

# England Biodiversity Group Meeting

9 May 2003

## Minutes

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<b>Present:</b> Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Richard Lloyd	CA
Martin Harper	Plantlife	Tim Sands	WT
Chris Mahon	Cheshire WT	Mark Avery	RSPB
James Riley	Defra/Just Ecology	Dominic Rowland	Defra
Hilary Neal	Defra	Pippa Morrison	MoD
Chris Spray	NW	Doug Hulyer	WWT
Keith Duff	EN	Andrew Stott	Defra
Simon Pryor	FC	Pauline Homer	ALGE
Alex Tait	LGA	Alastair Driver	EA
Keith Porter	EN	Moira Anderson	Defra
<b>Apologies:</b> John Harvey	NT	Colin Hedley	CLA
Paul Raven	EA	Simon Harding	Defra
David Miller	Durham CC	John Osmond	Defra

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### 1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

1.1 Brian Harding, director designate of Defra's Wildlife, Countryside and Flood Management Division, had replaced Sophia Lambert as chair of the group following her retirement.

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

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.2 It was reported that at action 4.5 the link with the Green Minister's network will be through the Government steering group for the strategy. This group has not yet been established pending the arrival of additional resources.

2.3 At action 4.11 it was reported that no further comments had been received by Tim Sands on the paper and the principles were now adopted by Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) and the Biodiversity Task Force.

2.4 At action 6.1 it was agreed that one of the four WCL representatives would rotate according to the particular expertise needed for the agenda.

### 3. Progress with EBS indicators – paper EBG/03/01

3.1 The first draft of the paper on indicators for the Strategy included 28 out of the proposed 48 indicators. The indicators are a mixture of state and response rather than pressure indicators. Additional work on birds, plant diversity and climate change indicators had been commissioned. The final document would be published in October 2003. A standard format had been used in the preparation of the indicators. As well as consultation with the EBG there would also be a wider, technical consultation. Following this and the

completion of the remaining indicators a further draft of the document would be presented to the group at its next meeting. Comments on the style of the document, on individual indicators and on the consultation process were invited.

**3.2** The group recognised that the draft document represented a good start and a number of points were raised including:

- Concern was expressed about the achievability of indicators in the business and education and economics sectors (B2, E1, U1) and the usefulness of A5 was queried. Indicator E2 was more appropriate under public understanding.
- Richard Lloyd was keen to be involved in the development of indicators E1 and E3 on tourism.
- The proposed timescale for development was short. Could this be extended for increased consultation with the workstreams or the indicators developed further at a later date.
- Progress toward HAP and SAP targets should be two separate indicators
- Climate change and invasive species are not well covered in the proposed list

**3.3** Andrew Stott welcomed advice from the implementation groups as to how the indicators can be improved and commented that:

- Indicators for marine and economics sectors will not be included in the October publication as development of these will be more long term.
- The report will give recommendations on how the indicators can be improved.
- On reporting, the aim is to develop indicators that can be reported on 1,3 or 5 year cycles, but important ones should not be excluded because they don't fit this pattern.

**3.4** It was noted that the England strategy will be reported on in 2006 and this will be a good point to update the report on indicators. The indicators enable England to contribute to international discussion on halting the loss of biodiversity as well as contributing to knowledge at the micro-level.

**Actions:**

- EBG to send further comments to AS / JR as soon as possible
- EBG to inform AS of individuals and organisations to be included in the technical consultation process
- AS / JR to engage with workstreams on the development of indicators
- AS / JR to consider development of indicators for invasive alien species.
- The next meeting would sign off the document for publication and consider its strategic positioning.

**4. Implementation of England Biodiversity Strategy – paper  
EBG/03/02**

**4.1** Reports were given on progress with implementation of sectoral and cross cutting themes.

**4.2 Agriculture.** Dominic Rowland reported that the original workstream had responded positively to continuing its input to implementation. A further meeting would be held in June to look at priorities and specific issues including CAP reform and the groups views on how the EBS programme could feed into CAP reform were requested. It was suggested the chair should act as champion for the EBG and for biodiversity within Defra. It was noted that a secondee from English Nature had been appointed to contribute to the CAP negotiating team and would be establishing a virtual consulting group to feed into the negotiations.

**4.3 Woodland and forestry.** Simon Pryor introduced the report which set out a summary of progress to date in implementing each aim in the EBS programme of action for forestry. Overall, progress had been made in embedding the strategy across the forestry sector in general though more remained to be done. A range of initiatives were contributing to implementation. An England Woodland Biodiversity Group had been established which will report to the UK Native Woodland group, the Forestry Forum and the EBG.

**4.4 Water and wetlands.** Alastair Driver reported that significant progress continued to be made with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Water Bill and review of alien invasive species. Good practice on Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) was being rolled out to the regions. A detailed timetable with outputs and milestones would be established for the next EBG meeting. There was some concern that consultations on Catchment Management Plans would not link adequately with agri-environment and flood management processes. There was a corresponding group for water and wetlands. It was proposed that an actual meeting of this group should be considered.

**Action:** Policy lead to convene a meeting of the corresponding group

**4.5** It was commented that the Water Bill did not offer a great deal for biodiversity as it stands but it should be an opportunity to review abstraction licences and ensure the water industry is aware of the importance of biodiversity. More debate was also needed on implementation of the WFD. The chair agreed to feed the group's comments to the Water Directorate at Defra

**Action:** BH to convey EBG's views to Water Directorate

**4.6 Urban.** Hilary Neal reported that the establishment of CAGE space is a vital development in terms of greening the urban environment. English Nature may have a secondment to CAGESpace. Nerys Jones of the National Urban Forestry Unit had been seconded to ODPM to develop guiding principles for greenspace within the Thames Gateway development area. The Thames Gateway was an opportunity for a showcase for incorporating biodiversity into

new development. The review of PPG9 was underway and early drafts are in progress. The BBC is focusing later this year on biodiversity in parks and gardens. There was an outline group for the urban sector but it was not yet fully established. Mark Avery commented that the reported progress on the urban work programme did not address major infrastructure development issues. It was noted that Brian Harding would have responsibility for planning within Defra.

**4.7 Marine and coastal.** Hilary Neal reported that the Review of Marine Nature Conservation (RMNC) working group had agreed to be the stakeholder group for this sector of the EBS.

**4.8 Economics and funding.** Shaun Mowat reported that most of the workstream is continuing to participate in the implementation group with the addition of extra members. The group is exploring co-operation with other funding streams. Individual members of the group are taking on specific topics looking at existing information and research synergies with other workstreams and will meet again next week to establish priorities and a work programme. The funding and economics work programme is cross cutting across government so can make the best use of other funds available.

**4.9 Education and public understanding.** Doug Hulyer reported that the implementation group had met at the end of March. The group aimed to link with the EPU stream of the Ramsar convention and would feed into the EBS sectoral workstreams and other cross cutting streams. A project proposal would be developed to establish what action on EPU is being undertaken at the moment. At the next meeting in June the group will consider indicators. Richard Lloyd said that Dfes, CA and FACE had just completed research on the barriers to understanding about food and farming.

**Action:** RL to include EPU group on list of invitees to seminar to discuss outcomes of the research.

**4.10 Business.** Chris Spray reported that membership of the implementation group aimed to reflect the business sectors identified in the strategy. A wider forum had also been established for advice and to act as a sounding board. The first meeting of the group had established priorities and looked at indicators. The group did not consider indicators B2 and B4 as proposed in the draft indicators paper to be useful and would set up a sub-group to consider this issue further.

**4.11** It was proposed that the group should consider additional members to include representation of the users of biodiversity such as the horticulture and pharmaceutical industries.

**Action:** Business group to consider representatives from biodiversity user industries.

**4.12** Concern was also expressed that SMEs were low on the group's priorities and that they might fall through the net.

**Action:** EBG to send suggestions of SMEs which would be willing to participate in the group to Chris Spray.

**4.13 Local and Regional.** Chris Mahon reported that a regional workshop had been held in March and a meeting of the chairs of the regional biodiversity fora had taken place on 8 May. This was the first time the regional chairs had met together. The implementation group had discussed landscape scale projects and will bring together good examples. It will also take forward work on community strategies and what biodiversity in the strategies should cover, as well as indicators.

**4.14** It was suggested that, while recognising that it is difficult to get involved on all issues, the workstreams should be looking 6-12 months ahead and raising issues with the EBG that the group should consider providing input to. The government steering group will be an important mechanism for ensuring key issues were raised in government. It was proposed that a pro-forma be developed for workstreams to present to the EBG at each meeting to flag up key issues and horizon scanning of what might require strategic action.

**Action:** Secretariat to develop draft pro-forma linking with items in the strategy

**4.15** Concern was raised about how the cross-cutting groups would link with the sectoral groups if they were not represented on the EBG. It was agreed that David Knight (EN) and Robert Canning (Defra) would be invited to attend meetings on behalf of the urban and marine sectors

**Action:** Secretariat to approach DK and RC and invite them to join the group

**4.16** The implementation groups need to link with HAP and SAP groups as well as each other and should consider communication channels with them. The HAPs and SAPs need to know which EBS policy area they fall within. This raises a question about the role of the existing umbrella and steering groups which should be clarified. It was agreed that this should be considered at the next meeting

**4.17** It was agreed that a list of members of the sectoral and cross cutting groups should be circulated

**Action:** Group leaders to send list of members to secretariat.

## **5. UK Biodiversity Partnership Annual conference - paper EBG/03/03**

The first annual conference will be held at Battleby on 21 and 22 May. The conference will discuss Lead Partner and LBAP reporting and the ecosystem approach in the UK.

## **6. Lead Partner and LBAP reporting 3002-3 - paper EBG/03/04**

Hilary Neal said that this reporting round was an important milestone because there was now much more information available than in the earlier round in 1999; LBAPs have been included for the first time; and a web-based reporting system was tested. There are, however, still information gaps to fill. Keith Duff proposed that an England Biodiversity Information Group should be set up and tasked with establishing what information is needed at the England level, what the issues are and what the EBG should focus on. It would be important to ensure that this group was not duplicating the work of the Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group at the UK level. It was agreed that EN should co-ordinate discussion on establishing an England Information Group

### **Actions:**

- KD to consider development of Information group and to report to next meeting.
- Members of EBG who want to be involved to approach KD.

## **7. English Nature Area based initiatives paper - EBG/03/05**

**7.1** Keith Duff reported that the aim of this initiative is to look wider than protected sites and address sustainable land management through a landscape scale approach. The initiative considered socio-economic as well as biodiversity priorities. The initiative was welcomed by the group and it was noted that The Countryside Agency and MoD were looking at similar approaches as are RDAs. It was agreed that this was an important topic and should be discussed more fully at the next meeting.

**Action:** Secretariat to include this item early in the agenda for the next meeting. Examples from the regional chairs meeting on 8 May should be included.

## **8. AOB**

**8.1** Pauline Homer asked about the availability of funding for Local Record Centres (LRCs). This should be discussed in the context of information needs overall and would be for the new England Biodiversity Information Group to consider.

**8.2** Alastair Driver reported that on Monday 12 May the results of the recent Otter survey would be published showing positive trends.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 4 September.