

England Biodiversity Group

8 July 2004

Minutes

Present

Brian Harding (chair)	Defra	Sarah Webster	Defra
Diane O'Leary	MoD	David Pape	Alge
Tim Sands	WT	Andy Stott	Defra
Andy Simpson	RSPB	Colin Hedley	CLA
Shaun Mowat	Defra	John Osmond	Defra
Craig Hitchen	Defra	Keith Duff	EN
Alison Barnes	Defra	David Goode	GLA
Martin Harper	WCL	David Miller	Durham CC
Alex Tait	LGA	John Harvey	NT
Richard Smithers	Woodland Trust	Paul Raven	EA
Moira Anderson	Defra	Martin Capstick	Defra
Sandra Fale	Defra	Fiona Rushton	HMT

Apologies

Simon Pryor	FC	Doug Hulyer	WWT
Mark Avery	RSPB	John Roberts	Defra
Pippa Morrison	MoD	Simon Harding	Defra

1.0 Welcome and introductions

1.1 The chair welcomed those present especially those new to the group: Richard Smithers, representing woodlands and forestry workstream, Diane O'Leary representing MoD, and Fiona Rushton and Sandra Fale who would shortly be joining Defra's Biodiversity Policy Unit.

1.2 The chair reported the departure of Chris Spray, who had represented the business workstream. Chris had moved on from Northumbrian Water to a new post in SEPA. The group recorded thanks for his work and sent its best wishes.

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.2 Action 2.2 to initiate meetings with Defra minister had not been completed. The chair commented that the recent launch of WCL's publication *Sustaining Biodiversity* by Ben Bradshaw would be a useful plank to build on in arranging a meeting. It was hoped that regular meetings with the minister, including representation from the workstreams, would be held.

2.3 Action 2.3 proposed a presentation from the water and wetlands group on diffuse water pollution from agriculture. The chair noted that the group would like a presentation at the next meeting in September.

Action: Water and wetlands presentation to be on agenda for next meeting

2.4 Action 3.1 to refine the EBS reporting system. The proposal to include a written summary of the quarter's activities had been taken forward, though not all workstreams had completed this. Further development in time for the next meeting would aim to make the reporting more focussed on key issues.

2.5 Action 5.2 Alex Tait suggested that the annual LGA conference next summer would be a good forum to inform a wider audience of the EBS work. Alex would make appropriate contacts.

Action: AT to approach LGA conference organisers

3.0 Workshop Report (paper EBG-04-03)

3.1 The report summarised the outcomes from the workshop held on 18 March 2004 and the key deliverables identified for each workstream for delivery by 2006. It was agreed that the report was valuable in identifying the key aims for each workstream. The group should consider how delivery would be monitored. The chair suggested that the workstream leaders should be accountable for delivery and should be asked to report on progress to the group. It was agreed that the secretariat would circulate contact details for each workstream and membership details. It was further agreed that ongoing revision of the format for the quarterly reports should give greater prominence to the deliverables identified in the workshop.

Actions:

- **Secretariat to circulate details of workstream groups.**
- **Secretariat to give prominence to deliverables in revised reporting template.**
- **Workstream leaders to consider how workshop outcomes will influence their programmes**

3.2 It was agreed that the report was a fair record of the workshop, and achieved the aim of working across the workstreams and identifying deliverables.

4.0 Indicators

4.1 Sarah Webster drew the group's attention to the commitment to publish an update on the EBS indicators in 2006. The first edition contained 8 headline and 38 sectoral indicators, which would be updated, and additional ground to be covered included economics and funding, non-natives and fragmentation, and comprehensive performance indicators for local authorities. In addition, Defra had commissioned research to develop a simple indicator for local authority performance on biodiversity to be included within the comprehensive performance assessment of local authorities.

4.2 At EU level a set of indicators have been agreed and there was reasonable correspondence between the EBS and the EU indicators. The main gaps were genetic diversity, invasive species, habitat fragmentation,

access and benefit sharing, and resource transfer (the last two awaited further definition by EU).

Action: SW's presentation on indicators to be circulated with minutes

4.3 Keith Duff noted that genetic diversity is a significant conservation and restoration issue. Achieving adequate knowledge was a huge task, and would absorb a large amount of resources. The group would therefore need to assess its priorities. The group would need to be clear about what it wanted to achieve in terms of genetic knowledge.

4.4 John Osmond drew attention to the inclusion of genetic conservation in proposals for higher level stewardship schemes including old fruit varieties and local provenance seed.

Action: HLS guidelines to be circulated with these minutes

4.5 Martin Harper reported that The Plant Diversity Challenge, the UK's response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation also recognises the importance of conserving genetic resources.

4.6 Paul Raven commented that as part of work under the Water Framework Directive a report on the risk of failure to achieve good ecological status was being prepared and would be completed by 1 September. The principles used in the report might be more broadly applicable.

Action PR to report to group at next meeting

4.7 Andy Stott noted that under the CBD genetic diversity refers specifically to commercially exploited species. Although there was some correspondence between EU and EBS indicators, there would still be additional reporting burdens to fit the data with EU criteria.

4.8 The chair commented that the 2010 targets should be one of Defra's key targets. The group needed to agree what should be achieved by then. Workstream groups should consider the changes sought by 2010 and how the indicators should have changed. The workstream leaders should report their conclusions to the EBG in two meetings time

Actions:

- **Workstreams to consider how indicators should have changed and prepare report for EBG at meeting after next**
- **Indicators to be considered further at next meeting and full discussion at meeting after next**

5.0 Quarterly Report (paper EBG-04-04)

5.1 Representatives of the workstreams summarised the quarterly reports. It was agreed that the Education and Public Understanding group would give a presentation on its work at the September meeting

Action: EPU presentation to be included on agenda at next meeting

6.0 Funding (paper EBG-04-05)

6.1 David Miller presented the paper 'Funding local and regional biodiversity in a time of change'. He reported that there were 100 LBAPs and 9 Regional Biodiversity Partnerships in England. Of these, only 50% had secured funding for 2004-5 by November 2003, with a proportion of the remaining amount being secured in the final quarter of 2003-4. The short-term nature of funding and the need to constantly seek out funding resulted in reduced output. The new regional agenda was increasingly important and new funding should be sought to increase capacity at the regional level, as well as existing funding targeted effectively at local level.

6.2 It was agreed that the paper was a helpful reminder of the importance of the local process, and its contribution to implementing national priorities. The group agreed in principle with the recommendations set out in the paper.

6.3 It was agreed that a small working group, to include key funding partners, should be established to explore funding issues. A first meeting should be held in early September and the group should report to EBG at its next meeting.

Actions:

- **DM to establish working group**
- **Anyone wishing to participate in the group to make themselves known to DM**
- **Group to report on progress at EBG meeting in September.**

7.0 Climate Change

7.1 Andy Stott outlined findings from research programmes currently underway looking at the potential impacts of climate change. The MONARCH programme modelled possible species and habitat responses and sea level rise. Indirect effects on for example land and water use were modelled by Accelerate project. MARclim modelled biological change scenarios.

7.2 Butterflies were already showing expanded ranges in line with what would be expected under climate change. However, it was noted that other impacts may be more significant than climate change.

7.3 Possible responses to be considered included

- Factoring climate change in to long term investment eg habitat restoration, species recovery; coastal realignment and when reviewing commitments for HAPs, SAPs, and SSSIs
- Management techniques – eg improve resilience of ecosystems to change; control of invasive aliens; water level management; facilitate species dispersal; re-think conservation objectives
- Recognise that landscape will change – plan for and facilitate dispersal; support new habitat creation; minimise loss of semi-natural habitat

Action: Climate change presentation to be circulated with the minutes

7.4 The chair said that the UK Standing Committee should consider climate change in the review of HAPs and SAPs 2005-6. The EBS report in 2006 would also need to address the topic and it was agreed that the EBG should hold a workshop discussion at the September or the subsequent meeting to consider the approach this report should take. Martin Harper proposed that WCL prepare a paper to inform the workshop.

Actions:

- **Climate change workshop discussion to be held at next or subsequent EBG meeting**
- **WCL to prepare a paper to inform workshop**

8.0 Malahide Message (paper EBG-04-06)

8.1 Martin Capstick reported that the EU stakeholder conference at Malahide had reached a consensus view of key priorities. The environment council had welcomed the report, the outcomes were challenging and constructive and all directorates had been able to sign up to them. Work was now beginning to consider priorities and prepare for the UK EU presidency which would start in July 2005.

9.0 Date of next meeting

Thursday 30 September