

## UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee Meeting 5 September 2002

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Present: Sophia Lambert DEFRA (chair)	Hilary Neal DEFRA (secretary)
June Milligan WAG	Malcolm Smith CCW
Jane Dalgleish SE	Jeff Watson SNH
Brian Murphy DOENI	John Faulkner EHS
Martin Capstick DEFRA	Janet Brown WCL
Mark Avery WCL	Moira Anderson DEFRA

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### Draft Minutes

#### **Item 1 Welcome**

1.1 The chair welcomed all to the first meeting of this committee under the new UK Biodiversity Partnership arrangements.

#### **Item 2 Government Response to MBR** (paper UKBSC/02/1)

2.1 The chair said that the Government response had been published on 27 August. The Response supported the recommendations made in the MBR and these now needed to be taken forward. JNCC had prepared a table of conclusions and recommendations (paper 02/1/2) which had allocated possible responsibilities between different parts of the Partnership for implementation of the recommendations.

2.2 Andy Brown (EN) welcomed Government support for the recommendations and looked forward to working together to implement them. John Faulkner (EHS) considered that the table of responsibilities offered a good starting point for the country groups

#### **Item 3 Terms of Reference and Membership of Standing Committee** (paper UKBSC/02/2)

3.1 The draft ToRs for the Standing Committee were approved subject to an amendment to include a role of providing the link to government for advice from the UK Partnership. The redrafted ToR would be circulated for comment.

##### **Action: Secretariat to redraft ToR**

3.2 It was noted that the purpose of the Standing Committee was to manage the business of the UK Biodiversity Partnership in its implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). It was agreed that comprehensive representation on the Standing Committee was not essential. The chairs of the Country Groups should however aim to represent the inclusive membership of their partnerships. It would also be important for the country administrations to be represented in circumstances where they were not also chairs of country partnerships. It was agreed therefore that the current core membership should be retained with relevant experts brought in for particular tasks. However it was noted that this should be put to the UK Partnership.

**Item 4 Supporting Mechanisms for UK Biodiversity Partnership** (paper UKBSC/02/3)

4.1 Paper UKBSC/02/3 recommended that 2 sub-groups should be established to support the work of the partnership: a Research Platform and a Biodiversity Action and Information Group (BAIG).

4.2 The proposals for establishing a Research Platform as a sub-group of the Standing Committee were endorsed although there was an almost unanimous feeling that jargon like 'platform' should be avoided. On the remit for this group, it was suggested that research into the socio-economic aspects of biodiversity such as health benefits should be considered as well as 'scientific' research. It was stressed that it would be important for the group's proceedings to use plain English if broader interests such as business and farmers were to be engaged. It was pointed out that there were substantial NERC research funds for biodiversity but these did not seem to be used for any purposes connected to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It was suggested the Platform should be tasked with establishing links with NERC and that a report from NERC on their applied biodiversity research should be requested. It was agreed that the Platform should be asked to develop a workplan for consideration by the standing committee.

**Action: Chair to invite DEFRA's Director of Science to establish a UK Biodiversity Research Platform and to:**

- **inform the Platform of the Standing Committee's view of the need to use plain English**
- **ask the Research Platform to prepare a workplan**
- **ask the Research Platform to establish links with NERC with a view to encouraging NERC to undertake a more useful biodiversity programme**

4.3 It was noted that the aim of a Biodiversity Action and Information Group was to provide technical and scientific advice on the implementation of the UK BAP. The sub-group would replace the Biodiversity Information Group (BIG) and the Targets Group and should be chaired by JNCC who should also be invited to have a seat on the standing committee. A copy of the draft Terms of Reference for the BAIG was circulated. Some concern was expressed about the final point of the proposed ToR on the impacts of climate change. It was agreed that any comments on the draft should be sent to the Secretariat. The proposals for the BAIG were endorsed by the standing committee and formal thanks were extended to BIG and the Targets Group for their work.

**Action: Secretariat to invite JNCC to establish BAIG and to take a place on the Standing Committee**

**Action: Any comments on the draft BAIG Terms of Reference to be sent to Hilary Neal by Friday 20 September.**

**Item 5 Current UK Level Action** (paper UKBSC/02/4)

5.1 Three strands of current activity at the UK level towards implementing the UK BAP were reported on.

5.2 The current limited reporting round for Lead Partners was showing significant progress. It was expected the results would be published in 2003. Plans were in train to establish a web-based interactive reporting system that would allow for continual updating of progress by both Lead Partners and LBAPs.

5.3 Arrangements were underway for two LP workshops to be held in October. One would be on the 8<sup>th</sup> October in Perth, and the other on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October in Bristol. Themes for the workshops would be integration between the local and national levels of biodiversity implementation and monitoring and reporting.

5.4 The proposals for 5 new HAPs were discussed. The case for new HAPs had been put before the country groups but Northern Ireland had not yet had the opportunity to consider any of the proposals as their Biodiversity Group was in abeyance. Although no-one doubted the scientific validity of the proposals, it was generally felt that the number of plans was already too large to be adequately covered by the existing resources. It was agreed that a decision on the proposals should be postponed until after the 2005 reporting round which would assess progress with the existing HAPs. It would be important to stress however that the delay did not denote any doubt about the value of these habitats.

5.5 It was pointed out that the process for adopting new plans was no longer clear following devolution and that clarification would be helpful. It was agreed that proposals for the adoption process should be made as part of an overall review of the Action Plan decision making process.

**Action: Secretariat to draft a paper setting out a proposed procedure for adopting new HAPs and SAPs and dropping existing ones (eg when species were found to be extinct)**

**Item 6 First UK Biodiversity Partnership Meeting** (paper UKBSC/02/5)

6.1 It was noted that the Partnership was expected to meet annually. The intention was to have a broad and inclusive membership open, within reason, to as many organisations as wished to attend. Attendance would be expected to vary according to the subjects under discussion. It was confirmed that the Scottish Executive were willing to host the first meeting in Edinburgh. It might, however, prove difficult to make the arrangements for February 2003 as proposed earlier and May would be better given other commitments.

**Action: Scottish Executive and Secretariat to arrange a suitable date**

6.2 It was noted that a core function of the Standing Committee was to prepare issues for consideration at the Partnership meeting. There was some discussion of the possible format of the first meeting, based on proposals set out in the paper UKBSC 02/5. Points raised included the need for the partnership to be given momentum, getting the new process off to a flying start. It should provide an opportunity to celebrate success and should be

participatory, rather than an occasion just for listening. The SC would need to decide what it wanted to achieve. A format of morning discussions and afternoon presentations was proposed. It was agreed that a sub-group formed round the country group secretariats would be needed to take forward preparation for the Partnership meeting.

**Action: Secretariat to establish a sub-group to prepare for the Partnership meeting.**

### **Item 7 Country Group Reports**

7.1 Northern Ireland reported that a Biodiversity Strategy was being launched on 7 September. The Strategy would endorse the recommendations made to Government and there was a commitment to re-establish a country Biodiversity Group. It was expected that the group would be established early in 2003. 40% of the actions recommended to Government fall to the Environment and Heritage Service and a 3 year action plan was in place to take them forward. There was already some implementation underway and substantial additional resources had been committed.

7.2 Wales reported that the WBG meets 3 times a year and the next meeting in November was to be based on the impact of agricultural policy on biodiversity. A framework for biodiversity action was expected to be published in the autumn along with the CROW Act S74 list of habitats and species. A review of LBAP implementation was being carried out by the WAG committee.

7.3 Scotland had undertaken to broaden both agenda and membership so had set up the Scottish Biodiversity Forum which met for the first time in February this year. It was a 2 day event with one day about biodiversity and the other topic based. At that event the Government asked that a Biodiversity Strategy be prepared and 5 workshops themed workshops have since been held which each attracted more than 80 participants. Strong messages have emerged that people want biodiversity to be part of the natural resource aspect of sustainable development.

7.4 England reported that the England Biodiversity Strategy is due to be published in the latter half of October. It will aim to integrate biodiversity into the main policy and economic areas and has taken a sectoral approach with the addition of a number of cross cutting themes. There have been relatively few areas of dissent or difficulty but implementation will be challenging. A new development emerging from the strategy is for a series of biodiversity indicators which will be produced next year. A companion document to the strategy on LBAP activity is also due to be published in October.

### **Item 8 Date of Next meeting**

8.1 The date of the next meeting to be decided after the date for the Partnership meeting is set.