

UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee  
Meeting 29 September 2003

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Present: Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Hilary Neal	Defra
John Faulkner	EHS	Trish Fretten	NAW
Deryck Steer	JNCC	Keith Duff	EN
Martin Harper	Plantlife	Mark Avery	RSPB
Malcolm Smith	CCW	Jane Dalgleish	SE
Moirra Anderson	Defra		

Apologies: Brian Murphy	DOENI	Martin Capstick	Defra
Jeff Watson	SNH	June Milligan	NAW

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## Minutes

### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The chair welcomed all present and introductions were made

### 2.0 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Action points had been completed or would be dealt with under other items on the agenda. At 4.2 the minutes refer to a Biodiversity Indicators Forum and it was explained that this group did not have a formal status hence the proposal that it be subsumed into the Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (BRIG). It was agreed that Deryck Steer would follow up this point and report back to the Standing Committee (SC) at its next meeting.

**Action: DS to discuss the future operation of the Indicators Forum and its links with UKBAP structures with John Custance (Defra)**

### 3.0 Reports from BRIG

3.1 Deryck Steer reported that BRIG was now established and had identified priority tasks as reported under paragraphs 4.0, 5.0 and 6.0 below.

### 4.0 Analysis of 2002 reporting

4.1 Analysis of Lead Partner (LP) responses to questions in the 2002 reporting round on level of knowledge about HAPs and SAPs was circulated, demonstrating that there are still a significant number of plans where status and trends are unknown. DS presented an analysis showing how the data broke down across taxa.

4.2 It was noted that it would never be possible to fulfil all demands and have perfect knowledge of all species and habitats. In identifying a need for further research or survey BRIG should take a pragmatic approach. Distribution maps, for example, might provide basic information on some species that we apparently have no data on. Analysis of existing data may help identify where there is concern and therefore where effort could usefully be focussed. It was likely that information on species

could be filled relatively easily. Information on habitats would be more complex and would require a UK approach across the statutory agencies.

4.3 It was agreed it should be a priority for BRIG to assess the knowledge gap and present costed options and proposals for addressing it. They should work with BRAG in assessing the extent to which research was needed (see para 7.2 below).

**Action: BRIG to bring clear proposals to next meeting of the SC.**

4.4 With regard to assessment of habitats a UK approach should be taken to ensure common definitions and methodology. It was noted that with some re-design to provide more detail the Countryside Survey could form a useful framework for analysis of habitat's extent and condition. Phase 1 habitat surveys were also useful tools for identifying distribution. It was agreed that Andy Stott of Defra's Science Unit should be asked to consider amendments to the Countryside Survey to give more information on BAP habitats and to make a report to the SC at its next meeting.

**Action: Secretariat to ask Andy Stott to provide a report on Countryside Survey for next SC meeting.**

## **5.0 Preparations for 2005 reporting**

5.1 DS reported that a sub-group had been established to prepare for the 2005 reporting round. MH commented that there needs to be a stronger link between reporting on progress and feedback into action. Learning from the web-based 2002 report, it was felt that a printed document from the 2005 round should have more information than the 2002 summary, but that the detail behind the information would be on the UKBAP website only. It was agreed that it would be useful to ask the audience for what format they would like to see in the information presented in.

**Action: BRIG to carry out customer survey**

5.2 Paper UKBSC-03-05 set out possible areas for further consideration by the reporting sub-group. The points identified in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.6 of the paper were endorsed. The report should give both UK level progress and some country views for comparison. It was agreed that country groups would be responsible for further analysis of country data. The sub-group should proceed on this basis. It was agreed that BRIG should set out proposals for key issues to be included in the report for presentation to the SC at a future meeting. Consideration should be given to whether climate change was a particular issue that could be illuminated by the reporting.

**Action: BRIG to set out proposals for the headline issues to be addressed by 2005 report**

## **6.0 Review of HAPs, SAPs and Targets**

6.1 DS reported that proposals for the review and details of the meeting of the sub-group established to take it forward were set out in paper UKBSC-03-06. 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.

**Action: 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 Sanding Committee for endorsement**

**Biodiversity News should contain regular updates of progress with the review**

6.2 BRIG's terms of reference did not include carrying out a review of the Action Plan targets. It was agreed that the ToR should be amended to include this. The review of targets should ensure that delivery is improved as well as the targets. Climate change and the adoption of the ecosystem approach might make a difference as to how targets should be set. Paper UKBSC-03-06a set out proposals for a review of targets. The standing committee agreed points 1,2 and 3 at paragraph 12 of the paper and that the disaggregation of targets to the country level should be undertaken following the 2005 review. BRIG should consider extending the review of targets to the local or regional levels as proposed in para 10 of the paper.

**Action: BRIG ToR to include a review of BAP targets.**

## **7.0 Report from Biodiversity Research Advisory Group**

7.1 HN introduced paper UKBSC-03-07. The Standing Committee had expressed concern that the large membership of BRAG would make it difficult to function effectively. This had been managed by establishing specific topic groups on, for example, alien species and socio-economic issues. The Standing Committee would welcome a closer dialogue with BRAG over their programme and priorities.

7.2 The information gap in HAPs and SAPs had also been considered, and the most effective way forward was for BRIG and BRAG to work together to address research needs. Miles Parker, chair of BRAG, would be invited to report on progress at the next meeting and to attend future meetings of the SC. The Standing Committee should see the BRAG workplan and Terms of Reference.

**Action: Secretariat to ask Miles Parker to make a report on BRAG progress at next meeting**

**Action: BRAG secretariat to circulate workplan and ToR to members of the SC**

## **8.0 UK Biodiversity Partnership**

8.1 Martin Harper introduced paper UKBSC-03-08 on behalf of Wildlife and Countryside Link. The paper reflected on the 2003 Partnership Conference and gave some general views from Link about the UK BAP process as a whole. It was important to re-affirm the partnership's commitment to a target led approach to biodiversity conservation. How would the lack of knowledge of the marine environment be addressed in the review of Action Plans? The habitat action plan approach would not be as effective in the marine environment as on land. The BRIG review of Action Plans could consider the usefulness of marine HAPs. The Chair queried whether marine issues were adequately reflected in the BRAG work programme. It was reported that the Irish Sea pilot project could help fill gaps in understanding of marine ecosystems and the conclusions from the project should reflect on implications for the UKBAP. DS agreed that JNCC would consider this. Wildlife and Countryside Link's marine group would also reflect further in the light of the pilot project's outcomes. It was agreed that there would be a full discussion of marine issues at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

**Action: JNCC to report on outcomes of the Irish Sea project and the BAP at next meeting.**

**Action: MH / WCL to contribute paper to discussion of marine conservation.**

## **9.0 Partnership Conference 2004**

9.1 Paper UKBSC-03-09 gave some feedback from the 2003 conference and proposals for next year's event. The aim was to hold it again around the time of World Biodiversity Day, but a potential clash with the next proposed meeting of the Scottish Biodiversity Forum was noted. Increased opportunities for participation by delegates should be a key feature of next year's conference. Workshops, if properly facilitated could be a useful tool to get the partnership's views on issues for the 2005 review. The theme of 'people' was considered as a possible theme for the second day. The chair proposed that professional facilitators should be considered to help run the event. It was agreed that a sub-group should be established to begin preparations for the conference and that the SC should be kept informed of progress by correspondence.

**Action: Sub-group to begin planning for conference**

**Action: Use of professional facilitators to be explored**

## **10.0 Ecosystem Approach**

10.1 Paper UKBSC-03-10 set out background to the Ecosystem Approach and, for information, the action that was being considered in England to take it forward. The UK has agreed to develop the concept as part of its commitment to the CBD. It was noted that the concept is not new, but where it is being effectively applied, it would be useful for this to be clearly flagged. Biodiversity should be firmly embedded as part of sustainable development. The country strategies incorporated the concept into their ethos. Practical projects were now the best way to identify measures to integrate the concept into policies and programmes. England intended to develop projects in each of regions. JNCC had employed someone to work specifically on the EA.

## **11.0 Country Reports**

**11.1 Scotland.** Consultation on the Biodiversity Strategy supported the proposed direction for the strategy. Implementation plans on land use, marine and urban issues were being developed. An indicators group and virtual business and public awareness groups had also been established.

The Nature Conservation Bill was presented to the Scottish Parliament on 29 September. It can be viewed at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/bills/pdfs/b9s2.pdf>

**11.2 Wales.** Wales did not have a formal biodiversity strategy. A State of the Environment Report was expected to be published in mid-October. The response to this report would address biodiversity. Local action was strong and the minister had attended the annual LIAG seminar in July.

**11.3 England.** The Biodiversity Strategy was established as a key programme in Defra. This has helped engage high-level players who will influence and educate decision makers in other government departments. The first annual report and a series of indicators covering all sectors in the strategy would be published at the end of October. The England group would take a more strategic approach to implementation, identifying key issues.

**11.4 Northern Ireland.** John Faulkner had to leave before this item so there was no report from Northern Ireland.

### **11.0 Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 22 March. Conference room 5, Temple Quay House, Bristol.