
UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee
13 October 2004
Draft minutes

Present

Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Sarah Webster	Defra
Wyn Jones	JNCC	Tony Gent	HCT
Bob Brown	NIBG	John Faulkner	DOENI
Jane Dalgleish	SE	David Parker	CCW
Keith Duff	EN	Paul Rose	JNCC
June Milligan	WAG	Moira Anderson	Defra
Phil Lewis	Defra	Andy Stott	Defra

Apologies

Deryck Steer	JNCC	Mark Avery	RSPB
Martin Harper	RSPB	Jeff Watson	SNH
Miles Parker	Defra		

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The chair welcomed all present, especially those new to the group, Wyn Jones and Tony Gent

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Action points had been completed or were on the agenda.

3. Indicators

3.1 Andy Stott introduced paper UKBSC-04-11 which was a note of the indicators forum meeting on 6 July. Activity in developing indicators at global, pan-European and EU levels was taking place. At the EU level a series of headline indicators has been developed, reflecting the CBD process. The European Environment Agency (EEA) would take forward this framework to report on progress towards the 2010 target. Initially implementation would be undertaken in 6 expert groups which were being set up by EEA. A similar process was underway at a global scale for CBD reporting through the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

3.2 It was agreed that Defra and JNCC should set up a working group to compare current UK indicators with CBD and EU frameworks and to develop proposals for co-ordination and reporting at the UK level.

Action: Defra and JNCC to establish indicator co-ordination working group and to report back to UKSC at next meeting.

3.3 It was noted that in the UK there was a well established network of volunteers which made an enormous contribution to the collection of data. There were similar volunteer bird count schemes for example in some EU countries but in others much capacity building would be needed. The adoption of EU indicators might act as a lever to promote interest.

3.4 The CBD target for 2010 would be broken down into more measurable targets and did not necessarily conflict with the EU 2010 target. A key problem was that any target to change the rate of loss would require measurements at least 3 points in time and this would be difficult to fit in to the timescale.

4. Report from BRAG (paper UKBSC-04-08)

4.1 AS reported that the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group had met in June and had received a report on socio-economic research. The report had identified 12 research priorities which had been circulated to identify interest in taking them forward. Defra's research priorities fit well with the report's findings.

4.2 New subgroups of BRAG had been set up on monitoring and evaluation, chaired by Paul Rose, and habitat management, chaired by Kevin Charman/Andrew Pullin. Both would review research requirements. The sub-group on non-natives was to be re-convened.

Action: BRAG to provide a list of sub-groups.

4.3 KD commented that it would be helpful to have an assessment of BRAG's success in influencing major research funding agendas such as NERC and ESRC. AS responded that BRAG was seen as a source of advice, but needed to produce a short list of priorities for use in consultations to increase its impact. The UK standing committee could promote BRAG as the research voice of the biodiversity community and use the short statements and the UK priorities in their own responses. KD reported that CEH is currently assessing its strategic funding programme for next 5 years. BRAG were invited to let KD know of particular research areas they thought CEH should consider as part of this programme.

Action: BRAG to consider issues appropriate to CEH programme and refer to KD as soon as possible.

4.4 It was agreed that a report on socio-economic priorities and any other key priorities should be presented by BRAG to the Standing Committee for discussion at its next meeting. AS said that BRAG would welcome input from the committee.

Action: BRAG to prepare research priorities paper for inclusion on agenda of next SC meeting in March.

5. Reports from BRIG

5.1 PR reported that plans for the 2005 reporting and targets review were making good progress. The on-line reporting system, BARS, was expected to be on general release at the end of October. It would then be important to encourage LPs, LBAPs and wider partnership to populate it with data.

5.2 The group established to address information gaps had proposed a three stage process as set out in paper UKBSC-04-06. It was agreed that the approach was sensible and that stage 1 should be carried out as soon as possible. Proposals for stages 2 and 3 should be reviewed by BRIG in the light of the stage 1 findings before being taken forward.

Action: BRIG to carry out survey of LPs reporting information gaps as soon as possible, and other proposed stages as appropriate, and to report back to next meeting of UKSC to enable a discussion of policy implications.

5.3 **Reporting Group.** On the assumption that JNCC would carry out the analysis of the data arising from the reporting round the standing committee would want JNCC to give considerable priority to this. It would therefore be helpful to see a scoping of the analysis so that countries could support the priority of this within JNCC's corporate process.

Action: Reporting group to prepare scoping paper on reporting round and report back to next meeting of UKSC.

5.4 **Targets group.** JM commented that more information on the breakdown of targets to the country level would be useful. There was a risk that the process would outstrip the ability of country groups to respond to the changes. It was noted that virtually all of the targets would be affected by countrification. About 50% would also need improvement / quantifying, but at this stage it was difficult to give a clear estimate of the scale of work involved. DP pointed out that it would be hard to measure disaggregated targets with the same level of precision without increasing the intensity of monitoring.

5.5 **Review of HAPs and SAPs.** Any proposals to amend the list of HAPs and SAPs or the targets had to be formally agreed. It was agreed that the groups should bring their proposals to the UK standing committee. It was also agreed that BRIG would need to consult with the country groups and agencies in

formulating their proposals. The review groups should take these processes into account in their work. PR and BH undertook to discuss the practicalities of the approval process and circulate their conclusions to Standing Committee members. It was agreed that it would be helpful to schedule future UKSC meetings so that they co-incided with decision points in the review process

Actions:

- **BH and PR to consider review approval process.**
- **Secretariat to schedule future meetings in relation to the timetable for the review process.**

5.6 PR reported that BRIG was considering establishing separate habitats and species groups as the process was different for each. Issues for marine species and habitats were different again and the group was also starting to consider these. Recommendations from the Irish Sea Pilot project in relation to marine SAPs would contribute to the thinking.

Action: PR to circulate brief for the above work so that the UKSC can bring a policy dimension to this

6. Favourable Conservation Status (paper UKBSC-04-09)

6.1 WJ introduced this topic setting out the current understanding of the term FCS, issues surrounding its definition and application, and next steps. FCS underpins many of the EC Habitats Directive species and site conservation objectives. All member states will report in 2007 on species listed in Annexes 2,4, & 5 and habitats listed in Annex 1. The reporting baseline was the best information available when directive came into force (1994). One of the challenges was achieving consistency in data. Definition of FCS in habitats will include status of typical species of that habitat, but there will be flexibility as to which of the typical species are chosen in the assessment. Future work included further testing of the concept; workshops with agencies and government departments were planned; and ongoing discussion with NGOs. WJ considered it would be useful if the UKBAP species and habitats were better aligned to habitats and species listed under the Habitats Directive.

6.2 TG suggested that FCS was a useful term in a number of fields, for example: SACs, land use planning, species protection and licensing, monitoring and surveillance, BAP targets and local sites. FCS provided a common theme and goal to draw them together, it identified shared needs and obligations. Its definition and application needed to be clear and straightforward, politically acceptable and measurable as well as aspirational for society. The UKBAP could provide a unifying framework if FCS was accepted as a central theme for BAP, which in turn could be a delivery mechanism for FCS.

6.3 The group recognised the importance of a common goal for biodiversity, but felt that FCS was not a useful mechanism to join up the different processes. Whilst FCS was defined as a concept it was not yet defined in such a way as to be able to be measured. Concern was expressed that FCS offered a static approach to conservation while a more dynamic view such as that offered by the Ecosystem Approach would be more relevant. It was agreed that the BAP process could do better in terms of identifying a common goal, joining up the different initiatives and policy strands, and involving a wider constituency. However, the Standing Committee was not convinced that FCS was the most appropriate mechanism for achieving these aims.

7. UK Conference 2005 (paper UKBSC-04-10)

7.1 SW outlined proposals for the conference in 2005. It was agreed that it should be held in Bristol, in early June. At the 2004 conference a large number of people had booked a place and not turned up, resulting in a number of potential delegates being unnecessarily refused a place. It was agreed that a nominal charge should be made for attendance to encourage commitment once a place had been booked. The proposed theme of urban biodiversity was not agreed and the promotion of 2010 target and beyond proposed instead to focus attention, following Malahide, on what the UK was going to do towards the 2010 targets. This was agreed. Consideration should be given to attracting senior staff from the statutory conservation agencies, and targeted groups such as local authorities, industry and other government departments. A conference steering group should be convened to develop a programme and KD and BB volunteered to join that group.

Actions:

- **2005 conference to be based on theme of 2010 targets and beyond.**
- **Secretariat to arrange meeting of conference steering group.**

8. Country Reports

8.1 JM reported that Wales had held a business and biodiversity seminar and at the next meeting would look at Wales' role in UKBAP work. An LBAP seminar had been held in the summer and an award ceremony held. Wales was looking at the work of quangos and considering whether it would be appropriate to merge them into the administration or not. A decision would be reached in November.

8.2 BB reported that the Northern Ireland biodiversity group had met twice and included many people from outside the biodiversity process. They were currently developing a work programme to 2006 and a process for reporting on biodiversity delivery. Overcoming the tendency for silo working across government was seen as a key step. NIBG was taking a particular interest in progress with the Scottish legislation process.

8.3 JD reported that the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004 had placed a biodiversity duty on all public bodies. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy had been successfully launched and implementation plans had been drafted. A LBAP and LP event was being held today to promote closer working and the launch of a Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme would be announced tomorrow.

8.4 SW reported that the England Biodiversity Group had met twice and targets to report against in 2006 had been agreed. BAP habitats had been included in the higher level agri-environment scheme. A draft of PPS9 on biodiversity and geological conservation had been published for consultation. Input had been made to the Regional Assemblies Bill. Funding for LBAPs was being addressed.

8.5 It was agreed that it would be useful to have written country reports at future meetings.

Action: written country reports to be tabled at future meetings.

9. AOB

9.1 The group would welcome an update on progress in following up the message from Malahide at the next meeting, and an update on progress towards COP9, including the role of the UK Biodiversity Partnership.

Action: Progress on Malahide and COP 9 to be on next agenda

9.2 JD proposed that standing committee meetings should include discussion of a key topic with implications for policy, such as the research strategy. Countries should also be consulted on the agenda. BH proposed that the next meeting should include an informal discussion over dinner the previous evening.

Action: draft agenda to be consulted on prior to next meeting and pre-meeting to be arranged the day before.

10. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 9 March, Temple Quay, Bristol