

**England Biodiversity Group
11.00 am – 2.00 pm, Monday 19 September 2005**

**Rooms LPS-LGO4,05 and 06
Defra Offices, Page Street, London**

Minutes

Present:

Brian Harding (Defra, WCLU)	Fiona Howie (National Farmers' Union)
Sarah Webster (Defra, EWD)	Johnathan Hughes (Forestry Commission)
Peter Brotherton (English Nature)	Matt Shardlow (Wildlife and Countryside Link)
John Everitt (Wildlife Trusts)	Emma Clare (Defra, CURE)
Steve Lee-Bapty (Defra, EWD)	Mike Barry (M&S)
Alex Tait (Local Government Association)	David Goode (University College London)
Dave Bullock (National Trust)	Ian Clayton (Defra, EWD)
David Henshilwood (English Nature)	
Helen Dunn (Defra, REU)	

Apologies

Doug Hulyer (WWT)	Paul Raven (Environment Agency)
Martin Harper (WCL)	John Roberts (Defra Marine and Waterways)
David Miller (Durham County Council)	Andy Stott (Defra, NRRRA Science Unit)
Pippa Morrison (MOD, Defence Estates)	Hilary Thompson (Defra, EWD)
Shaun Mowat (Defra)	

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

EBG 05/11

The minutes of meeting on 21 June were agreed.

Matters arising

Action 2.7 done copy of letter from HLF had been circulated to the group
Action 4.3 Sarah Webster had not heard from everyone yet re target audiences for outcome from the reporting round, but there was still time – deadline extended to 30 September.

Action 4.3 done – the web address for BARS had been circulated with the papers, but Pete felt the action probably referred to the web address for the questions to be asked in the reporting round, which could be found at www.ukbap.org.uk

Action 4.7 was covered on the agenda

Action 4.11 remained outstanding

Action: Workstream leaders to send target audiences relevant to their area to Sarah Webster by end September

3. Annual Stocktake 2005

Sarah Webster: A draft template for workgroups to complete had been circulated at EBG 05/12 including new sections on lessons learnt and achievements the groups are confident they can reach by October 2006.

David Henshilwood suggested that ongoing obstacles to delivery should be included in the annual stocktake, and it was agreed that this would be built into the template under “Challenges in the year to October 2006”. This section could be based on the obstacles reported in the quarterly reports. Brian Harding stressed that the real focus for identifying challenges should be those affecting the deliverables for 2010, which would be considered as part of the 2006 report and 5 December.

Action: Template to be amended to include identification of obstacles to delivery under Challenges in the year to October 2006.

Action: Deadline for reception of completed templates Friday 21 October.

4. EBS 2006 Report

Brian Harding reminded the group that the full report on the Strategy was due for publication in October 2006.

Sarah Webster: Following the last meeting the template for workstream programmes had been amended to include a narrative paragraph and a “communication deliverable” – for Workstreams to set out the bones of a communications strategy. The structure and process for preparing the report had been approved by Jim Knight.

Brian Harding proposed a deadline of 31 October for receipt of the templates so that the secretariat could use these to structure the 5 December workshop. Timetable for completing templates and process to report. Where workstreams would not be meeting until after this date, it was suggested that the new work programmes could be circulated and signed off electronically.

The discussion moved to the co-ordination of the UKBAP and the EBS review. There was some concern that if the strategy was to be used to deliver BAP

targets, workstreams would need to see the outputs of the targets review before signing off their work programmes. Brian Harding emphasised that the 2006 EBS report could not wait for the UKBAP review to complete (mid-2006) before starting. Sarah Webster said that the secretariat was aware of this issue, and that work programmes needed to build enough flexibility to integrate delivery of UKBAP into the EBS iteratively. Brian Harding asked the secretariat to put the timelines for the EBS report and UK BAP reviews together to see the read across and be able to map out the process and critical dates.

Action: Workstreams to complete templates and return to secretariat by 31 October.

Action: Secretariat to set out timelines of the UKBAP review and the 2006 Report synoptically and circulate with the minutes.

Action: Workgroup responses need to be put together for the December 2005 workshop.

5. Progress with EBS indicators

Sarah Webster gave a verbal update. A paper setting out the state of play on the indicators for each workstream had been circulated and there had been no comment.

Nineteen of the 46 indicators had been updated on the Web and accompanying press release circulated.

A contract for technical support for the workstreams was at tender and was due to run from September 2005 to October 2006. A full update of the indicators would be published alongside the 2006 report.

6. UKBAP Review Group report on taking Stage 2 forward EBG 05/13

Pete Brotherton spoke to the paper that had been circulated at EBG 05/13. He began by reminding the group that part of the purpose of the England Biodiversity Strategy was to deliver UK targets on the conservation of priority Habitats and Species. Things had moved on since the paper had been circulated, as the priorities group had decided to move from a 3 stage to a 2 stage process. As a result, most of the factors listed in Box 1 under "Knowledge limitations, ecological feasibility and implementation issues were being dealt with at Stage 1, leaving the Societal issues to be dealt with at Stage 2. It was felt that Box I was already being done. It was decided that if Box I was correct then Box III could be in Box II. Therefore Stage two is societal.

Alex Tait was concerned that the local dimension had not been adequately captured by the Box 1 criteria. Peter Brotherton replied that the UK driver must

be the level of priority the Species and Habitats have. The Local BAP process should reflect this.

On when species should be removed from the list, Pete Brotherton said that at least 25 species would be likely to come off the list, but there was a need to ensure the removal of factors contributing to their threat and decline, to avoid the need swing in and out of 'fire fighting' mode.

It was agreed that balance was needed; the BAP process was not just set up to meet the UKBAP targets and raising public awareness and bringing local people on board was an important function of Local BAPs.

The debate moved on to Habitats:

It was recognised that there was far greater difficulty with habitats. Certain habitats such as ponds and post-industrial urban habitats did not fit neatly with the criteria.

It was recognised that there was a dichotomy between species that could be catered for by generic habitat management and those that required specific management. Pete Brotherton said that one of the hopes from Stage 2 was that much stronger links would be drawn between the Habitat Action Plan steering groups and their associated species.

Summing up, Brian Harding said that, recognising the process had moved on since circulation of the papers, the group endorsed the revised approach. The importance of local issues in engaging a wider public would need to be taken into account. While EBG was happy for societal considerations to be separated out, they must not be lost sight of completely, and needed to be given a proper profile in the final process.

Section 74 list

Pete Brotherton drew attention to the increased significance of the "Section 74 list" as a result of the duty proposed by the NERC Bill on all public bodies to 'have regard' to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Section 74 list was currently identical to the UKBAP list, but it was for the group to consider whether the new UK BAP list should be augmented to reflect specifically English priorities – for example, where species such as Lapwings which were not threatened in the UK as a whole but were declining in England. In Scotland, the approach adopted was to include all those UKBAP species that occur in Scotland, and augment these with specifically Scottish priorities.

On whether the Section 74 list should reflect English priorities, it was agreed in principle that the list should be tailored to English circumstances, but there was currently no mechanism for identifying species that were declining or threatened in England alone, although some species were known. In conclusion, it was

agreed that the list should be tailored to reflect English priorities, but the practicalities were remitted to the UK BAP review subgroup to consider.

Action: UK BAP Review subgroup to consider practicalities of tailoring the UKBAP list to English circumstances and advise.

On whether we should exclude from the S74 list species for which the primary action was monitoring, the group felt that this would be confusing for sections of society and that if species (or habitats) met the national priority criteria should be included even if we did not know enough. This might result in a longer list but there may be possibilities for streamlining the list using categories such as “all Tiger Beetles”.

Alex Tait pointed out that under the convention we have a duty to protect all species. Though monitoring might be the action the habitats must also be protected. It was agreed that the duty meant that listed species must have their habitats protected.

On habitats, the group endorsed the proposal at 2.4 of the paper to manage proposals for new Habitat Action Plans through relevant workstreams.

David Goode felt that Stage 2 of the review provided opportunities to identify gaps in coverage; the urban group is looking into the need for a more carefully defined urban habitat.

At 2.6 of the paper the group noted the need for resources to improve species and habitat monitoring. It was important to keep monitoring a whole suite of species even where there was no recent evidence of decline. The group relied on BRAG to think about how we can use our limited resources in a more creative way - for example, working with and providing pump-priming to universities who were already engaged in biodiversity related work. It was noted that as a public body, NERC itself would be subject to the NERC bill!

At 2.8 of the paper, on costs, Pete Brotherton pointed out that 90% of the costs are associated with habitats, of which two thirds were associated with the uplands. A collaboratively funded project was underway, due to report in December 2005, to develop a framework which would enable us to cost both current and emerging priorities. It was agreed that at this stage cost should not be a driver as to what is on the list, but would become important when deciding what to do with the list.

Wildlife and Countryside Link flagged their concerns about the pace of delivery on the review of marine habitats and species. The response on marine so far had not been good enough to keep to planned timescales and there were concerns that JNCC lacked the necessary resources to coordinate work on the marine side. Brian Harding asked the secretariat to explore.

At section 3 of the paper, looking ahead to the final stage of the review, it was noted that this was the biggest change since the establishment of UK BAP, as country groups and workstreams were being invited to get involved with defining delivery mechanisms for UKBAP priority species and habitats. The group endorsed the vision of fewer, more integrated plans, linked into policy sectors, with a presumption of using the workstream structure to deliver habitat, species and ecosystem scale priorities for England's biodiversity.

Action – secretariat to explore state of play and options on marine side of UKBAP review.

At Section 4 of the paper, it was noted that the Chairman of the Priority Species and Habitats Review Group had resigned and a replacement was being sought. John Everitt pointed out that we needed clarity about what the new Stage 2 entailed and design the membership around that. We should perhaps look more fundamentally at the membership of the group, given that the new stage 2 would entail considering how we delivered those species and habitats that are coming forward from the review, in the round.

In conclusion, the group agreed that the next stage was critical; we needed to have people with the right skills to bring to the party.

Brian Thanked Peter Brotherton for the paper.

Action - EBG members to suggest members or chairs in the light of the revised stage 2 process.

7. Date of next two meetings

Monday 05 December 2005 (Workshop meeting), Thursday 23 March 2005.

8. AOB

The European Nature Convention in the Netherlands was mentioned. The Dutch manifesto aims to 'connect' – nature to nature, nature to people, and policies to practice.

Action: Secretariat to circulate web link to the Dutch Manifesto with the minutes.

Web link: <http://www.natureconference.org/>