

UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group

MINUTES

2nd Meeting – SNH, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 2AS

27 October 2003

Present

Ant Maddock	Mike Meharg	Hilary Neal
Deryck Steer	Paul Rose	Liz Howe
Gwyn Williams	Pete Brotherton	John Ramsay
Jim Munford	Robin Wynde	John Baxter
Joanna Drewitt	Sarah Ruff	Trish Fretten

1. Welcome

- 1.1 Deryck welcomed all to the second BRIG meeting and outlined the idea of a “running” agenda. This “running” agenda aims to focus on the relationships among BRIG, its members and other groups. In particular, this tries to understand sensitivities that members of BRIG must be aware of this during implementation of their work. Members were encouraged to bear this “running” agenda in mind and to contribute to it. Deryck said that as chair he would play an important role in the “running” agenda which is vital to get the work of BRIG recognised and supported.

2. Final acceptance of minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 Minutes of first meeting were accepted via email in advance of the meeting. (http://www.ukbap.org.uk/Library/BRIG/Minutes_Agenda/28_07_03_Minutes.pdf).

3. Feedback from working groups and other work since last meeting

- 3.1 Feedback from the Standing Committee on BRIG papers

Deryck reported that the Standing Committee was a new group with a strong focus on adding value to the UK BAP process and ensuring the right outcomes. Given this there was a clear role for BRIG and its relations with the Standing Committee:

- It was important for BRIG to be sure of the direction of the Standing Committee and to understand what the Standing Committee wanted as its outcomes
- BRIG must provide information to the Standing Committee that helped achieve the Standing Committee outcomes and objectives
- Accordingly, papers submitted by BRIG to the Standing Committee should convey our considered information clearly. Deryck noted that BRIG’s previous contributions to the Standing Committee were too detailed and said that in future BRIG should provide short papers with concise options.

ACTION 1. DERYCK TO MEET BRIAN HARDING (STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIR) BEFORE 22 MARCH 2004.

ACTION 2. BRIG TO PROVIDE THE STANDING COMMITTEE WITH A WORK PROGRAMME WITH TIMED PRODUCTS AND OUTPUTS.

3.2 2002 Report Assessment Group

Paul summarised the 2002 Report Assessment paper which identified information gaps in the UK BAP and said UK BRAG had similarly identified research, survey and implementation as the key constraint to SAPs and HAPs. At their meeting on 19 September 2003 BRAG suggested that there was scope for a combined BRIG / BRAG working group to look at science-based monitoring and management (see BRAG minutes, item 7.0 and BRIG agenda item 5.2)

http://www.ukbap.org.uk/Library/BRAG/Minutes_Agenda/19_09_2003_DraftMinutes.pdf.

Paul proposed that these information gaps needed to be considered urgently. The Standing Committee had asked BRIG for clear, costed proposals at its next meeting on 22 March 2002. In the short term, it was suggested that a one-off high level working group would identify immediate actions to address gaps and priorities. The working group, perhaps using a combination of bottom up and top down approaches, should identify pressures having most effect on biodiversity and in particular, which pressures, if unchecked, would lead to loss of which species or habitats.

An alternative approach would be to assess the present coverage of monitoring and surveillance schemes and how effective these are in assessing progress on species and habitats targets. This analysis could then be used to identify the most urgent gaps.

After much discussion it was agreed that BRIG could not decide on the formation of this working group without further information. Paul would prepare an outline proposal for a small high level working group. In advance of a meeting of the working group, JNCC would prepare an account of existing sources of data. At a later stage, a BRIG/BRAG working group could consider the implications and options for filling the gaps either by survey, monitoring or research.

ACTION 3. PAUL TO EMAIL A PAPER TO BRIG MEMBERS OUTLINING THE WORK PROCESS AND SUGGESTING MEMBERSHIP OF THIS WORKING GROUP.

ACTION 4. BRIG TO SUBMIT CLEAR, COSTED PROPOSALS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ITS NEXT MEETING ON 22 MARCH 2002

ACTION 5. JNCC TO PREPARE AN ACCOUNT OF EXISTING DATA SOURCES IN ADVANCE OF A MEETING OF THE SMALL HIGH LEVEL WORKING GROUP.

3.3 2005 Reporting Group

The work done by this working group was supported by the Standing Committee who requested that a stronger link between reporting on progress and feedback into action was made. The working group would now go ahead and work on the 2005 reporting round reflecting on the questions to be asked and bearing in mind the issues relating to data gaps.

ACTION 6. THE 2005 REPORTING WORKING GROUP PROCEED WITH ITS WORK – ROBIN.

ACTION 7. BRIG TO CARRY OUT A CUSTOMER SURVEY TO ESTABLISH THE REPORT FORMAT CLOSER TO THE TIME OF PRODUCTION – ROBIN

3.4 Species and Habitat Priorities Review Group

The Standing Committee commented on the proposals for the review and details of the meeting of the Species and Habitat Priorities Review Group as follows:

“It was noted that the review would be an update of the existing list, not a wholesale review of HAPs and SAPs. The BAP was looking at long term outcomes so it would be inappropriate to make a large number of changes. It was important that the process of review should be open and inclusive and transparent. Country groups should be included in the consultation, although individual country priorities which were not priorities in any other part of the UK would not be included as part of the review. The original criteria for inclusion on the priority list should remain as before but guidance on the application of the criteria would be welcomed. BRIG should provide regular updates on progress with the review.”

Three actions were proposed by the Standing Committee:

- “BRIG to draft guidance on the application of criteria for inclusion on priority lists to the review of HAPs and SAPs
- “DS to bring a project plan for this task to the Standing Committee for endorsement
- “Biodiversity News should contain regular updates of progress with the review.”

After some discussion it was agreed that the scope, parameters and time frames of work should be rethought in the light of these Standing Committee comments. The Standing Committee has requested a more detailed outline of what the review group is planning and in particular address the Standing Committee’s concern that the working group will increase the numbers of priority species and habitats too much. It was important to ensure that the Partnership as a whole understood the nature of the review and the parameters set by the Standing Committee. For example, the importance of developing a process to deal with the overall management of UK species and habitats and their prioritisation needed to be more clearly explained. The working group could consider the strategic approaches to policy that had developed in the countries since the UK BAP was first established and the potential for action at the habitat level to avoid a proliferation of species plans.

ACTION 8. A DRAFT PROJECT PLAN BASED ON THE SCOPING WORK BE PRESENTED TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE BY 22 MARCH 2004 - JOANNA.

ACTION 9. PAUL TO PROVIDE THE REVIEW WORKING GROUP WITH INFORMATION ON THE WORK DONE TO DATE, FOLLOWING GUIDANCE FROM THE BIODIVERSITY TARGETS GROUP, BY UK ORGANISATIONS ON PRIORITISING SPECIES AND HABITATS LISTS, BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING.

ACTION 10. BIODIVERSITY NEWS SHOULD CONTAIN REGULAR UPDATES OF PROGRESS WITH THE REVIEW – BRIG SECRETARIAT.

3.5 Targets work

The targets paper submitted to the Standing Committee resulted in the targets review being included in the Terms of Reference of BRIG. It was agreed that this work start immediately and nominations for members of this Targets Review Working Group were called for. Pete agreed to be chair with Gwyn, Sarah and Ant expressing interest in joining this working group.

ACTION 11. THE TARGETS REVIEW WORKING GROUP TO SCOPE THE WORK GUIDED BY THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN PARAGRAPH 6.2 OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED 29 SEPTEMBER 2003 - PETE.

3.6 Terms of Reference – amendments

With slight amendments the revised Terms of Reference were accepted. It was agreed that BRIG should consider how the issues with which it was concerned, could be reflected at the Partnership conference.

ACTION 12. UPDATED TERMS OF REFERENCE TO BE PLACED ON THE UK BAP BRIG WEB PAGE – SECRETARIAT.

3.7 BRIG membership

Ant outlined the few changes to BRIG membership.

ACTION 13. THE MEMBERSHIP LIST BE SENT TO ALL BRIG MEMBERS – SECRETARIAT.

3.8 UK BAP website comments

The use and comments from the users of the UK BAP website were outlined.

4. Standing items

4.1 Country groups

Wales – Liz

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership comprises NGO's, Agencies and the Farmers Union of Wales among others, meets regularly and uses a workshop format. They look at cross-cutting issues and invite people from outside the biodiversity environment. For example, the most recent meeting linked business and biodiversity.

Much LBAP work is done by the Wales Biodiversity Partnership including getting funding for officers and developing guidance. For example, the "Priority habitats of Wales – a technical guide" outlining habitat information at an LBAP level was recently published. (Copies from Liz).

A new landscape scale project was being developed to add scales not being met by the UK BAP. A shortlist of priority projects was being drawn up for discussion with WBP partners.

Northern Ireland - Mike

Northern Ireland continues to form links with the Republic of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Research Platform has agreed four joint SAPs with Ireland including the Irish Lady`s-tresses *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* and corn crane *Crex crex*. Ireland will host the EU presidency next year and the aim is to have these plans published by then.

There is also work going on with introduced species in Northern Ireland and the first LBAP officer has been appointed for Belfast. Plans are afoot to appoint seven more out of the 26 possible LBAPs.

England - Hilary

The England Biodiversity Group is the main engine implementing the England Biodiversity Strategy which is one year old. The first annual stocktake is due for publication shortly and a set of indicators will be published in early December.

The England Biodiversity Group monitors progress with the nine work streams corresponding to the nine chapters in the England Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy is one of DEFRA's key programmes and reports received from each work stream are consolidated into a single report. A high level group in Whitehall is charged with ensuring that the Strategy's objectives are integrated into other policy areas and also with helping to deliver the target on SSSI condition. The formation of an England Information Group aimed at engaging with users and ensuring the best use of data has been discussed at the England Biodiversity Group. It has been agreed that an information network would be formed and it would be important to ensure there was no duplication of the work of BRIG.

An exchange fair between LBAPs and Lead Partners, to increase understanding, communication and joint working, is planned for February.

4.2 BRAG – Paul

Two BRAG meetings have been held with the themes initiated by BIG being developed further. Current work involves a socio-economic theme and developing links with new and existing work.

BRAG welcomes links with BRIG and has proposed a joint management and monitoring working group (see agenda items 3.2 and 5.2).

4.3 UK Biodiversity Indicators Forum - Deryck

The Standing Committee had asked about the role of the Forum in relation to BRIG and other UK Biodiversity partnership structures. This needed clarifying in discussion with DEFRA.

ACTION 14. DERYCK TO MEET JOHN CUSTANCE TO DISCUSS THE INDICATORS FORUM BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

4.4 NBN - Jim

The trustees' main role is to agree the business of NBN and then to implement the work programme.

A local Records Centre Committee has been formed to develop a new way of working that includes LBAPs.

NBN has allocated some money within this year's Defra Joint Venture Agreement funding package toward a seminar with LBAP groups. It is being co-ordinated by Charlotte Gault and will bring LBAP groups up to date on NBN with a view to encouraging them to use it both to

contribute data and to use the NBN supplied data to inform their actions. It will also highlight what data they would like to see on NBN.

NBN has also discussed links to BARS with Pete Brotherton with possibilities of a linkage between UK BAP site / NBN (in place) and BARS to act as UK BAP information complex.

Main tasks are to develop the infrastructure and operational expression of NBN next year, to work with the freshwater and invertebrate recorder groups and within the UK BAP to prioritise data capture and add gateway functionality for LBAPs and Lead Partners.

Links with Rothamsted are being developed. Currently data like abundance and life stage are held in NBN but there is no way of displaying these data. NBN is working on resolving this.

The next version of the Gateway will be released in May 2004 after a test at the end of October.

The annual NBN conference will be held on 14 November 2004.

5 New items

5.1 Guidance on Survey and Monitoring

This item was linked to item 3.2.

5.2 BRIG / BRAG working group formation

This was discussed under item 3.2.

6 Next meetings

6.1 Date and venue of next BRIG meeting – 27 January 2004, Cardiff, 09h00 - lunch.

6.2 Next Standing Committee meeting - 22 March 2004

7 Process review of meeting – improvements to how BRIG works

At the end of the meeting Deryck ask for members to comment on how effective they thought the meetings had been and how his or the group's performance could be improved. The following improvements were considered:

- Now that the Standing Committee's future position and role was better understood, BRIG could use this understanding to communicate with the Standing Committee at an appropriate level. This would be particularly true when dealing with major issues that could not be resolved by BRIG and where guidance was sought.
- Develop better processes to consider how best to present the standing items (country reports, BRAG and NBN reports) and if it would be better for these to be circulated with the agenda and other papers before meeting. Reports should cover main issues, its relevance to BRIG, and work to be done in the immediate future.
- By empowering the working groups through agreed project briefs that encourage the working groups to bring only the most significant issues to BRIG, a better level of decision taking and empowerment could be achieved. The secretariat has developed a template for working group reports (see attached). Members are asked to use this template for the next meeting reports when their use will be evaluated.

- The way in which the BRIG meetings were held should be styled to convey information to the Standing Committee in the most effective manner.

ACTION 15. BRIG MEMBERS TO COMMENT ON THE STYLE OF THE MEETINGS BEFORE THE NEXT AGENDA IS AGREED (PROBABLY THE LAST WEEK OF DECEMBER 2003).

FORMAT FOR REPORTS TO BRIG BY WORKING GROUPS

Feedback from working groups and other work since last meeting

1. Report back

- Short and to the point overview of progress.
- This should cover three main issues (is progress on time; is the work being done to the agreed quality and are the required resources available?).
- Achievements, successes and problems are highlighted here.

2. Issues for BRIG

- This is where BRIG will help the group solve any problems that the group itself cannot solve. These are issues that are preventing the working group from achieving its objectives.
- These issues should be raised in the problems section above.
- Of necessity these issues are likely to be cross cutting.
- BRIG will discuss and try to resolve these problems.

3. Messages from BRIG

- This is where the solutions to the problems discussed above are clarified.
- Examples may be agreeing a consistent message is sent out by BRIG members or a certain type of communication is ensured.