

# UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee

April 30 2003

## Minutes

---

Present:	Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Hilary Neal	Defra
	Jane Dalglish	SE	June Milligan	NAW
	Jeff Watson	SNH	Keith Duff	EN
	John Faulkner	DOENI	Moira Anderson	Defra
Apologies:	Brian Murphy	DOENI	Mark Avery	RSPB
	Deryck Steer	JNCC	Malcolm Smith	CCW
	Andrew Brown	EN		

---

### 1. Welcome and apologies

**1.1** Brian Harding, director designate of Defra's Wildlife, Countryside and Flood Management Division and the new chair of the standing committee welcomed all present and gave apologies.

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

**2.1** Copies of the revised Terms of Reference to include a role for the committee to act as a link from the partnership to government were circulated. It was suggested that the Standing Committee should give some thought, strategically, to the future of the UK BAP. It was agreed that this should be discussed at the next meeting. The draft ToR was agreed subject to minor amendments and is attached at Annex A.

**2.2** The action point at 5.5 to set out proposals for a procedure for revising the list of HAPs and SAPs would be undertaken when progress had been made by the BRIG on the review of HAPs and SAPs.

### 3. Progress with 2002 reporting round: paper UKBSC/03/01

**3.1** The paper was a draft report giving a summary overview of UK level findings from the 2002 Lead Partner and LBAP reporting round. The published summary report would be presented at the UK Biodiversity Partnership conference on 21 May, and analysis of the reports would also be published online on the same date. The web based version would allow searches to be made for information for each country. This reporting round had increased the information available since the publication of the Millennium Biodiversity Report in 2001 and it was for the country groups to take the work forward in light of the findings. The information provided put the UK in a good position to measure progress towards our commitment to the CBD to halt the decline in biodiversity loss by 2010.

**3.2** A number of comments were made and drafting amendments suggested including:

- The improvement in measuring status was welcomed and but some concern was expressed about the scientific accuracy of the figures. It would be helpful to say they are a 'best estimate' or similar term, to recognise that certainty was not possible.
- Where trends are reported a timescale should be given or the phrase 'on the basis of current knowledge' inserted.
- The baseline against which reports were made was not clear.
- The document would be distributed to Lead Partners and Local Biodiversity co-ordinators and the conference would consider any messages for a wider audience.
- It was agreed that additional material on other UK action would not be added to the printed version but a wider context would be included with publication on the website.
- It was noted that the need for more information should be explored further. BRIG would be asked to develop a hierarchy of information needs.
- Lead Partners had reported 'infrastructure development' as a significant problem. This was a new trend and should be followed up to discover the underlying factors.

**Action:** Secretariat to make agreed amendments to the report at proof stage and to consider contextual material to present on the website and for the conference.

**Action:** Secretariat to ask BRIG to assess the information needs as revealed in the 2002 reports and identify priorities

#### **4. Report from Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group: paper UKBSC/03/2**

**4.1** The two Lead Partner workshops held in 2002 had scoped the work programme for this group over the next year. The group was to manage the machinery of HAPs and SAPs and the UKBAP website and to promote links with the NBN and BRAG. It was agreed that the draft work programme for the group should include an additional bullet point at 6.1 to read 'assessment of 2002 reporting and what should be done about it'. A meeting of the group would be held as soon as possible after the Partnership conference.

**Action:** Secretariat to inform BRIG of the amendment to work programme

**4.2** It was proposed that the work currently undertaken by the ad hoc UK Biodiversity Indicators Forum should be included within the work of BRIG. The group should also be given guidance on the approach to the adaptation of the HAP/SAP lists. It was agreed the group should be asked to present options for strategic directions for consideration at the next standing committee meeting.

**Action:** Secretariat to request BRIG to present options for changes to HAPs and SAPs to the standing committee on 29 September

**4.3** The membership of BRIG should reflect that of the standing committee and nominations should be sent to Paul Rose at JNCC by 9 May.

**Action:** All to ensure nominations for membership of BRIG are sent to Paul Rose by 9 May

## **5. Report from Biodiversity Research Advisory Group – paper UKBSC/03/3**

**5.1** JNCC had appointed Richard Ferris to support this group and he would take up the post shortly. Membership of the group included a wide range of organisations at a high level. It was noted that the group had included research on socio-economic aspects of biodiversity in its work programme and was also engaging with the science agenda. It was agreed that Brian Harding would report the committee's positive comments to Miles Parker

**Action:** Brian Harding to convey the committee's views to Miles Parker

**5.2** It was noted that Scottish Natural Heritage and Environment Agency were not represented on the group but that the group was still open to nominations.

## **6. Progress with UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference – paper UKBSC/03/4**

**6.1** A draft programme for the event had been circulated and a comments on progress were invited. It was suggested that it would be helpful to clarify the thinking behind the programme in some explanatory text. This could be achieved through the addition of background context by giving titles to and outlining objectives for the different sections of the programme. The programme should also include discussion on the way ahead for the UK BAP process as a whole.

**Action:** Secretariat to revise draft programme in the light of comments.

## **7. Country Reports**

**7.1 Wales.** June Milligan reported that National Assembly review of LBAPs had held good evidence sessions and the report had produced unsurprising recommendations. The exercise had been very worthwhile in raising awareness. The Wales Biodiversity group had changed to a seminar format and had held meetings on public awareness, agriculture and land use, and on large-scale habitat restoration. The change in format had successfully brought in new people to the process. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act s74 list of priority species and habitats for Wales had been published in November 2002. CCW was providing funds for the development of additional action plans. Wales Biodiversity week would be held in June

**7.2 Northern Ireland.** John Faulkner reported that the NI Biodiversity Strategy had been launched. The strategy broadly accepted the earlier recommendations and implementation was now underway. There had been some delays in setting up the NI Biodiversity Group. The format for the group was agreed but a chair had yet to be recruited and NGO representation decided. It was difficult to go ahead with action at the local level until the NIBG was established but the background work was in place. A survey of the Irish Hare as part of the BAP had demonstrated no change in the population over the last 5 years.

**7.3 England.** Hilary Neal reported that the Biodiversity Strategy for England was published in October 2002. The machinery for implementation was primarily through the England Biodiversity Group. Workstreams for the 5 key policy areas were continuing and new groups for the cross-cutting issues had been established. A workshop had been held in March bringing together key regional players to draw out regional issues in implementing the strategy. In February the EBG had published 'Natural Partners' setting out the achievements of local biodiversity partnerships in England to complement the strategy. Indicators to measure progress on each sector of the strategy were being developed and should be published in October. The CROW Act s74 list of priority species and habitats was published in December 2002 and was based on the original UK BAP list.

**7.4** Keith Duff said that the key to ensuring recognition and action in implementing the England Strategy was the co-ordinating committee bringing together other government departments. John Faulkner noted that N Ireland intended to establish a similar body.

**7.5 Scotland.** Jane Dalgleish reported that a draft Biodiversity Strategy was published at the Scottish Forum held in February and was now out to consultation. Three implementation groups had been set up looking at rural, marine and urban biodiversity and a group to develop indicators. Ministers were interested in biodiversity recognising that it is vital to delivering sustainable development and as a contribution to the UK response to commitments made at WSSD. A nature conservation Bill was published at the beginning of March. There were no plans to publish a list of priority habitats and species but there would be a duty on public bodies to further biodiversity and have regard to any strategy or strategies. The key body was the Scottish Biodiversity Forum. A steering group would decide the way forward once the strategy is agreed.

**7.6** Jeff Watson reported that SNH was working to make biodiversity relevant to a wider audience. Discussions were being held with the Heritage Lottery Fund looking at funding for local action projects that include people.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

29 September 2003, Bristol

## **Annex A**

### **UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee Terms of Reference**

- To guide and support the whole UK Biodiversity Partnership in implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
- To enable the Country Biodiversity Groups to exchange information, experience, guidance and best practice
- To provide a means of communication and advice from the partnership as a whole to government
- To oversee the maintenance of systems to support and report on a common set of UK Habitat and Species Action Plans, setting up sub-groups as necessary
- To steer the work of the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group
- To prepare issues for consideration and discussion at the annual conference of the UK Biodiversity Partnership