on *Towards Adaptation to Climate change* to be sent to Andy Stott by 5 April**

A number of comments had been received and incorporated in the report which was published electronically on International Biodiversity Day, 22 May. Andy Stott circulated the associated press release. The CCA workstream still feels the best way forward would be for a meeting with several of the workstreams and is

developing proposals for this. The group is also keen to bring the various different sources of guidance together.

### **3. Quarterly Workstream Achievement Reports**

**EBG-07-08**

Martin Brasher invited workstream leaders to highlight particular issues arising, beyond those recorded in the written reports.

David Henshilwood had been appointed as the NE rep on the business and biodiversity group, but objected to the reference in the report to lack of NE engagement as an obstacle to progress. If he was seen as being such an obstacle, he would appreciate it if this could be raised with him before it was stated in a report.

Pam Whaley circulated a compilation of the responses to a consultation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). Alex Tait felt there should be closer integration between ICZM and marine management.

Economics and funding workstream had prepared a specification for a project on valuation of Species and Habitat Action Plans under the UK BAP. This was awaiting financial clearance. The group was also working closely with Defra's Natural Environment Group on ecosystem services and writing a guide to valuing ecosystem services.

Martin Brasher mentioned the proposal for a "Stern" - style report on the economic value of biodiversity. The workstream's work ought to be an important input to this. This had flowed from "G8 plus 5<sup>1</sup>" Environment Ministers meeting which David Miliband had attended in Potsdam in March; the "Potsdam initiative" was a checklist of 10 things to be taken forward. This had gone forward to the G8 summit Heiligendam on 8 June, where Biodiversity had featured in a Summit communiqué for the first time. Although only a small mention, this had been important in terms of getting biodiversity in at the highest level and had been the result of biodiversity being one of the two priorities (the other had been climate change) for the German presidency of the G8. MB offered to circulate the Potsdam initiative but of key interest was the Stern –style review of economic biodiversity. Germany will be hosts for CBD COP 9 next May in Bonn. The proposal was to ask a senior economist to produce a report to be circulated sufficiently in advance of the COP to be properly discussed, although this represented a tight timescale, given the necessary evidence-gathering. Germany was working closely with Japan who will host the subsequent COP and also the next G8 presidency, which offered greater than usual prospects for continuity.

For the Woodlands and Forestry workstream, Simon Pryor reported that much time had been taken up with the launch of the new forestry strategy for England

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<sup>1</sup> The +5 being: India, China, Mexico, South Africa and Brazil.

*England's Trees, Woods and Forests* and the workstream had ensured that this incorporated EBS priorities. The workstream had also fed EBS targets and indicators into RDPE and emerging forestry strategy indicators. Indicators on woodland SSSIs, HAPs and woodland birds worked well, but the group was struggling to formulate a landscape connectivity indicator. Andrew Stott said that in the context of UK and EBS Defra was planning to commission more work on landscape permeability.

One obstacle faced by the Woodland and Forestry group was that they had been bound up with issues surrounding the new Habitats Regulations which gave strict protection to all bats and half a dozen other species. The new regulations could jeopardise the important management work being undertaken to progress the SSSI target on woodland birds. The FC felt they were more concerned than other land managers about the implications of the regulations and sought views and ideas from other sectors.

David Bullock made the point that we needed to conserve bats and their roosts at the landscape scale rather than the tree. To minimise the risk of disturbing bats, the pragmatic and reasonable approach was to check if there are bat records for a woodland or tree; estimate the value of a tree for use by bats; look at the opportunities for roosting sites in trees in the wood and in the surrounding landscape. Scrutiny of every tree in a wood for bat roosts prior to felling was impractical and unnecessary. There were some woods where we would need to exercise more care but these were mostly well known. Amy Coyte concurred with this.

Martin Brasher said that it had been necessary to go ahead with the Regulations to comply with an ECJ ruling – Government had no other choice but to respond to infraction proceedings. However, Ministers recognised the concerns about the possible negative impact of the Regulations and were concerned to find a pragmatic way forward. In particular, Defra was developing guidance to help managers identify the presence of European Protected Species, and asking FC and others to bring forward evidence where compliance was having a negative impact on biodiversity. Defra was seeking a pragmatic solution but this was not always easy to negotiate, and was always subject, ultimately, to the interpretation of the ECJ.

Paul Raven reported that the Environment Agency had some concerns, but mainly about the cost, timescale and availability of up-to-date data about the presence of protected species.

Alex Tait asked whether the Regulations would raise similar issues for agriculture. However, David Bullock said the problem lay in the huge difficulty of detecting bats in trees as opposed to, say, Great Crested Newts on farmland. Amy Coyte said that the important thing was to promote the favourable conservation status of Bats on a landscape scale. Bats were an excellent

indicator of the landscape approach. It was important to take this long-term, landscape scale approach rather than an individual bat approach. Alex Tait felt this was a pragmatic suggestion but was concerned that it might not be legally watertight.

Martin Brasher agreed to speak to the policy team on this and feed back to EBG.

**ACTION: Martin Brasher to speak to Protected Species policy team and report back to EBG.**

#### **4. Update on the use of the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) for workstream reporting**

Pete Brotherton gave a live presentation on BARs. The system was only two and a half years old and had been under constant development to ensure that it was user-friendly both for storage and retrieval of information. All UK Action Plans, local plans, and the Scottish, Welsh and, now, the England Biodiversity Strategy had been uploaded and the Northern Ireland BAP was coming on stream. The aim of the system was for a much more dynamic reporting framework. The revised targets published in November 2006 were now on the system, and BARS was becoming a repository for lead partners' and LBAPs data.

EBS deliverables for each workstream had now been entered on to the system. It was quick to enter data, and easy to use, putting EBG data in the same place as that from LBAPs.

Paul Cobbing reported that the Local and Regional workstream had had a discussion about getting the best out of the BARS system and what the group needed to do to encourage its use.

Paul Raven felt the improvement in functionality of BARS was excellent, but it could not replace the function of workstreams reporting back to EBG on policy issues.

Martin Brasher summed up by saying the group was keen to make more use of the system, but workstream leaders needed to be clear what was being asked of them. They would also need some training, perhaps in the form of a workshop. Pete Brotherton suggested that workstream leaders took on providing an overall update and deliverable update. It was up to the workstream leaders whether they developed a works plan beneath that, but this was generally recommended, and those workstreams that had done so found this very useful for managing their work.

Martin Brasher felt we should use BARs and retain an oral report back by workstream chairs to EBG, particularly on policy obstacles. Andy Stott added

that this was a potential export product and we should explore where it might have potential applications in EU and other international fora.

#### **4. Communication Strategy –**

**EBG-07-09**

Martin Brasher asked Doug Hulyer to introduce the topic. Doug said there was now need to turn a theoretical strategy into an action plan. This was not for a single organisation to take forward; the England Biodiversity Group was set up as a partnership, and the strategy and plan already took into account the plans of key partners. At the Education and Public Understanding workstream, there was a strong agreement about the appropriate division of labour. Issues about internal communication could be taken forward through the Partnership Conference and through the LBAP conference taking place in Exeter in September. The EPU itself would take forward work on the “tool kit”. Defra’s Communication Directorate had agreed to help with other elements of the work. The case for a baseline on the public’s understanding/knowledge of biodiversity was compelling, as without it we could not measure change. There was also an issue of funding regional communications work on which one particular suggestion had been made.

Alex Tait felt that the “tool-kit” was of potential use to Local Authority officers, some of whom were better equipped than others to take on a biodiversity communications role. While some were ahead of the game, it was unrealistic to expect all Local Authorities to invent their own communications materials; if there were a resource pack that people could use when getting the message across, this would be a great help. Doug clarified that the “tool-kit” was already in the work programme for the EPU group and was targeted towards people coming in new to the biodiversity communications sector. The cartoon theme had been explored through the medium of the bioDAversity code (a spoof on the Da Vinci code) which could be viewed <http://www.daversitycode.com/>.

MB welcomed the fruitful engagement between EPU and Defra CD. Regarding baseline, the only information available was Defra’s public attitude survey, which gleaned information at a very basic level and did not give a detailed picture. There was a consensus that we needed further baseline research.

On prioritising the campaigns, priority should attach ‘Biodiversity – the word’ and to ‘future visions’, particularly in terms of climate change. Some of these scenarios were happening already. Campaigns should aim to lever in money. HLF as a funder also needs a clear framework.

Summing up, Martin Brasher concluded that the group was content with the broad direction proposed in the strategy. He asked Doug Hulyer to set out more fully the division of labour he had set out at the beginning of the item and asked the group to feed in any concerns and also offers of help – especially willingness to lead on particular matters.

**ACTION: Doug Hulyer to write up proposed division of labour and next steps to be circulated with the minutes (attached at Annex); England Biodiversity Group to feed in offers of help direct to Doug copied to the Secretariat.**

## **6. Priority Habitats and Species List Review**

Martin Brasher explained that the report of the priorities review group, including the draft list was published on the UKBAP web-site on 6 June. The next step was to submit to Ministers of all four UK administrations recommending adoption of the list. There was a question as how we took this forward into the Section 41 list under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Alex Tait pointed out that activities in England could have an impact on species in other countries in the UK. Pete Brotherton felt that there was further refinement to be done to take account of data-deficient species. David Henshilwood clarified that the issue was by how much we shorten the list and by what process – we would need a very clear statement of status and process. Paul Raven reported that there was concern about the implications of the list at the top of the office in the Environment Agency.

Brian Eversham said that the more that action for species could be wrapped up in wider, habitat-based actions the better.

Martin Brasher felt that what was needed was a simple explanation of the position and how this work will be taken forward, that could be used as a basis to seek views of the group on how the list might be divided up.

Alex Tait felt it was important to make clear that the duty under Section 40 of the NERC Act extended to biodiversity beyond that covered by the list.

Pete Brotherton said that the priorities review group would be meeting on the following day, and would appreciate an input from country groups as to what added value the UK group could provide. For example, the Priorities Group was planning to refine the signposting and would appreciate a steer as to what further work would be valuable. Julian Hughes suggested EBG send a signal as a group that we want to see the energy going into the making the habitats work, and felt it would be useful to have a think-piece about how we fulfil our responsibility for taking forward the English part of the habitats list. Wildlife and Countryside Link were doing some work on this; there was a need to inject some dynamic energy into the habitats process. Link would like to work with everybody on this.

Martin Brasher summed up by saying the Secretariat would put a note round the group and invite responses then return to the issue at the 5 September meeting.

**ACTION: Secretariat to draw up and circulate a note setting out the position as regards the S41 list as a basis for inviting the views of the group.**

## **7. Update on UK activities:**

Sarah Webster briefly introduced the publications *Conserving Biodiversity in a changing climate* and *Biodiversity Indicators in your pocket*, as well as the draft strategic statement *Conserving Biodiversity – the UK approach*.

## **8. AOB**

Martin Brasher drew attention to the UK Partnership Conference to take place in Aviemore 9-11 October. The draft programme had been circulated with the meeting papers.

Julian Hughes asked whether there would be a continuation of the Countdown 2010 funding stream. Martin Brasher said that Defra was awaiting the outcome of the spending review, which would be announced in the autumn.

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

Weds 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 2007

Rms LG 05 & 06, Page Street, London.

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December

London

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## **ANNEX – Way forward for Communicating Biodiversity**

(DH - Doug Hulyer, Chair EPU Group; MT – Mark Tollitt; LC – Lara Clements)

The draft Communicating Biodiversity strategy was discussed and the EBG endorsed the overall approach. The actions suggested in the Education and Public Understanding workstream 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter report were agreed and with the following specific actions for priority follow-up:

- a) All campaigns were thought to be important and could be delivered across the partnership through the concept of lead partners. For Defra, resource priority would be given to the 'Biodiversity – the word' campaign (particularly the development of advocacy materials for use within government and decision-takers). The 'Future Visions' project was particularly mentioned and it was suggested that Natural England may wish to take this forward.

Actions: EPU to develop campaign ideas further and concept of lead partners and report back to EBG by year-end (including further discussions with Natural England around 'Future Visions' campaign);

DH to meet with MT/LC to discuss next steps over 'Biodiversity – the word' campaign and further engagement of SIGs through their communications deliverables.

- b) The need for to establish a baseline of current attitudes to, knowledge of, and behaviours related to biodiversity was agreed. Defra Strategic Communications Unit agreed to assist with this.

Actions: DH to meet with MT/LC to take this forward

- c) Internal communications and infrastructure. BPU would take forward recommendations in the report regarding better internal communications within and between SIGs and the EBG. There would be opportunities to communicate the strategy across the wider partnership through the LBAP coordination conference in September (Exeter) and October 2007 (UKBAP Partnership, Aviemore). DH agreed to work with the secretariat on both. The matter of regional support for communications would be subject to further discussion between Defra, Natural England and the wider partnership over the coming months.
- d) The full *Communicating Biodiversity* report should be divided into its component parts (and re-worked if necessary) over the coming months as recommended in the EPU 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report.

Action: DH

It was agreed that these recommended actions would be circulated to the EBG within a few days of the meeting and regular updates on progress will be provided at each EBG from now on.