

England Biodiversity Group
11.00 am – 3.00 pm, Thursday 30 September 2004

LNH-B Nobel House, London

Minutes

1.0 Welcome and introductions

1.1 A list of those attending the meeting is attached at Annex 1

1.2 The chair expressed EBG's thanks to Moira Anderson for her input to the group and explained that she would now be concentrating on other areas of work whilst a member of European Wildlife Division's programme management team would take on her role in the group.

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 a meeting with a Defra Minister was in progress. Advice had been submitted to Ben Bradshaw and Defra was awaiting his response. This was expected shortly.

2.3 Action 2.3 – Alex Tait had approached LGA conference organisers about including something about the EBS on the conference programme. The organisers were happy to include something and the theme of the conference would be improving life in local communities. The conference would be held from 5-8 July 2005 in Harrogate with 1200-1500 people expected to attend. It was anticipated that the programme would be finalised by early December. Elliot Morley spoke at last year's conference. The timing shortly after the next general election and at the beginning of the UK's Presidency of the EU could be helpful in securing Ministerial attendance at next year's event. There would also be the opportunity to have some kind of display of stand to demonstrate ongoing work, although there would be costs associated with this.

Actions:

- **David Miller agreed to discuss the issue with Defra, the L&R SIG and Alex Tait in identifying possible speakers and potential subject areas.**

2.4 Action 3.1 – the secretariat had circulated details of the current list of workstream members and planned meetings to the group. It was noted that dates of next meetings were missing for some workstreams. The Chair underlined the importance of these for EBS governance and implementation.

2.5 Action 7.4 – WCL had prepared a paper to inform the climate change workshop, and this would be circulated shortly.

3.0 Revised EBS reporting format and EBS Quarterly report (paper EBG-04-07)

3.1 A new template had been used for completing this quarter's report. Although the format of the new version may not be perfect, it was agreed to use it for 6 months and then to revisit the format if necessary.

3.2 Chairs of the workstreams summarised the progress of their groups:

3.21 The water and wetlands group highlighted the need for a joint meeting with the agriculture workstream. It was agreed that this would take place early in 2005. In addition, the water and wetlands workstream had developed a detailed work programme to focus on the added value of the group. It was agreed that this might be a helpful model for other workstreams.

Actions:

- **Paul Raven to circulate template for the water and wetlands detailed work programme;**
- **Paul Raven and John Osmond to organise a meeting between the water and wetlands and agriculture workstreams.**

3.22 The agriculture group was also looking at how it could best add value. It was agreed that where new objectives and actions became apparent (since strategy publication in 2002) these should be added to the work programme. There would be a full report on progress in 2006, but workstreams should refresh their work programmes as and when appropriate, while retaining the text reporting on the achievement of the originally published objectives for the audit trail.

3.23 There was also some discussion about the new commons legislation on heathland. It was emphasised that fencing was critical in relation to lowland heath grazing and biodiversity objectives. Defra reported that it was too early to report what would be in the draft bill and that a consultation was being held with stakeholders. Defra would convey the points from this meeting to the bill team.

Action:

- **Brian Harding to convey points about importance of fencing to common heathland legislation bill team.**

3.24 The economics workstream had been considering holding a conference or seminar for RDAs and LAs to present some research on the linkage between environmental indicators and growth. However, some of the research had unexpected results which might cause confusion in a conference setting. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the research was circulated to members of the group. The economics and finance and local and regional SIGs agreed to work together to share existing information and to identify a constructive way forward.

- **Action:**

- **Economics and Finance and Local and Regional SIGs to work together to make progress on presenting research on linkages between the environment and local growth.**

3.25 The development of a marine bill had recently been supported by the Prime Minister and would flavour the future work of this workstream. A stakeholder conference would be held in November on the proposed bill and the European marine strategy. The workstream was also considering organising a seminar on economics and marine biodiversity.

3.26 The L&RSIG had been focusing on the issue of funding, which would be covered later in the agenda. The SIG was keen to work with the EPU SIG and to make links with the health agenda. The group of Regional Biodiversity Chairs working with the L&RSIG were drafting a publication linkin biodiversity with major themes (health and regeneration) at the local level. Biodiversity considerations had been fed into the Regional Assemblies Bill the three EBS indicators are also being progressed.

3.27 There were 2 “red” results in the woodland and forestry workstream’s progress report. These were attributed to funding difficulties. Work was ongoing to align the allocation of resources and grant schemes more closely with BAP priorities to address this problem.

3.28 The business SIG was still without a chair, although Brian Harding had approached a potential chairman. No reply had been received and the secretariat would follow this up. The EPU SIG would be presenting their progress later in the meeting. It was anticipated that the urban SIG would soon start making more progress and would report back.

Actions:

- **Secretariat to follow up response from Marks and Spencer about invitation to chair business SIG**

4.0 Annual Stock take (paper EBG-04-08)

4.1 The annual stocktake was now due and the secretariat would circulate a template for returns. The stocktake would be submitted to Ministers and published on the website. Returns should include progress in the last year, building on previous achievements. The stocktake would be a good opportunity to plug into the political agenda, and bring out, for example, links with climate change and the wider sustainable development agenda, as well as the value that was added by different workstreams working together.

Actions:

- **Secretariat to circulate stocktake template during w/c 4 October;**
- **Workstream chairs to complete report and return to secretariat by 29 October**

5.0 Presentations from Water and Wetlands group

5.1 Paul Raven gave a presentation on river basin characterisation to demonstrate the tool that the Environment Agency was developing to identify pressures and impacts on water bodies as part of their work in implementing the Water framework Directive. The approach could be applied to the EBS by identifying pressures and managements priorities across each sector. It was expected that baseline monitoring would be in place by 2006 and any gaps would be addressed between 2006 and 2009.

5.2 Alastair Burn gave a presentation highlighting the links between agriculture and diffuse nutrient pollution. Concerns were raised that mixed messages were emerging from Government about the issue and that this was a problem. In addition, solutions should be more joined up and that this should be addressed. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have had more focus on agri-environment schemes and how the next phase should be targeted. Finally, there was the concern that OFWAT was not taking biodiversity issues into account adequately in funding decisions for the current round of ware pricing and that this should be addressed.

Actions:

- **Alastair Burn to circulate information about 105 priority sites for diffuse nutrient pollution**
- **Secretariat to consider inviting OFWAT to a future EBG meeting.**
- **Paul Raven and Alastair Burn to circulate presentations to EBG**

6.0 Report from key funding partners' working group (paper EBG-04-09)

6.1 David Miller and Alison Barnes presented the paper that a working group had developed to address the problem of funding issues for local and regional partnerships. Both long term and short term situations were identified as needing to be addressed.

6.2 It was agreed that the funding gap was a severe problem especially because although partnership coordination enabled action to be delivered on the ground, supporting the basic infrastructure did not attract funders who were more likely to fund projects that can demonstrate rapid progress on biodiversity gains and meet their objectives rather than those of the partnerships. This could be a presentational problem for funders.

6.3 English Nature would take recommendation i) away and look at it within the constraints of its existing budget. Defra noted the funding gap, but were unable to resolve it at the moment – they would do what was possible.

6.4 It was agreed that further work was needed before considering the direction for the longer term. David Miller agreed to ask Paul Cobbing of GOWM to do some more work on this. The funding working group would reconvene and report back at the next EBG meeting.

Actions:

- **EN and Defra to pursue short term recommendations and EN to provide a note summarising 05/06 funding position**
- **Alison Barnes to identify two or more regions to test funding model**
- **David Miller to approach LGA contacts and ask for report to LGA on progress on biodiversity within local government to date and make case for future support**
- **David Miller and the working group to work with Paul Cobbing to do further work on the long term questions**
- **Funding working group to reconvene and report back at the next EBG meeting.**

6.5 Thanks were expressed to the group for the work that they had done so far on a difficult issue.

7.0 Presentation from Education and Public Understanding group

7.1 The main focus of the presentation was on work between the EPU and the BBC in developing the biggest ever mass participation conservation event. The idea would be to get considerable numbers of people do something to enable communities to conserve or restore nature. It was planned to be on a similar scale to Children in Need, and the main event would be in 2007, with the theme building up over the next 3 years. It would be likely to be something like the creation of the UK's largest nature reserve that could be a "people's reserve". A great deal of work had been put in by the BBC in characterising potential audiences, and it would now be essential to secure the involvement of major, but unexpected, organisations. It was anticipated that the idea would be finalised by Christmas. The benefits of such a project were potentially enormous.

7.2 It was agreed that this was a big step forward for biodiversity and that it would be essential to optimise the role of EBG in the development of the project. The BBC wanted to show transformation of sites, and ideas were sought about potential locations for projects. It was suggested that although most people lived in urban areas, rural areas would also be keen to contribute. There were also suggestions that the idea could include dedicating land for schools and creating local nature reserves all over the country.

Actions:

- **Doug Hulyer to circulate email from the BBC requesting ideas for possible "restoration" sites for the project;**
- **Workstream chairs to consider how their groups could feed into the process and report back at the next meeting.**

8.0 England dimension to UK BAP reviews (paper EBG-04-10)

8.1 It was agreed that this would be postponed to the next meeting.

9.0 EBS Indicators

9.1 Workstreams were considering the update of EBS indicators in 2006. Information about this work should be included in stocktake returns.

10. AOB

10.1 There was no other business

11. Date of next 2 meetings

11.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 8 December in London. 15 March was suggested as a date for the meeting after that.

*Addendum: The secretariat suggested 15 March in error. The EBG meeting in March will be held on **17 March** in London.*

Items for next meeting

Long term funding options

England dimension to UKBAP review process

Full discussion of indicators for 2010 targets

Climate change

ANNEX 1

Attendees

Brian Harding	Defra
Sarah Webster	Defra
David Miller	Durham County Council
Simon Harding	Defra
David Henshilwood	EN
Simon Pryor	FC
Peter Brotherton	EN
Andrew Clark	NFU
Doug Hulyer	WWT
Tim Sands	WT
Paul Raven	EA
David Goode	UCL
Alex Tait	LGA
Dornford Rugg	Defra
Pippa Morrison	MoD
Alison Barnes	Defra
John Osmond	Defra
Martin Capstick	Defra
Fiona Mettam	Defra